



*Empowering
Families
for Growth
and Change*

1994 Family Ministries Planbook



1994 International Year of the Family

Empowering Families for Growth and Change

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Including resources for
Christian Home and Marriage Week — February 12-19, 1994
Family Togetherness Week — September 17-24, 1994



1994 International Year of the Family

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's participation
with the United Nations

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Contents

Preface.....	iv
<i>Sustaining Love through the Seasons of Marriage</i>	1
Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day, February 12	
<i>I Will Save Your Children</i>	8
Sermon Resource, Christian Home Day, February 19	
<i>Transitions and Traditions</i>	13
Sermon Resource, Family Fellowship Day, September 17	
<i>Sara and Ivan's Big Change</i> Children's Story	20
<i>Jamie's Dilemma</i> Children's Story	22
<i>School Daze</i> Children's Story	25
<i>The Story of Jesus for Balloons and Other Joyful Creatures</i> Children's Story/Activity	27
<i>Good News for Modern Marrieds</i> Mini-seminar	29
<i>Parenting to Empower Children</i> Mini-seminar	51
<i>Family Transitions</i> Ideas for Family Ministry	70
<i>Resources on Change and Empowerment</i>	78
Appendix	82
<i>Changes in Families</i>	
<i>Traditional Societies - Modern Societies</i>	
<i>Generational Differences</i>	
<i>3 Generations of Worshippers</i>	
<i>Family Ministries Survey Part 1</i>	
<i>Family Ministries Survey Part 2</i>	

Preface

This is a very special year for families! The Seventh-day Adventist Church is participating with the United Nations in the 1994 International Year of the Family themed "**Empowering Families for Growth and Change.**"

Important dates in the 1994 calendar year include:

Christian Home and Marriage Week February 12-19

Christian Marriage Day February 12

Christian Home Day February 19

Family Togetherness Week September 17-24

Family Fellowship Day September 17

Many changes in society continue to alter the structure, roles, and functions of the family worldwide. However, the family continues as the basic, natural framework which provides for the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual development of its members from birth to the grave. Family remains vital to the preservation and transmitting of cultural and spiritual values from one generation to the next. Seventh-day Adventists participate eagerly in the opportunity provided by the 1994 International Year of the Family to empower individual families to cope with the radical changes impacting their lives in a short span of time. Several basic assumptions undergird the Church's commitment to Family Ministries in these challenging times:

- The family is the basic social unit of society and of the Church. Forces today that are directly destructive to spirituality, as well as rapid economic, social, and demographic changes affecting families, call for preventive care as well as crisis intervention. The centrality of the family to both the message and the mission of the Church is the compelling reason for the Church to be involved in aggressive ministry to families.

- The family is the primary setting designed by God for the transmission of Christian values and the development of faith. Family discipling functions cannot be transferred effectively to any other entity, consequently it is within the best interest of the Church to utilize its energies to protect and empower the family unit.

- To be a disciple is to bring the principles of Christ's kingdom to everyday relationships where forming intimate, loving relationships constitutes the paramount evidence of faith. Since the family is the primary group in which the capacity for intimate relationships with God and one another is developed, its healthy function is crucial to the disciple-making process.

- Through our family relationships, God wants to show His love to the world. The same relational strengths which make for healthy families make for powerful witness. As families learn to live together by grace, grace begins to extend to all whose lives they touch, winsomely drawing others to Jesus through the family circle. Family evangelism begins with relational bridges which are themselves an expression of our faith and over which more and more of our faith can be shared.

- Ministry to families must seek to encompass and address the needs of all families. Families assume different forms and functions from one country to another and within each nation and subculture. Diversity is the byproduct of life-changing events, which may or may not be within the control of the individuals involved. The life stages through which families pass present unique challenges.

- Christians are called to treat people and families of all cultures with respect and integrity and to uphold and develop that which is good and in keeping with biblical principles in their cultural heritage. At the same time, because cultures can only mirror the fallenness of the people who comprise them, Christian families are called to allow the overarching principles of Scripture to reshape their patterns of relating and their traditions as they stretch toward divine ideals. To minister effectively to families, the Church must both uphold God's ideals and remain in close touch with the realities of family life today.

It is with an eye toward the empowerment of individual family units and the family of God toward these ends that these materials have been prepared. God bless!

Karen and Ron Flowers
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Sustaining Love through the Seasons of Marriage

by Ron Flowers

Co-director, Family Ministries, General Conference

Theme

Provisions exist in the Christian gospel to enable married couples to maintain their covenant amid changes that affect their marriage.

Theme Texts

Lam. 3:23; Hosea 2:20

Presentation Notes

Throughout the following outline, superscripts such as ^{1, 2, 3} are used to indicate items from the section called **Sermon Illumination** which may be used for illustration. The addition of your personal illustrations will enhance the presentation.

Introduction

The theme for this International Year of the Family is "Empowering Families for Growth and Change." Change in our world is inescapable. Change is normal in marriage. Today we are considering marriage and how husbands and wives can be empowered to deal with change in their relationship.

Changes in Marriage

Change in the institution of marriage itself. There are a number of ways in which married couples experience change. First of all, contemporary marriage is undergoing a change from marriage as it was known and experienced in the past.¹ Modern societies expect much more of marriage in the way of companionship, emotional fulfillment, mutual growth in personal identity, and progressive levels of intimacy (Augsburger, 1988, p. 17).

Intrusive change. Deaths, disasters, illnesses, family moves, financial difficulties, career failures, and other kinds of losses create particular stresses on the marriage relationship. One attorney, for example, commented that it is not unusual for couples who file for bankruptcy to also file for divorce. Intrusive change often presents situations for which one cannot make preparation beforehand.

Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day

Predictable change. Predictable changes have come to light with the study of human development. Social scientists have mapped a life cycle that extends from the prenatal period until death. Just as there are seasons in our individual lives so there are seasons in a marriage. These stages in marriage come about because of the life cycle changes in the spouses, but also because the relationship itself has a life cycle. Each season has certain characteristics. Transitions between the seasons are potential periods of crisis. To know these stages of development ahead of time helps us to prepare for them.² The resources of the gospel can be better focused on the special needs created during the times of change.

Marriages within Marriage

Many developmental models include such stages of marriage as: honeymoon, the career establishment period, the child-rearing period, the empty nest when the children are gone, and the retirement marriage. An interesting approach to these seasons of marriage is taken by Christian author and marital therapist David Augsburger (1988) who recognizes that, regardless of whether couples parent children, the marriage relationship has a life of its own which changes over time. He believes that those who live in a marriage over several decades are likely to experience the equivalent of at least four different "marriages" between them as partners within their one marriage. "Marriage is not a single style of relating, committing, trusting, negotiating, conflicting and growing. When there is growth . . . there will be multiple marriages, serial marriages, a series of marriages that unfold as the persons grow" (p. 15).³

Marriage One: Dream. "I love you. I must be with you. I'll never leave you. You'll always be first. We are in love." Feelings of hurt, fear, or frustration are cautiously shared or concealed. Differences are tolerated or overlooked. Conflict is avoided, since it is damaging to the dream. Intimacy is fueled by the fires of romance.

Marriage Two: Disillusionment. "I still like you, but I can't go on without change. I need space, I need respect. I need to be me as well as 'we.' We are in struggle." The dream begins to evaporate, manipulation occurs as a way to get what we want. We risk sharing feelings, but find them threatening, often uncontrolled, confused and confusing. We demand change of the objectionable differences in the partner. Conflict erupts from frustrated feelings. There is fighting, bargaining, pressuring. Intimacy is intense at times, but absent when there is tension.

Marriage Three: Discovery. "I find you surprising. What I liked at the first I came to resent in you. Now I wouldn't change it at all. We are learning to love." True communication is invitation and work toward equality. We own our feelings and express them with candor. We discover that our differences are creative, necessary parts of each of us and of our marriage. We find more creative ways of resolving conflict, seeking mutually satisfying solutions more quickly.

Marriage Four: Depth. "When I'm with you I feel at home, complete. When we're apart I am at peace, secure. We are loved." There is more genuine mutuality and equality in our

Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day

communication. We flow with both our thoughts and feelings. We delight in our differences and develop them in each other. We accept conflict as a healthy process and utilize it to work for mutual growth (Augsburger, 1988, pp. 10-12, 24, 25).

While couples and circumstances differ, research and clinical observation shows these "marriages within a marriage" last about a decade with transition periods between them.

Failure to negotiate the passage between 'the marriages within a marriage' makes divorce more likely and complicates immensely the normal patterns of growth. It is the treacherous passage into and out of the second marriage which sinks many basically good relationships that might have matured and become deeply satisfying and fulfilling alliances (Augsburger, 1988, p. 13).

Commitment: Stabilizing Force in Times of Change

If marriage is likened to a progression of seasons resulting from earth's journey around the sun, then the commitment of the partners to each other is like the gravitational force that holds earth in orbit. The commitment of husband and wife to each other for the journey of marriage gives assurance that, whatever betide them en route, they remain committed to each other.

As the source of that gravitational pull is the sun, so Christian marital commitment has its source in God. On numerous occasions throughout Scripture the relationship of God to His people is likened to marriage (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32; Hos. 2:7; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:9). The outstanding quality of God in that relationship is His faithfulness (Hosea 2:20; Lam. 3:23).

The marital relationship of lifelong companionship is founded on total commitment. This is one of the reasons why the author of the letter to the Ephesians has compared marriage to the relation of Christ with His church (Eph. 5:31-32). Christ has totally committed Himself to His community of followers. He has promised to be with us always (Matt. 28:20). He has made us as His own body (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:28-30). He has loved us even when we have been unfaithful, and He has poured out His life for us, not hesitating even to die for us in order that we may live. . . . It is that kind of love—the love that Christ has had for us—that we are to have for one another in our marriages (Achtmeier, 1976, p. 38).

The love which is needed to stabilize a marriage is the type of love which God displays to each of us—an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person. This takes energy and effort. It means caring about the other person as much as you care about yourself (Wright, 1982, p. 39).

Strategies for Coping With Change

1. *Put change in perspective.* "Only when one takes a long view of marriage is one truly free to risk the exploration of both the highs and the lows, the peaks and the valleys of a growing relationship. When marriage is seen as a joint journey of mutual growth, a

Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day

developmental process over a long period of time, then difficult periods can be put into perspective" (Augsburger, 1988, p. 18).

2. *Whenever possible, plan ahead for changes* which are likely to come. "Many of life's events can be planned for in advance—such as having a baby—and can bring security and satisfaction. Some aspects of the various seasons of a marriage are fairly predictable in the changes they bring. These also can be anticipated" (Wright, 1982, p. 12).

3. *Adjust to the changes in your partner.* Some changes can wreck a marriage, such as alcoholism, drug use, mental and physical cruelty, and infidelity. These belong in a class by themselves. However, much change can be accommodated when we truly accept our partners as persons of value. The passage of time by itself changes people. Also, God's love and our love may actually be freeing our partner to grow and change toward his or her potential. In such change we should take delight.

Elizabeth Achtemeier shows the connection between this adjustment, accommodation process, and Christian marital commitment, "We must also learn to accept each other, with all our faults and imperfections. Christian marriage is not only total commitment; it is also *accepting commitment*, learning to love and value the other for the imperfect person he or she is" (Achtemeier, 1976, p. 43).

4. *Grow and change with your partner.* One wife rationalized that her divorce was appropriate by saying, "I've outgrown him." One of the important avenues to growth together in marriage is communication.⁴ Continue to show unconditional love and acceptance.^{5,6}

Conclusion

Christian marriage has a real advantage when it comes to facing change, for it is rooted in God's covenant. The destructive aspects of change cannot harm the marriage that is anchored in God.⁷ Covenant love is not threatened by change, rather it transforms change, sees that which is positive in it, and takes a creative approach. Covenant love is committed for eternity. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. It is a love that never fails.

Sermon Illumination

1 Marriage is changing

Couples entering marriage today have considerably different expectations of it than has been the case in the past. Marriage is undergoing a change from the traditional style, characterized by a definite, authoritarian, hierarchical role structure, with specific duties and obligations, to what is known as companionship marriage, which is more equalitarian, democratic, and flexible in its role structure. Whereas external social pressures were a strong factor in holding the traditional marriage together, the companionship model depends much more on love and affection, intimate communication, and mutual interest for unity. Commitment is perceived differently—it is more to another individual than to the institution of marriage itself. In short, one does not marry and settle down, but one enters upon a lifelong work to achieve a mutually harmonious relationship (Flowers, 1982).

Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day

2 Some developmental stages and tasks in the family life cycle

Stages	Tasks
Beginning family	a. Differentiating from family of origin. b. Negotiating boundaries between friends and relatives. c. Resolving conflict between individual and couple's needs.
Infant/preschool family	a. Reorganizing family to deal with new tasks. b. Encouraging the child's growth while maintaining safety and parental authority. c. Deciding how to implement personal and family goals.
School-age family	a. Renegotiating workload. b. Sharing feelings when child can't handle school. c. Deciding who helps child with schoolwork.
Adolescent family	a. Renegotiating autonomy and control between adolescents and parents. b. Changing parental rules and roles. c. Preparing to leave home.
Launching family	a. Separating from family. b. Leaving home appropriately. c. Entering college, military, or career with assistance.
Postparental family	a. Renegotiating marital relationships. b. Renegotiating time and work. c. Adjusting to retirement.

(Brown & Christensen, 1986, p. 24)

3 Perpetual change in marriage

I should say the relation between any two decently married people changes profoundly every few years, often without their knowing it; though every change causes pain, even if it brings a certain joy. The long course of marriage is a long event of perpetual change, in which a man and a woman mutually build up their souls and make themselves whole. It is like rivers flowing on, through new country, always unknown (Lawrence, D.H., *We need one another* quoted in Augsburger, 1988, p. 16).

4 Continually make adjustments

God is perfect, the ideal of Christian marriage is perfect, and the means God puts at the disposal of Christian couples is perfect. Yet there is no perfect marriage, no perfect communication in marriage. The glory of Christian marriage is in accepting the lifelong task of

Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day

making continual adjustments within the disorder of human existence, ever working to improve communication skills necessary to this task, and seeking God's enabling power in it all (Small, 1968, p. 81).

5 Unconditional love in marriage

"A man told his wife that on a particular Friday he was going into the boss' office to request the raise that he believed he more than deserved. He was quite nervous and upset. When he finally got his courage to go into the boss' office toward the end of the day, the boss agreed that he deserved the raise and gave him even a larger increase in salary than he had anticipated.

"When he arrived home, he noticed the dining room table was set with the best dishes. There were candles burning. His wife was preparing a delicious meal. He thought to himself, 'Someone has called her from the office to tell her.'

"He went into the kitchen, told her the good news, they kissed, and then soon sat down at the table for a delicious meal. Beside his plate was a beautifully lettered note which read: 'Congratulations, darling! I knew you'd get the raise. These things will tell you how much I love you.'

"They enjoyed the delicious meal together. When she got up to get the dessert, he noticed a second card fell from her pocket. He bent over, picked it up, and read: 'Don't worry about not getting the raise. You deserved it anyway. These things will tell you how much I love you'" (Joe A. Harding quoted in Charles Allen, 1988, p. 47).

6 Say something nice to Sarah

"The young reporter looked puzzled. He wasn't sure what he had expected the old, snowy-haired gentleman to say in response to his inquiry. But he certainly hadn't expected to be handed a worn gold watch. Nor had he expected such a routine question to produce anything more than a routine answer. He just needed something he could jot in his pad to pacify the paper's social editor so he could get on with his bigger stories for the day.

"He looked again at the watch, then back into the eyes of the old man. They were filled with anticipation as he spoke. 'Go ahead and open it, young man. Written right there inside the cover is all you'll ever need to know.'

"This was a big day for George and Sarah. And these were big doin's for the little midwestern farm community into which George had settled over fifty years ago. Their son Peter had arranged the whole thing as a surprise for their 50th wedding anniversary. The whole town had turned out. That's why the young reporter had been assigned to interview the old man. And that's how it happened that he had asked the simple question: 'Tell me, Mr. Rampton, what's your secret? How do you stay happily married for fifty years?'

"Looking a bit uncomfortable all dressed up in his shirt and tie and dark gray suit, he gestured as though to hook his thumbs behind his familiar suspenders. But finding none, his arms dropped awkwardly to his sides.

'Well, son, I didn't know much about the ways of ladies or weddin's or makin' a home on the day I got married,' he began. 'I guess you could say the whole thing had me scared right

Sermon Resource, Christian Marriage Day

stiff. Only one thing made me get dressed up and go through with the whole thing. I knew I loved Sarah here a powerful lot. And this was the only way I could have her for my own.

"It was her daddy that gave me this here watch. After the weddin', as I was hitchin' up the team to drive me 'n Sarah out to my place, he walked over to the buggy and said he had a present for me. I could tell he was kinda choked up when he said, 'My boy, that Sarah of yours is pretty special. But inside the watch is all you'll ever need to know.' Then he thrust a box into my stomach and left so fast I didn't even get a chance to say nothin'."

"The gold glistened in the sunlight. The engraving was a bit worn by time, but the simple statement remained. 'Say something nice to Sarah'" (Family Enrichment Tract Series, A4, Home and Family Service, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, DC, 1982).

7 Jesus walking on water

The late Dr. Ed Banks, longtime evangelist and seminary professor who with his wife, Letah, founded Adventist Marriage Enrichment, liked to use in their marriage seminars a painting of Jesus walking on the water (see Matt 14:25-27). As a visual aid during their presentation on crises and difficulties in marriage, Dr. Banks would point to this powerful portrayal of the Master amid turbulent seas against a backdrop of ominous clouds and ask, "What does this painting say to you?"

Various observations would be made as one by one members of the group gazed at the painting. "His face is so calm and reassuring!" "He knows no fear." "His feet are completely dry." "His extended hands invite us to walk on the water with Him." Many a troubled couple reported that they found in that simple exercise of reflection on Jesus' mastery of the elements a renewal of their faith in Him as Master of earth and sea and sky, and courage to face changes and difficulties in their lives.

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I Will Save Your Children

by Karen Flowers

Co-director, Family Ministries, General Conference

The following excerpts are from the book of poetry entitled *Although the Day Is Not Mine to Give, I'll Show You the Morning Sun*, written and illustrated by David Melton (New York: Random House, ©1971 by David Melton). The commentary is provided by Karen Flowers.

*My child,
my child,
your days of childhood
are quickly spent.
As the season passes,
I wonder why
it hurries so. . . .*

*I find myself,
saying to myself,
"If I had it to live again,
somehow I'd grab the moments;"
not considering,
I'm letting others slip away
while I think about it.
Too many things to steal our attention:
The washing machine must be fed,
and the car needs repair again.*

*I hope that
in these years,
I have attended
to more than skinned knees
and cut fingers.
I hope that somewhere,
in the everyday,
that I have not overlooked
the needs of your heart,
and the growth of your spirit.
I hope that somewhere
in the while,*

Sermon Resource

*there was enough
worth the while.*

*And if there was not . . .
and if there was not . . .
and if there was not . . .
I don't know now
how I can make it up to you.*

Parenthood for many of us seemed simpler in the early years. In the run of the everyday, when things settled smoothly into familiar routine, we could even be tempted to think we could take it on our own. There were the books we had read, the skills we had developed, the successes that overshadowed the deficiencies. But in the terror of moments when a fever climbed or a child stomped her foot and defiantly shouted "No!" we knew how much we needed God. Why do we hear God's voice only when there's trouble?

"Remember," His word gently reminds. "I am the Vine. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the Vine. Neither can you bear fruit, unless you remain in Me. Apart from Me you can do nothing."

These words could evoke an image of God chiding a parent for unsaid prayers, skipped devotions, blessings taken for granted. But let the comfort of His words settle over you. "We're in this together, you and I," I hear God saying. "In the good times, we will both be proud and encouraged. And when times are hard, I will give you the strength to go on loving. Your extremity will always be my opportunity."

God's understanding of the challenges of parenting is not a knowledge gleaned from books, or merely the omniscience of an all-wise God. He has been here with us. His is the knowledge of shared experience. Remember, He says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among you."

His invitation is "Come to me when you are weary and I will give you rest. Rest in the assurance that you need not worry about what you will eat or drink or wear. After these things it's human to seek. But remember, I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry. And He who believes in Me will never be thirsty. Seek first My kingdom and My righteousness, for yourself and your children, and all these things will be added unto you."

*Yesterday,
you asked beautiful questions:
Why is the grass green?
How did the little man
get inside the TV?*

Sermon Resource

And . . .

What does God look like?

Today,

you ask the questions

of a probing mind:

What is the distance to the sun?

Why does the lightning flash?

And . . .

Where does God live?

Tomorrow,

I know there will be more questions.

Some, I am not eager to hear.

And some I'll be unable to answer:

Why is the sky a polluted gray?

Why are the rivers turning black?

Why are there still wars?

And . . .

Is there really a God?

First there is the eager anticipation of questions, the beginnings of language and intelligent exchange between parent and child. Then there is the annoyance of countless questions from sun-up to bedtime and past. Then there come the challenges of the questions of searching minds. Minds which question the unquestionable. Minds which challenge our values. Minds which spin out debate faster than we can process. Where are we to find the answers? How can we ever be a match for them? Yet how can we leave their questions for others to answer?

"Do you not know," God has responded, "that I am the Way, the Truth, the Life? No child comes to the Father but by Me. You call Me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. Human logic will never suffice. Ask, and words will be given to you. Seek answers, and I will guide you into all truth. Knock, and the doors of wisdom will be opened unto you."

As I fill your

days of childhood

with Christmas carols and fairytales,

I must also

prepare you for realities.

I must offer you both—

the way the world should be

Sermon Resource

*and the way it is.
Introducing both
may tend to confuse,
but ignoring either
would only cheat you of Life. . . .*

*I shall lead you
for only this short while,
not knowing
whether or not
you are to become
one,
in the formation
of even rows of Mankind;
or if you are to become
one,
and alone;
an individual
to create a new course
for others to follow. . . .*

*In years to come,
I will see in you,
a reflection of myself.
It's a happy thought
when I understand,
and am in control
of my own attitudes.
It's an overpowering
and frightening thought
when I am not. . . .*

*As you prepare
to chart new pathways
of your own,
when we come to the path
that only you can see,
or come to a hill
that only you can climb,
I promise not to hold you back.
Instead,*

Sermon Resource

*I will encourage you
to go on.*

*There will be
no goodbyes
for us—
no farewells.
For as you leave,
a part of my existence
will go with you,
and I shall not
again, be whole and complete
until you return.*

Watching our children grow up brings together some of life's most rewarding and frightening experiences. But as surely as the leaves come out on the trees in Spring, our children will be drawn into wider and wider circles of exploit and influence. The moment when the pull of individuality and adventure becomes so strong a child breaks free of the forces which bind him close to us and shoots off into his own orbit, represents one of life's most significant change points for both parent and child. It usually comes packaged with a mixed bag of emotions. It's a time when parents take stock. The world into which we must release our children is so much more troubled than the one which supported our beginnings as adults. Have we said enough, done enough to prepare them? What of our experience together as a family? Of course there have been the good times, but what of our own brokenness and the mark it has left on our children?

"Remember," comes God's voice of comfort. "I am the Good Shepherd. I have laid down My life for My sheep. There is no path your child can take but is known to Me. When you cannot be there to influence him, I will make the path to heaven as winsome as green pastures and quiet waters. When you cannot be there to guide him, I will be with him, even through the valleys and the shadows. When he goes astray, gently my rod and staff will bring him back. And with every good gift you would desire for him, I will bless him until his cup overflows, until the day I bring you both to dwell with Me forever.

"I am the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all to Myself. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Before Abraham was, I AM. I will be with you, even unto the end of the world, and I will save your children.



Transitions and Traditions

by Gaspar Colon

Co-director, Family Ministries, Euro-Asia Division

Theme

Dramatic changes in the lives of God's people were often marked by celebrations. These celebrations frequently became traditions that kept memories alive and helped change to be viewed positively as part of growth and progress toward God's goals for His people.

Theme Texts

Leviticus 23:1,2; Luke 22:19

Presentation Notes

Throughout the following outline, superscripts such as ^{1,2,3}, are used to indicate items from the **Sermon Illumination** section, which may be used for illustration. The addition of your personal illustrations will enhance the presentation.

Introduction

As his muscles strain to get a better grip on the Stranger who is wrestling him to the ground, Jacob's mind whirls to make sense of his plight. Who is this intruder who has approached him in the night? Could it be someone sent by his brother Esau to detain him or slay him? Instead of answers Jacob experiences the force of one mightier than he. He senses that this powerful visitor is more than a thief in the night, more than one sent to stop him on his journey. But, what if he's wrong? He must fight on. He must hold out until the light of dawn. He must!

With the first rays of the sun glinting off the nearby hills the Stranger quickly ends the stalemate. Enveloped in the agony of pain and defeat, Jacob holds on to the Stranger who says, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replies, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Before blessing him, the Stranger changes Jacob's name from "heel grabber" to "struggler with God" (Israel). The battle is over. As the sun rises in the sky, the man who is now named Israel stands overwhelmed with what has just happened. He has encountered God face to face and lived. The deceiver has wrestled with God and has come away blessed, renamed, and made ready to face his brother Esau.

The limping patriarch builds there a lasting altar to the memory of this change point in his life. From now on the place will be called Peniel, "Face of God," because there he met God face to face. In years to come Israel will tell his children about this. He will bring them here. He will even have them stop here whenever they are near. Why? Because he wants to remember

this period of dramatic change. He wants his children to remember God's victory in his life (See Genesis 32:22-32).

Relating to Change

How does one nurture faith while immersed in a changing world? What attitude shall we take toward change? Are changes disruptions to be avoided in the journey of life? Should we try to eliminate change as much as possible? The fact is that change is unavoidable.

Growth causes change. We never seem to outgrow the movements of life that bring change in their train; change which may baffle, irritate, or frighten us.

Unfulfilled expectations cause change. Our fears may begin early in life, when our concepts about life are being shaped. We try to answer questions like: "What kind of person will I be?" or "What will I do when I grow up?" or "Whom will I marry?" or "How rich and famous will I be?" We create idealistic expectations based on fantasies of what we think our lives should be like. Often, as we grow up, the ideal expectations that we have so carefully constructed clash with the cold realities of our limits and our circumstances, and we are sadly disillusioned.¹

Change brings challenges. While change can unsettle us and create uncertainty and fear, it can also provide occasion for personal development as we rise to its challenges. Change challenges us to consider:

- **That we do not walk alone.** We walk through change with a changeless loving God. We wrestle with Him face to face, witness His strength, and are affirmed by Him as we prepare to face the unknown.
- **That we need to remember.** We can celebrate change by establishing meaningful landmark traditions that perpetuate the lessons learned, aid us in sharing these lessons with the next generation, and strengthen our trust in the changeless Friend who accompanies us through change.
- **That we need to update our faith resources** to meet our new roles.

The Exodus—Israel's great experience with change. Nearly 400 years after Joseph brought his family to Egypt, the children of Israel found themselves enslaved. Repeated warnings and consequent plagues did not convince Egypt's ruler to heed God's demand that His people be freed. On their final night in Egypt, the destroying angel took the life of the firstborn in every Egyptian family. Among the Israelites, however, there was salvation provided from this plague. A final warning from God was given, "your first-born will die, unless you present the blood of a lamb on the sides and on the tops of the door frames of your home." Each family was to solemnly eat of the prescribed meal and be ready to claim their freedom with cloaks tucked under their belts, their sandals on, and everything in readiness for the march to freedom.

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This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance. . . . Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. . . . Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as He promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.' Then the people bowed down and worshiped" (Ex. 12:14, 17, 24-27, NIV).

Traumatic as it was, this great change in the life of the nation was for the better. God was with them in this change. They were to commemorate it, and build their faith for their future upon this great act of God in their past. Tragically, when confronted by obstacles, attacks, and adversity, they found themselves grumbling at their dashed expectations of a smooth transition to the promised land. Having forgotten what God had intended the traditional celebrations to produce in them, they wandered in the wilderness until a new generation took God at His word and finally inherited the longed-for land of promise.

Facing Change with a Changeless Companion

The ever-present I AM. When Moses was called by God to lead His people out of captivity, he wanted to know God's name. Moses wanted to identify the One who had sent him. He wanted to share the principle characteristic of the sovereign Lord who was calling His people to a new land, to different circumstances, to the fearful responsibilities that come with freedom. God responded, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14, NIV).

"I AM" is always in the present. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it this way: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8, NIV).²

The abiding Comforter. When feelings of insecurity filled the disciples at His impending departure, Jesus assured them, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14:17, KJV).

"I am with you always." Even as Jesus bade them farewell and commissioned them to their work of teaching all nations and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, He assured them with the words: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, NIV).³

Regardless of the changes in your life, in your family, in the challenges that you face today, there is one who is not ruffled by the storm, in whose loving arms you can find peace and rest and an understanding heart. To you He says, "Don't be afraid, I AM with you."

Multiplied Transitions and Meaningful Traditions

The Bible is a collection of the stories of God's people in transition. God's people are always facing change.

- Eve and Adam had to adjust to a new home away from the protective, life-giving garden that they had always known.
- Noah was confronted by the destruction of the world as he knew it and witnessed a new beginning.
- Abram and Sarai left their well-established home in the city of Ur for the promise of a new life, a new land, and a legacy to a new generation, which seemed impossible.
- Jacob suffered the guilt of his own trickery as well as the deception of his father-in-law and his sons.
- Joseph was transformed from a rejected sibling sold as a slave to a mighty ruler in Egypt.
- Hadassah went from orphan girl under the care of her cousin Mordecai to become Esther, Queen of Persia and Media.
- Pastor Hosea nurtured his illegitimate family while seeking out his wayward wife to buy her back from her pimps.
- Peter, the outspoken, brash fisherman, became a respected apostle and key leader in the early Church.
- Saul the persecutor became Paul the captive of Christ, taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and leaving behind him a substantial legacy in Scripture.

In many, if not most of these transitions, when He felt it was important for His people to remember important lessons, God instituted a celebration of the event or experience. These celebrations were to be repeated on anniversaries or otherwise cyclical patterns to keep alive the experience and the blessing. Often a child would ask her parents, "Why are we doing this?" and the opportunity would arise to re-tell the story; to re-live the event; to contextualize the historic. The Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths; each were reminders of specific aspects of God's intervention on behalf of His people.⁴ These celebrations were to keep God's people focused and invested in God's plan for them, but unfortunately these sometimes turned into mere ritual and lost their meaning. The result was a lifeless series of things to do that impeded rather than enhanced their spiritual growth.

In His teaching, Jesus sought to bring back to the consciousness of His followers a clearer understanding of the message of restoration, which is at the core of the gospel. He transformed the Passover celebration of freedom and independence to a solemn invitation for His people to make room for the Word to become a part of our flesh and blood; a declaration of total dependence on God. To nurture faith among the members of our families and our church

Sermon Resource, Family Fellowship Day

community, it is important to celebrate meaningfully, to establish landmark events that remind us and keep us focused in our walk to the promised land.⁵

Facing the challenge of new roles

A baby is dependent on his parents for everything until he learns how to crawl and walk. Then a new world of opportunity and responsibility opens up to him. The interaction between parent and child changes to include issues such as where it is safe to go and where it is not. What can the child touch, what should he not?

. . . A child leaves the intimate security of home to face her first day of school in which she will interact more formally with a wider circle of influences.

. . . A young man seals his commitment to Jesus in baptism and becomes a part of the active, ministering body of Christ.

. . . A couple voice their wedding vows and launch out together to meet the challenge of creating a home and affecting society through it.

. . . The factory worker retires and strives to feel useful at home and in his community.

. . . The new widow faces the dark chasm of loneliness while she tries hard not to be a burden on others.

Change is here to stay. It is normal. It provides for each of us an opportunity to reach beyond our limits and develop faith and other resources to cope with the new roles that we inherit as we move through the stages of life.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians: ". . . I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:11-13, NIV).

Conclusion

Change in life is inevitable. How we face and work through the changes that come are important to our well-being. When facing change:

- **Remember you do not walk alone.** You may walk through change with a changeless, loving God. At times it may seem as if we are wrestling with Him as did Jacob. But also like Jacob, we witness His strength, and are affirmed by Him as we prepare to face the unknown.
- **Celebrate the lessons learned from change.** Establish meaningful landmark traditions that perpetuate the lessons learned and that will aid you in sharing these lessons with the next generation, strengthening our trust in the changeless Friend who accompanies us through change.
- **Learn from change.** Update your faith resources; try to look for positive ways in which you can stretch and grow.

"And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines,

Sermon Resource, Family Fellowship Day

and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (1 Samuel 7:10-12, KJV).

. . . Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us,—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed,—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage.

We cannot but look forward to new perplexities in the coming conflict, but we may look on what is past as well as on what is to come, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us [1 Samuel 7:12].' `As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25. The trial will not exceed the strength that shall be given us to bear it. Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial [or changepoint] will be given (E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 125).

Sermon Illumination

1. Change Points

"The circumstances of our lives put us in contact with points of change, and just when we feel we are freed from one particular changepoint, crisis, transition, or stage of life—pow! We are off into another one. Changepoints are here to stay.

"The little girl can't wait to grow up so she can be a `boss' like Mommy.

"The teenage girl fantasizes about having clear, beautiful skin and what kind of a man she'll love.

"The young wife and new mother longs for the time when her baby will sleep the whole night through.

"The wife of a military man dreams of OWNING a home, wallpapering it, and staying in it until the cow jumps over the moon.

"The couple without children wonders if having or adopting a child would bring a lasting happiness to their marriage.

"The mother of two teenagers hopes the old adage `this too shall pass' will come true.

"The woman whose children have grown and left home can't define exactly what's wrong with her—only that this time in her life isn't as she expected it to be.

"The newly divorced or widowed woman suddenly finds herself experiencing the highly praised freedom she's heard about, but now that she has it, it's a lonely kind of freedom and she doesn't have a clue as to how to develop or use it.

Sermon Resource, Family Fellowship Day

"The woman who goes through the hormonal changes of menopause wakes up one morning to find the cold fear of growing old heavily upon her. She questions whether God has more in store for her or if this is all there is.

"What we all forget in every phase of our lives is that *life* is a whole *series* of changepoints" (Joyce Landorf, *Changepoints*, pp. 12-13).

2. Reference Points

Some years ago, one of the leading Adventist Choirs in New York City was performing a concert at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The music hall was filled to capacity for this long-expected event. All was going well. The choir was in top form. The director was leading the group flawlessly through the well-rehearsed pieces that had made this choir famous. Near the end of the program, during the most complex portion of the climax of the performance, someone opened the stage door near the pianist who was accompanying the group. A gust of wind sent the pianist's musical score flying across the stage.

Attempting to recall the rest of the score from memory, the pianist continued to play, but something was wrong. In the frenzy of the moment, the pianist had inadvertently changed keys. The choir lost its bearings in the complicated interplay of parts and stopped in dead silence.

Instantly the choir director raised a finger and pointed to the lead soprano who softly hummed a middle C (do), the director quickly whispered the reference point from which to start, and in a split second the well-practiced choir had continued *a capella*. The pianist quickly retrieved his music and joined in. At the end of the piece the audience applauded the group for its instant recovery from a disastrous situation. As the audience applauded the director pointed to the lead soprano. Her perfect pitch had saved the performance. The single changeless note had given everyone in the group their bearings so that they could continue the piece instantly and without much fuss.

God is like that. When our situation gets chaotic and the reference points are blurred, He provides us with the changeless reference point (His Word) that we need to finish the task.

3. Jesus, the calm in the tempest.

See Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; or Luke 8:22-25.

4. Textual Background

See Deuteronomy 8:2-18.

5. Personal Experience

Share some of the ways your family celebrates special spiritual milestones such as baptisms, baptismal anniversaries, communion, etc.

References

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Sara and Ivan's Big Change — From the Oven to the Freezer

Written by Sara-May Colon, age 9, Illustrated by Ivan Colon, age 11

Ivan and Sara and their parents had been missionaries in Africa for more than four years. At the time this story was written, Ivan was 11 years old and Sara was 9 years old. They lived in the city of Abidjan. Abidjan is the biggest city in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. The main language there is French, so Ivan and Sara and their parents had to learn to speak French. It is very hot in Abidjan and there are many palm trees and mosquitoes. (See picture # 1)

(See picture # 2) Ivan and Sara loved their big house in Africa. They had a black cat named Shadow. They had a friendly German Shepherd dog named Astra. Astra took care of the cat when it was a kitten. They also had 2 turtles. Their names were Blinky and Winky. Ivan and Sara loved playing with their dog and cat. Also, one of their favorite things to do was to ride their bicycles around the block. Sara liked to visit the guardians on her street. Guardians guard people's houses night and day so robbers won't get in.

In Africa it is very hot and you never have to wear sweaters or coats or long pants. All you need to wear is thin, loose African clothes, cool dresses, or shorts and shirts.

In the summer of 1992 Ivan and Sara's family went on furlough to the United States. Do you know what *furlough* means? It

means that you go on a vacation trip for three months. After a few weeks Ivan and Sara wanted to go back to Africa. Finally it was time to go home. They were happy that they would soon stop living out of suitcases and would sleep in their own beds. On the airplane ride home they said to each other, "I can't wait to get home and play with our pets." When they got to their gate in Abidjan their house guardian, Michel said, "Bon soir. Bon arrive." That means "Good evening, welcome back!" in African French. When the guardian opened up the gate, Ivan and Sara ran in, forgetting to carry their stuff, and hugged their dog and cat. The cat had really grown bigger! Then they remembered to carry their things into the house.

About 10 minutes after they had all their luggage in their house, the telephone rang. (See picture # 3) Daddy picked up the phone and heard that the General Conference was calling their family to live and work in Russia (the Euro-Asia Division). Sara and Ivan shouted, "You mean, we are going to Russia?! Wow! What a change! It will be like going from the oven to the freezer!"

Instead of moving back *into* their house, they started packing to move *out* of their house. (See Picture # 4) It was hard for Ivan and Sara. They had to sell or give

away some of their favorite toys and they sold their bikes. One of the hardest things they had to do was to give away their dog, Astra, and their cat, Shadow, and to let their turtles go. A nice thing that happened, however, was when they shared some of their toys and clothes with some of the poor children in their neighborhood. Seeing them happy made Ivan and Sara happy.

The day came to leave Africa and the nice people who lived there. Sara said, "I will miss the guardians so much. They are so nice to me. I will also miss Ismael, our houseboy." (A houseboy is an African man who helps with the housework.) Ivan and Sara would miss all their other friends from school and church, and the friendly market lady who sold vegetables and fruits at their gate. She carried her vegetables and fruits in a big tin wash basin on her head.

As the big plane took off, Sara and Ivan waved goodbye to Africa. It was a long flight to the United States. It seemed rather strange to be returning to the United States so soon after furlough.

When they got to the United States, Ivan and Sara's family went to live near the World Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Silver Spring, Maryland. Their mom and dad went to Russian classes there. Ivan and Sara went to a new school. It was a huge church school of almost 200 students. What a change! Their church school in Africa had only 9 students in the whole school! Mom and Dad's Russian teacher came to Ivan and Sara's school to teach Russian to them and some other missionary children who were also going to Russia. Russian is sure different from French! If you want to say

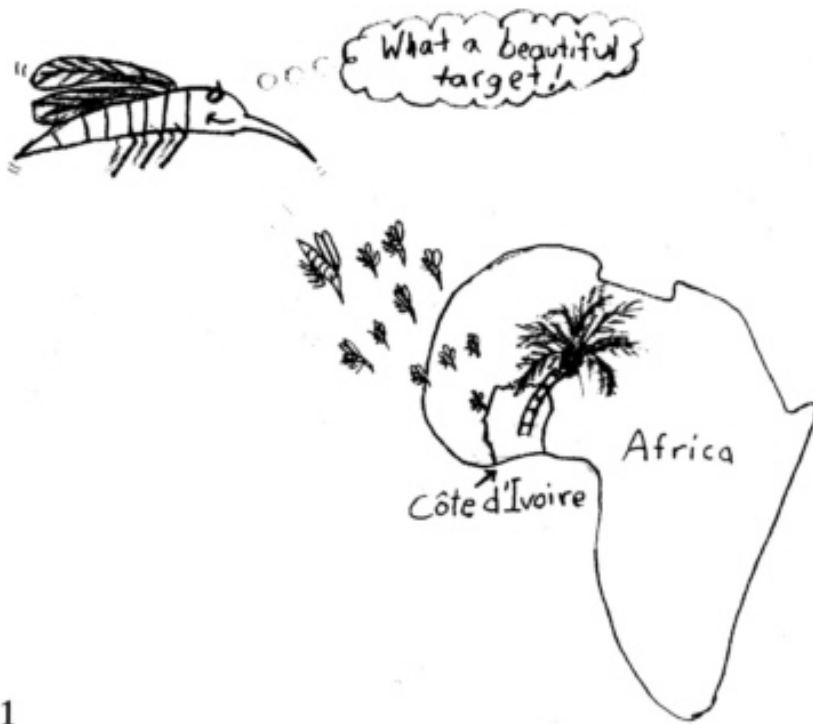
"Hello" in Russian, you say (See picture # 5) "ZDRAWS-tvitch-ya."

Ivan and Sara's parents took them to lots of stores to buy warm clothes for Russia. You see, Russia gets very cold in the winter. Wow! What a change! They sure did not need warm coats when they were in hot, steamy Africa!

As they write this story, Ivan and Sara are still waiting to leave for Russia. They are eager to really settle down in their own home again. They will probably be living in a tall apartment building somewhere in Moscow. They have not seen their toys and other stuff that they saved from Africa for many months. It was all sent to Russia. They have been living with what they brought in their suitcases. "I can't wait to see all my stuff again, and I hope that we can get some new pets in Russia. I sure miss Astra and Shadow," said Sara. "I sure miss our big house in Africa and swimming every other day," said Ivan.

(See picture # 6) Ivan and Sara wonder what it will be like in Russia. They don't know what to expect. Another big change is coming. But change is not all bad. They will meet new friends, learn new games, see new places, learn to speak a new language. They will not be bored.

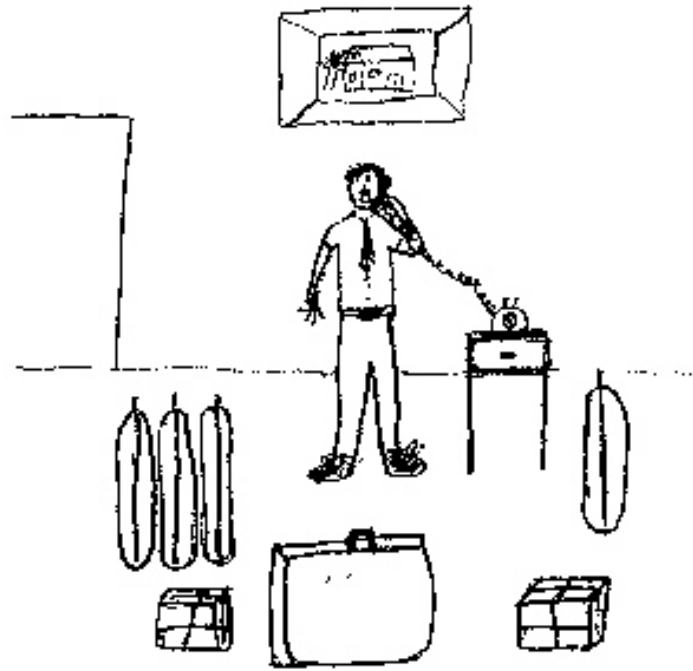
It's also nice to know that Jesus is their Best Friend. He is your Best Friend, too. He NEVER changes. He ALWAYS loves us and will help us to adjust and do OK when everything seems to be changing in our lives. He will ALWAYS be with us until we fly to our new home in heaven. There we can keep our pets FOREVER. We will never have to pack and move again. Hooray!



1



2



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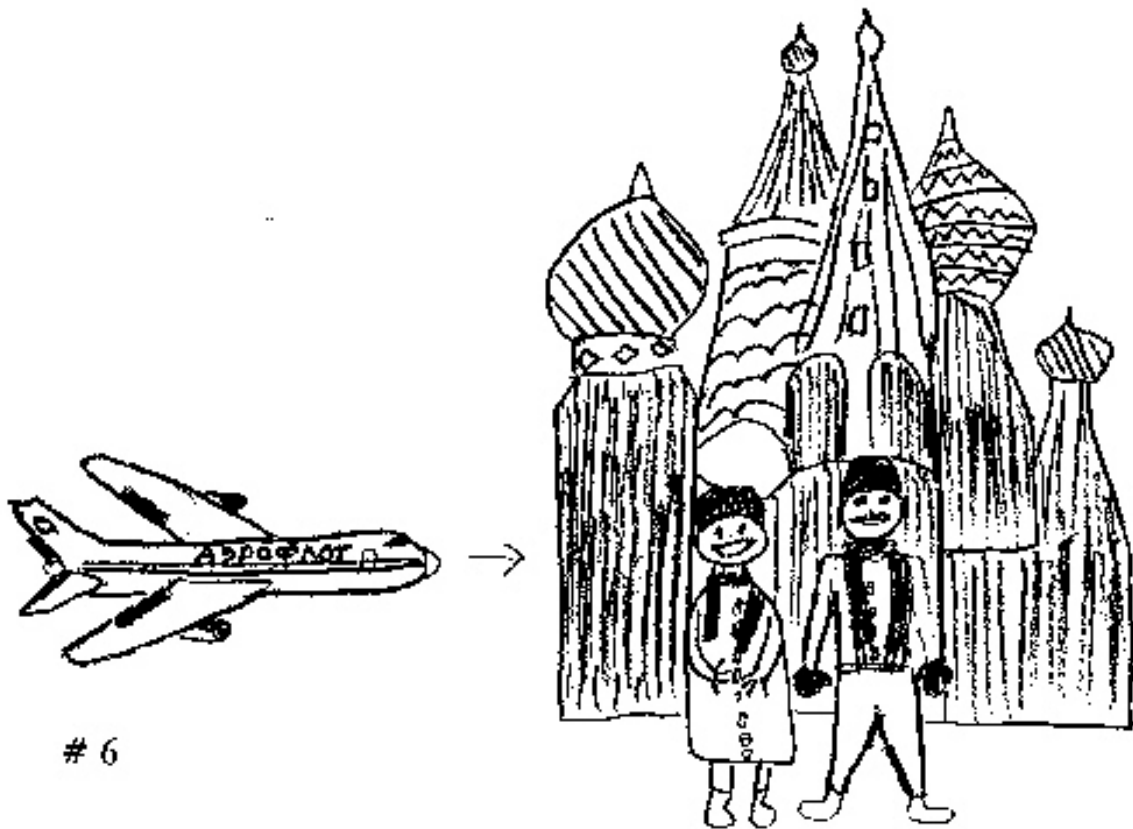
4

Здравствуйте

(ZDRAWS-tvitch-ya)

Hello

#5



#6



Jamie's Dilemma

by Jeanette Pelton

Jamie sat on the porch next to his suitcase with a worried frown on his face. His mother and dad had just given him some news he wasn't at all sure he liked.

The morning had started out all right. Mom had made pancakes for breakfast and Jamie liked pancakes. But after the blessing, Dad had cleared his throat and said, "Jamie, we have some good news for you. Do you remember how we talked last year about a new brother or sister? Well, last night, the adoption agency called us. They have found for us both a brother and a sister. We will be gone for a few days to get them and sign all the papers. You will be staying with Grandma until we get back."

Jamie gulped. He had forgotten all about the discussion they'd had last year. At the time, the idea of a brother to play with had sounded fun, but he wasn't so sure now.

"How old is the brother?" he asked.

"Your new brother is seven and your new sister is five," said Mother. "Would you like to see a picture of them? His name is Jon and her name is Jacinta."

Jamie looked at the picture of two small, solemn looking children.

"Now Jamie, we have a lot to do to get ready. We are buying bunk beds for your

room. You will have one bed and Jon the other. Jacinta is going to have your old bed in the spare bedroom, and we need to buy two dressers, and some clothes."

"I could share my legos with him," offered Jamie. He really didn't know why he said that.

"I'm sure he'll like that. Now, they won't speak English, you know. They speak Spanish."

"You mean he can't talk to me?"

"They'll learn English, you'll learn some Spanish. You'll get along fine. Now you go pack your suitcase to go to Grandma's."

**"Do we have to
get the new kids?"**

It didn't take Jamie long to pack some playclothes. He went out to sit on the porch until it was time to go. Having a new brother had sounded like fun, but this new brother couldn't even talk to him. "Probably doesn't know how to play ball or anything," thought Jamie. "I'm not sure I like this at all. What if my friends at school laugh at him? Maybe they'll laugh at me too." Just as he

Children's Story

felt like he might cry, his Dad came out and sat next to him.

"Going to be a big change, having more than one son around here," Daddy said as he sat down next to Jamie. "Glad we've got a big yard."

"Do we have to get the new kids?" asked Jamie suddenly.

"No, we don't have to get them," said Daddy slowly. "But we want them."

"I'm not sure I want to share my bedroom with somebody who can't even talk to me."

Daddy looked at Jamie for a long minute and then asked, "Jamie, are you afraid Mother and I won't have enough time for you once Jon and Jacinta come?"

Jamie looked at his feet. He didn't know how to put what he had in mind in words. He just felt scared and worried inside.

"Jamie, Mom and I love you. You're very special to us. Our love won't be divided between you and your new brother and sister. Jesus made love so that the more you give away, the more you have, so you never run out. You will always be loved. Do you understand?"

Jamie still felt strange, confused, and sort of afraid, but knowing his Daddy loved him helped.

About a week later, Grandpa and Grandma and Jamie were walking through the airport terminal to pick up Mother and Dad.

"There they are!" Jamie shouted to Grandpa. Daddy reached out his arms and Jamie ran into them for a hug. Then he hugged Mom. And then he saw his new brother and sister standing back holding hands.

They looked small and lost. They both had dark hair and big brown eyes.

Jamie smiled at them.

"Hi, I'm Jamie."

Jon looked at him for a long time. Then he stuttered shyly, "Hello-Jamie-I-am-Jon-How-are-you?"

"Hey, he speaks English!" Jamie said.

"Not really. He's been practicing that all the way from the orphanage! He does want to be friends," smiled Mother. "I think they're a little too shy to talk right now. We need to get them home away from this noisy airport."

On the way home, Jamie was silent. He really didn't know what to say. He kept peeking at Jon and Jon kept peeking at him. When they reached home and had carried in the suitcases, Mother showed Jon and Jacinta their rooms, and then their toys. They looked at everything with wide eyes. Mother sighed. "I wish I spoke more Spanish. I want them to feel at home."

Jamie was silent for a while. Then he brightened. "Mom, may I go for a walk? I'll be right back and I won't go far."

"Well, I guess you may, but what's so important right now?"

Children's Story

"I'll be right back, Mom." Jamie said as he ran out the door.

In a very short time, Jamie returned with an older man who walked with a cane. He brought him into the kitchen.

"Mom, I want you to meet my friend Mr. David. He special."

"Well, of course he is, but why . . ."

"Mr. David was a missionary. Now he teaches adults who want to learn Spanish at the high school. He can help us talk to Jon and Jacinta."

"He does? He will? That's a great idea! They're just in sitting on their beds afraid to move and I want them to know everything's going to be fine."

They all went into the bedroom. Jon and Jacinta looked up timidly. Mr. David smiled broadly, sat down on a chair and spoke to Jon. Jon was so surprised at hearing his own language that he forgot to answer him.

"What do you want to say to them?" Mr. David asked.

"First, tell them this is Jon's bed and these are his toys and his clothes. Then we need to show Jacinta her room and oh, wait—first tell them we love them. That's the most important," said Mother.

"Tell them I want to be their friend and big brother," added Jamie.

"Tell them this is their home and we want them to be happy," said Daddy. Mr. David

laughed and began to speak in rapid Spanish. Jon and Jacinta looked at the beds and clothes and toys. Finally, Jon said something.

"Jon wants to know if these are really his and if we're sure they can stay," Mr. David translated.

Of course they are his! And we do want them to stay," said Mother. She smiled at the children. For the next hour, Mr. David helped the Rodgers talk to their new children. He promised to come back the next morning.

"Tell them I want
to be their friend
and big brother"

At worship that night, Daddy put his arm around Jamie. "Jamie that was a great idea. Having someone around who speaks Spanish will make the first few weeks so much easier."

"I think I'm going to like being a big brother. I'm going to start teaching Jon to speak English. And he can teach me some Spanish too. Mr. David said he'd help us."

"That's great. Let's thank Jesus right now for our safe trip, and our new family and our friend Mr. David."



School Daze

by Jeanette Pelton

Anna looked in the mirror to brush her bangs. She sighed. Today was her first day of school. She would go with her big sister Marti. Mother had bought them new crayons and paper and pencils and paste and a school bag to carry them in. She had a new lunchbox too, a pretty red and blue one that held a thermos of juice and a sandwich and an apple and cookies.

Anna felt confused. Part of her wanted so much to grow up and go to school. The other part was scared. Scared to leave mother and go to that big building at the end of the road. She knew her big sister would go with her, and that the school wasn't too far from home, but somehow that didn't really help much.

"Come on, Anna, we'll be late," said Marti as she passed her door. "You don't want to be late on the first day of school do you?"

Actually, she wished she could just stay here and not go at all. But mother called again, "Anna, time for breakfast! You don't want to be late!"

Anna dragged herself downstairs. Her sister had told her all about school—the hours of writing and sitting and waiting for everyone else. Mother had said she would like it, but the way her sister had described it didn't really sound too promising. She dawdled over breakfast until time for

worship. After Mother had prayer, she had hugged Anna tight. Anna thought she saw a tear in her mother's eyes. It made her worry even more. If school was going to be good, why did Mother look so sad?

Anna walked to school with Marti. Marti's friend joined them as they went down the street. Anna walked more and more slowly as they got closer to the building. She was afraid, but she was not quite sure why. Mother had taken her to the school last week to meet her teacher and show her around the building. The room had been pretty, with bright bulletin boards. She like the flowers on the windowsill. There had even been a guinea pig in a cage that the children could pet. Her teacher had seemed nice enough, in a grownup sort of way. Other children her age were there with their parents. She hadn't spoken to any of them. She had suddenly felt shy.

Now here she was, standing in the doorway of her first grade class. Her teacher smiled and showed her to her desk and helped her put her things in it. Then she showed her where to hang her coat and put her lunch on the shelf. The teacher had to go and help someone else, so Anna sat at her desk, waiting. She looked around as the desks started to fill up with children. There were 18 students in her class. How would she ever remember all their names?

Children's Story

After everyone was seated, the teacher prayed and then told part of the story of Moses for worship. Then she began passing out arithmetic books. Anna opened hers to the middle and gulped. It looked hard. Teacher helped them put their names on the covers and open to page one. She showed them how to make numerals and they spent time practicing. It seemed like no time until teacher told them to put their books away for recess. At recess, they played running games. It was fun. Anna enjoyed running. When it was time for school again, they got more books and papers. Soon it was time for lunch. In the lunchroom, Anna found a seat between two girls.

"My name is Mary," the girl on her left said.

"I'm Alicia. I sit behind you in class. Do you like school?"

"I don't know yet. I'm Anna."

"I wonder who that man is?" asked Anna.

"That's the principal. If you get into any trouble, you go to his office," said Alicia. "My big brother goes there lots."

"What does the principal do?"

"I think he's in charge of the whole school," Mary answered.

"I liked recess," Anna offered.

"You can run fast," Mary said. "I'm not a very good runner, but I like to jump rope."

"Do we do that here?"

"I don't know. I hope so. I brought my rope to play with after lunch."

"Teacher said when we're finished eating to put our lunch boxes back on the shelf and go outside and play till she calls us," said Alicia.

"Do you want to jump rope with us?" Anna asked as they went out to play.

Alicia was really good at jumping and showed Anna several new games with a rope. She found out that Alicia lived some distance away and her mother brought her to school by car. Mary and Anna lived quite near each other. The girls had so much fun they felt a little sorry when it was time to go in. But they got to color some pictures to take home to their mothers. After a story and a little rest on their mats, it was time to learn the sounds of letters. Suddenly a bell rang.

"It's time to get ready to go home," announced her teacher. "Please get your lunch boxes and papers and line up by the door in single file."

Anna was surprised. The day had gone so quickly she hadn't noticed. Out front she met her sister Marti again.

On their way home, Marti asked, "So how do you like school?"

Anna thought for a moment about the jump roping and the games, the coloring and her two new friends. She smiled. "I think I'm going to like school. It's not bad at all. I'll race you home!"



The following story of Jesus for children is illustrated by using balloons filled with helium gas, with strings or ribbons approximately 1 1/2 meters long. Older children will enjoy controlling the balloons while the story is being told to the younger children.

Create a barrier (i.e. a large table or two turned on their sides) behind which the balloon "puppeteers" can hide. Practice ahead of time is essential so each one knows when to let his or her balloon(s) rise above the table while continuing to hold the string as marked in the script. At the end of the story all balloons are released to rise to the ceiling. This story is especially appropriate for a family camp or retreat setting. If used indoors, take into account how you will retrieve the balloons if the ceiling is very high!

If a wide variety of colors of balloons is available, the following color choices are suggested:

Jesus — purple
Mary and Joseph — pink and light blue
Angels — white and yellow
Wise men — red, green, dark blue
Shepherds — mix of other colors

The number of balloons used for angels and shepherds can vary according to the number of children available as puppeteers. One child may control a whole group of balloons if necessary.

The Story of Jesus for Balloons and Other Joyful Creatures

by Karen Flowers and Charles Teel, Jr.

[All balloons on strings and hidden behind barrier, out of sight]

Once there was a baby.	(Jesus balloon goes up on a string.)
With, as usual, a mother and a father.	(Mary and Joseph balloons up on strings.)
But also, there were angels	(Large group of angel balloons up on strings.)
and shepherds,	(Four shepherd balloons up on strings.)
and wise men,	(Three wise-men balloons up on strings.)
And much excitement throughout the land!	(All balloons "dance" [tug up and down on strings], while the "puppeteers" cheer.)
	(All balloons are then brought down, out of sight.)

Children's Story

And 30 years later there was a lone
carpenter who began to preach.

(Jesus balloon up on string.)

He healed lepers,

(Wise men/Mary/Joseph balloons up—to
represent lepers.)

and called fishermen,

(Angel balloons up—to represent
fishermen.)

and blessed children,

(Shepherd balloons up—to represent
children.)

And entered Jerusalem before
Cheering crowds!

(All balloons "dance" and "puppeteers"
cheer.)

But they killed Him on a cross.

(All balloons except the one representing
Jesus are slowly lowered down behind
barrier, leaving Jesus balloon alone.)

He died because He loves us
and wants us to live forever as His family.

(Jesus balloon slowly lowers behind
barrier.)

But He's alive now, in heaven,
where He's making a home for us.

(Jesus balloon goes up.)

Which, when you think about it,
is why we've come to worship.

(Joseph and Mary balloons go up.)

And bring our gifts like the wise men.

(Wise men balloons go up.)

And celebrate like the shepherds.

(Shepherd balloons go up.)

And sing praises like the angels.

(Angel balloons go up.)

We're here to bring honor and glory to
Jesus, our Saviour and Friend!

(Jesus balloon *released* to rise to ceiling.)

As soon as He can, He's coming back,
and we're going to heaven with Him!

(All balloons *released* to rise to ceiling
with cheers from puppeteers.)

That's GOOD NEWS!



Good News for Modern Marrieds

Four Evenings of Bible Study and Marital Growth for Couples

by Karen Flowers

Co-director, Family Ministries, General Conference

Outlined below are four evenings of Bible study and marriage enrichment for couples. These provide a starting point for Family Ministries leaders planning marriage strengthening activities at the local church, or for couples who would like to experience marital growth in a Christian context with small groups of couples in a home setting. The activities suggested will take 1 1/2 - 2 hours per evening.

Evening 1

Marriage under the Everlasting Covenant

Introduction

Human beings were created for relationships with God and with one another. In the Genesis account, the only conflicting element present that seemed to mar the perfection of all that God had created was the "aloneness" of Adam. Fittingly then, the creation of the two sexes brought a cry of ecstasy from the lips of the male (Gen. 3:23). Because the intimacy they were created to enjoy is too risky apart from the protection of covenant, God instituted marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NKJV).

The tragic account of Genesis 3 marks the cataclysmic effect of the Fall on marriage and family relationships. Wherever sin reigned, co-regency and mutuality would give way to domination, exploitation, blame, and hostility, even unfaithfulness, abuse, and violence.

Praise God, however, the curse of Genesis 3 is not the gospel! Jesus came to restore all that had been lost, including His original design for marriage. In her book *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings* (1956) Ellen White notes, "Like every other one of God's good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty" (p. 64). Commenting further in *The Adventist Home* (1980, p. 99), Ellen White makes it clear that God did not alter His design for marriage after the Fall, but rather that Jesus came to restore God's *original* design for the marriage relationship. We may even now experience this restoration as the kingdom of God comes to us in Christ. (See Matt 12:28; Gal. 1:4, Heb. 6:5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 3:17-19.)

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Jack O. and Judith K. Balswick, in their book *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (1991, p. 21), propose that Christian marriage and family relationships grow through sequential stages. These move from the limited commitments humanly possible on the wedding day (initial covenant) to a commitment based on a growing understanding and experience together of unconditional love, grace, empowerment, and ever deepening levels of intimacy (mature covenant). (See Figure 1, p. 50.)

The logical beginning point of any family relationship is a covenant commitment, which has unconditional love at its core. Out of the security provided by this covenant love develops grace. In this atmosphere of grace, family members have the freedom to empower each other. Empowering leads to the possibility of intimacy between family members. Intimacy then leads back to a deeper level of covenant commitment. . . .

Since relationships are dynamic and ever changing, . . . if a relationship does not spiral in to deeper levels of commitment, grace, empowering, and intimacy, then it will stagnate and fixate on contract rather than covenant, law rather than grace, possessive power rather than empowering, and distance rather than intimacy (Balswick and Balswick, pp. 21-22).

The following four evenings for couples are a means to enable married couples to move toward a maturing covenant.

The Nature of Covenant

The biblical model for Christian marriage and family relationships is God's everlasting covenant of love with His children (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32; John 15:12; 1 John 4:7-11). In the New Testament, marriage is elevated as a symbol of the union between Christ and the redeemed (compare Matt. 9:15; 25:1-13; John 3:29; Eph. 5:31, 32; Rev. 21:2, 9).

There are two words for covenant used in connection with covenant-making between God and His people in the Old Testament. One is the word used for a "last will and testament," a covenant where God makes all the promises and His people enjoy all the blessings (see Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40). Abraham—and all the believers of the Old Testament—were saved by a promise until Christ, whose last will and testament the everlasting covenant represented, died and the will took effect (Heb. 11:39; 9:15-22).

The other word for covenant in the Old Testament is a word used for a contractual agreement where an exchange is made between the two parties concerned, an arrangement whereby blessings come in exchange for obedience (see Josh. 24:24-27). God never intended to enter into a contractual agreement with His children, knowing our inability to hold up our end of any contract requiring faithfulness and obedience. However, when Israel insisted on a contractual response to His gesture of love, God went along with them to allow them to learn by

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experience the futility of promising God "all that You say we will do" (for an example, see Exodus 24:7-8). Just as a parent might allow a young child who was determined he didn't need any help tying his shoes to try until his failure caused him to turn to the parent for help.

Sadly, even bitter experience has often not been enough to teach God's children the futility of such responses. Rather than turn to the God of promise and blessing with a response of love and gratitude, God's people attempt to reduce covenant to rules they think they can keep. But mercifully, God continues to offer His covenant of promise, one which came to fullness in Jesus Christ (Jer. 31:31-33; Luke 1:68-74; Gal. 3:15-25; Heb. 9:15-22).

Study the following passages as a group. What characteristics of covenant can you identify? What implications do your discoveries have for understanding God's ideal for the marriage covenant?

Gen. 9:13, 16 Deut. 4:31	Covenant is initiated and confirmed with ceremony and symbol.
Gen. 17:7, 9 Eph. 5:8	Covenant calls for a response of love.
Ex. 2:24-25 Jer. 32:40	Covenant is extended in compassion and concern for the well-being and happiness of another.
Deut. 7:6-9 Isa. 54:10 Isa. 43:1-7 Hos. 3:1-4	Covenant is an exclusive, cherished relationship of love. Faithfulness and fidelity to covenant is a response to that love.
Deut. 4:23-31 Ps. 89:28, 34 Ps. 106:43-46	Covenant is not broken because of the failings of one's partner. It is a total, unconditional commitment. Though consequences may not be removed, covenant love is unconditional. Covenant love anticipates restoration and renewal in broken relationships.
Judges 2:1 2 Kings 13:23 Isa. 54:10	Covenant is tenacious. It hangs on through the tough times.

God's covenant is one of unconditional commitment. It is not contingent upon our response. God did not offer to enter into a "something for something" contract with Israel. His covenant is not extended only *if* His children keep up their end of the bargain. It is not based on performance. Rather God freely enters into a covenant relationship with each generation by His own choice and based upon His promises to generations before them, knowing all the risks.

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God's covenant is everlasting. It is durable. It is founded on His unconditional, changeless, selfless love. God introduces Himself as a faithful, steadfast God who keeps covenant forever. With Him, covenant always precedes expectations. He is a promise-keeping God, and His history as One who provides for all our needs is evidence of the surety of His covenant (compare Ex. 20:2, Phil. 4:19).

Jesus set the standard for covenant when He entered into a new kind of relationship with twelve men. One by one He called them to follow Him, and as they each stepped over the line and accepted His invitation, He committed Himself totally to them, loving them—even when they were unfaithful—with a changeless, selfless love; promising to be with them even to the end (Matt. 28:20).

Think of the difficulties faced by Jesus within this band. There was quarreling and arguing. They expressed doubt, hatred, and violence. There were among them the bigoted, the deceitful, the stubborn, the disloyal. They were not above manipulation to secure the best for themselves or to get their own way. They possessed chauvinistic attitudes toward women and children. They had an aversion to servile duties. Ultimately one was unfaithful to the point of betrayal, while the others abandoned Jesus in His darkest hour of need. Plenty reason enough in our day to break covenant, yet Jesus' commitment remains firm.

COUPLE ACTIVITY

Dennis Guernsey in his book *The Family Covenant* (1984) suggests that the usual wedding vows sound like they were written for angels, and that they would be more realistic if they read:

I take you to be my lawfully wedded spouse with the full knowledge that you are weak as I am weak; that you will be unfaithful as I will be, if not in actuality, then in fantasy; that there will be times when you will disappoint me gravely as I will disappoint you. But in spite of all of this, I commit myself to love you, knowing your weaknesses and knowing the certainty of betrayal (p. 23).

Talk "knee to knee" about your reaction to these vows. In what ways would these vows have been more realistic for your marriage in the light of your experience together as a married couple? Does the acknowledgment of the limitations of every fallen human being to keep covenant detract from the commitment being made? In what ways does this acknowledgment strengthen commitment? Compose "wedding" vows for yourselves now in the context of your experience together to this point. Find opportunity to recommit yourselves to each other with these vows.

ALTERNATE COUPLE ACTIVITY

The following comments were shared by a mother whose 23-year-old daughter offered the following explanation for her new live-in arrangement with her boyfriend of three years.

Joel and I have known each other too long to continue living apart. We believe we are right for each other and are pretty sure we will eventually get married. It's just that right now there are several good reasons why we should wait. Both of us have educational goals yet to complete. We can save quite a bit of money by sharing expenses. Furthermore, we have a lot of differences to work out—like domestic roles and deciding where we want to live and whether we want to have a family. We believe we can work these things out better if we are living together and can see on a day-to-day basis whether we are compatible. Neither of us ever wants to be involved in a divorce, so we are postponing marriage until we are sure of ourselves. Besides, for relationships to become really stable, each person has to have some room to change and to grow. In marriage, it's too easy to get locked in. Right now, living together is a big enough step.

In the light of your discussion about covenant, are the young woman's conclusions valid? What would you share with this young couple from your own experience about the importance and value of commitment in marriage?

**Evening 2
Living Together by Grace**

Louis Smedes begins his book *Forgive and Forget* (1984) with the following fable.

**The Magic Eyes
A Little Fable**

In the village of Faken in innermost Friesland there lived a long thin baker named Fouke, a righteous man, with a long thin chin and a long thin nose. Fouke was so upright that he seemed to spray righteousness from his thin lips over everyone who came near him; so the people of Faken preferred to stay away.

Fouke's wife, Hilda, was short and round, her arms were round, her bosom was round, her rump was round. Hilda did not keep people at bay with righteousness; her soft roundness

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seemed to invite them instead to come close to her in order to share the warm cheer of her open heart.

Hilda respected her righteous husband, and loved him too, as much as he allowed her; but her heart ached for something more from him than his worthy righteousness.

And there, in the bed of her need, lay the seed of sadness.

One morning, having worked since dawn to knead his dough for the ovens, Fouke came home and found a stranger in his bedroom lying on Hilda's round bosom.

Hilda's adultery soon became the talk of the tavern and the scandal of the Faken congregation. Everyone assumed that Fouke would cast Hilda out of his house, so righteous was he. But he surprised everyone by keeping Hilda as his wife, saying he forgave her as the Good Book said he should.

In his heart of hearts, however, Fouke could not forgive Hilda for bringing shame to his name. Whenever he thought about her, his feelings toward her were angry and hard; he despised her as if she were a common whore. When it came right down to it, he hated her for betraying him after he had been so good and so faithful a husband to her.

He only pretended to forgive Hilda so that he could punish her with his righteous mercy.

But Fouke's fakery did not sit well in heaven.

So each time that Fouke would feel his secret hate toward Hilda, an angel came to him and dropped a small pebble, hardly the size of a shirt button, into Fouke's heart. Each time a pebble dropped, Fouke would feel a stab of pain like the pain he felt the moment he came on Hilda feeding her hungry heart from a stranger's larder.

Thus he hated her the more; his hate brought him pain and his pain made him hate.

The pebbles multiplied. And Fouke's heart grew very heavy with the weight of them, so heavy that the top half of his body bent forward so far that he had to strain his neck upward in order to see straight ahead. Weary with hurt, Fouke began to wish he were dead.

The angel who dropped the pebbles into his heart came to Fouke one night and told him how he could be healed of his hurt.

There was one remedy, he said, only one, for the hurt of a wounded heart. Fouke would need the miracle of the magic eyes. He would need eyes that could look back to the beginning of his hurt and see his Hilda, not as a wife who betrayed him, but as a weak woman who

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needed him. Only a new way of looking at things through the magic eyes could heal the hurt flowing from the wounds of yesterday.

Fouke protested. "Nothing can change the past," he said. "Hilda is guilty, a fact that not even an angel can change."

"Yes, poor hurting man, you are right," the angel said. "You cannot change the past, you can only heal the hurt that comes to you from the past. And you can heal it only with the vision of the magic eyes."

"And how can I get your magic eyes?" pouted Fouke.

"Only ask, desiring as you ask, and they will be given you. And each time you see Hilda through your new eyes, one pebble will be lifted from your aching heart."

Fouke could not ask at once, for he had grown to love his hatred. But the pain of his heart finally drove him to want and to ask for the magic eyes that the angel had promised. So he asked. And the angel gave.

Soon Hilda began to change in front of Fouke's eyes, wonderfully and mysteriously. He began to see her as a needy woman who loved him instead of a wicked woman who betrayed him.

The angel kept his promise; he lifted the pebbles from Fouke's heart, one by one, though it took a long time to take them all away. Fouke gradually felt his heart grow lighter; he began to walk straight again, and somehow his nose and his chin seemed less thin and sharp than before. He invited Hilda to come into his heart again, and she came, and together they began again a journey into their second season of humble joy (pp. xiii-xv).

["The Magic Eyes, A Little Fable" from *FORGIVE AND FORGET* by Louis B. Smedes. Copyright © 1984 by Louis B. Smedes. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.]

Forgiveness: Healing the Wounds We Don't Deserve

Living together by grace is possible only as we grasp the radical concept of forgiveness. It is a complex process with many facets, only one of which we will be discussing: the process by which a person who has been deeply hurt can come to forgiveness and find personal healing. It is this process that alone can pave the way for reconciliation in a broken relationship. It can provide the balm to soothe a hurting heart, whether the other person involved ever asks for forgiveness or full restoration in the relationship is ever achieved.

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(Note: Consequences of actions cannot always be removed. Forgiveness cannot make things as though the painful event never occurred, and it should never be proffered as the reason a person should remain in a destructive, abusive situation. But forgiveness can remove the sting from the wounded place so that in time a person can think of the events and the other person involved and the memory will not give rise to incapacitating levels of pain.)

All that we know about forgiveness we learn from God. The most just Being in the universe—the great Lover of rightness and fairness—is also the great Forgiver. In His justice, God could not wink at our sin and overlook it. Sin's consequences must be borne. Rightfully, they should be borne by sinners. But God in His mercy "made Christ to be sin for us" (1 Peter 2:23, 24; 2 Cor. 5:21). Ellen White puts it eloquently:

Christ was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed" (*The Desire of Ages*, 1940, p. 25).

Forgiveness is painful, it is costly, it is hard. Forgiveness forever changes the life of the forgiver. It will never be the same again. Lasting impressions are made, permanent scars are created, but willing forgiveness can over time bring healing for the hurts we don't deserve. So Christians are encouraged to leave repayment with God (Rom. 12:17, 19) and called to forgive one another (Eph. 1:7).

Of all the Bible writers, the physician Luke has the most to say about forgiveness. Perhaps he found in this radical principle of the kingdom the balm for which he was searching to heal the hurts of his patients' hearts. Consider the following passages (most from Luke's gospel) as a group. What understanding about forgiveness do they offer?

Luke 5:18-26 Jesus first heals the wounds of the heart with forgiveness before touching the paralytic's broken body. Before we can become forgivers, we must hear Christ's words, "Your sins are forgiven," and experience the inner healing for our own sins which He freely offers.

Luke 23:34 Forgiveness is present even before the offender asks for it. At the cross the fountain was prepared from which we may draw. Genuine forgiveness is a free gift offered in love by one who has been hurt. It may never be asked for, but it is there. It provides a reservoir of refreshing for our own souls and courage to those who have inflicted pain to come and ask for forgiveness. To have forgiven already, whether or not full reconciliation takes place, can bring great peace to the person who has been hurt.

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Luke 17:3-4 Forgiveness is not about keeping score. It is not a single, one-time act. Rather it is a *process* which moves a person from deep hurt, often through deep pain and much anger and resentment, to healing.

"If you never even want to forgive, never even try to remove a hateful memory and restore a loving relationship, you are in a lot of trouble.

"If you are trying to forgive, even if you manage forgiving in fits and starts, if you forgive today, hate again tomorrow, and have to forgive again the day after, you are a forgiver. . . . In this game nobody is an expert. We are all beginners" (Smedes, 1984, p. 151).

Luke 7:41-48 Little forgiveness produces little love. Much forgiveness produces much love.

Matt. 18:21-35 When people grasp the magnitude of the forgiveness offered them by God, they will cease relating to others as if they must exact payment for every harm done to them and will become forgivers out of gratitude.

The key to this parable is the magnitude of the debt. One talent equals US\$1000. A 10,000 talent debt equalled an amount which was 12 1/2 times the annual tax of all five Jewish provinces paid to Rome! In those days a laborer typically worked for 20 cents a day. The debt was impossible for the debtor to pay! The magnitude of our sin also constitutes an impossible debt. But we are so like the debtor when we plead with God for more time and opportunity to change, to prove ourselves! And how like the debtor we are when we measure out to one another our meager forgiveness as though God has measured it out to us in small rations.

This parable is about comprehending the magnitude of God's forgiveness, freely granted us in Christ. As we stand under the cascading fountain of His forgiveness, we may reach out to those who have hurt us, with forgiveness which we do not have of ourselves. As Ellen White comments in *Christ's Object Lessons* (1941), "The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own" (p. 251).

COUPLE ACTIVITY

Complete the following statements individually, then share your responses privately as a couple, dialoguing together about forgiveness in your relationship as husband and wife.

New thoughts I have had about the meaning of forgiveness in marriage . . .

Times in our marriage when your forgiveness has meant so much . . .

Areas where forgiveness is needed in our relationship to make way for new beginnings . . .

Contemplate together this statement from Dennis Guernsey, *The Family Covenant* (1984):

If there is no commitment, no covenant, there is no will to go on. If there is covenant, you can forgive seventy times seven. You can endure when everything inside you says quit.

Covenant does not consign us to the past and its defeats. Covenant orients us to the hope that our covenant-making God can make all things new in Christ (p. 25).

ALTERNATE COUPLE ACTIVITY

Gordon & Gail MacDonald, in their book *Till the Heart Be Touched* (1992), recount a modern story of commitment.

David and Lisa Johnson were an average couple with two young sons. One day Lisa became ill with what seemed to be a bad bout with the flu. After a few days she recovered sufficiently that her doctors released her from the hospital, though she was still extremely weak. There was no indication for Lisa that the worst was yet to come. But upon her arrival at home, her husband David gave her a letter revealing his extramarital affair with a homosexual lover and his recent discovery that he was HIV positive.

David tells how he expected her to react with hysteria and order him out of the house. In advance he had arranged with a psychiatrist to see her and had already packed his bags. She stunned him with her response. "David, do you love me?" When he responded affirmatively, she continued, "Then let's work this out." Forgiveness was a slow, painful process during which David made his break with his illicit lover, and God's grace did its work of healing and reconciliation. When Lisa became ill again, it was evident that the HIV virus would soon take her life. The couple decided to share their secret with friends. Some were horrified and terminated their relationships with the couple. Others came closer to try to understand this incredible story of forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing in a marriage relationship. David and Lisa said their story was about commitment, a nearly forgotten kind of commitment which meant "going the extra mile until all possibilities are exhausted, mercy has been extended to the repentant, and life's worst has been forced to produce good" (p. 51).

The MacDonalds reflect, "Not everyone would be able to do what Lisa did, but what happened will always be a benchmark as to what is possible when someone takes commitment seriously—a lot more seriously than many people in our age take it" (p. 52).

What is your response to this story? In what experiences of your marriage has God been given the opportunity to produce good out of life's worst? Are there ways even now that you could give Him that chance?

Evening 3
Empowering One Another for Abundant Life

Theirs was a fabled romance. The young Robert Browning returned from the Continent to find England astir over a new edition of Miss Elizabeth Barrett's *Poems*. The poet-playwright was an adventurous, much-travelled bachelor, the poetess a fragile spinster sealed away from the rest of the world by a controlling father and her ill health.

Although a porcelain glaze of propriety glossed every page of the letters which passed between them, deep admiration and growing devotion created warm hues beneath the surface. In time he ventured, "I love you," and pleaded to visit her. She pulled instinctively away, warning that "her poetry is the best of her." "It has all my colours;" she wrote. "The rest of me is nothing but a root, fit for the ground and the dark." But love persisted, and Elizabeth slowly surrendered to it. For years she had scarcely left her bedroom. Little could she have imagined that in the empowering encouragement of Robert's love she would soon travel, publish widely, function capably as wife and mother, and take her place as an empowering force in his life as well.

From childhood (Elizabeth disclosed in her letter of November 12, 1845), she had hungered for an "irrational" love, for she could not imagine herself worthy of any other. To find herself loved apart from pity for her condition or admiration for her genius was "something . . . between dream and miracle," but she flourished under Robert's sunshine.

Many secrets lurked behind the red-brick front of the Barrett residence at No. 50 Wimpole Street. Mrs. Barrett was dead, the doors to her rooms locked the day of her death by a single command from her husband, who forbade the mention of her name from that day forward. Mr. Barrett, from all outward appearances a devoutly religious man, rigidly controlled his family and demanded obedience in the name of biblical authority. It was a household that tiptoed about his overpowering presence, fearful of touching one of his "vibratory wires" and setting off the rocking tremors of his explosive anger and his punitive wrath.

Elizabeth was one of only three of his twelve children who ever dared defy him and marry. It was a decision for which her father and her brothers, except for George, would punish her for the rest of her life. Even the news of her father's death brought the mixed emotions of grief and relief, for though a family friend reported that he had in the end "forgiven" his married children, even prayed for their well-being, tragically it was only in hearsay about his prayer life that his children learned that he ever acknowledged their existence once they challenged his ultimate authority.

Elizabeth did not make her decision to marry without fear and trembling. Her inner turmoil reflected not only trouble with her father, but her ongoing battle with shame. She once admitted that she had toyed with the idea of letting Robert "try me for one winter," then offering

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to walk out of his life forever if she proved a disappointment. On another occasion she considered that perhaps she "should choose to die this winter—now—before I had disappointed you in anything."

For Robert, the decision had been simpler. "What I mean by marrying you," he concluded in his letter of August 3, 1846, "it is, that I may be with you forever—I cannot have enough of you in any other relation." She tells him he is blind, but for now she would accept his blindness. Having searched the length and breadth of Robert's devotion for hidden cracks and chinks, she eventually succumbed completely to an unconditional love that had at last "conquered fear, or worn it out."

Though accounts of their love and devotion will always bear the markings of a fairytale, the Brownings also lived with trouble. Despite their romance, there was "plenty of room for battles," Elizabeth confided to her sister. There were five miscarriages, too many brushes with death for the fragile Elizabeth, and the ever-lengthening shadows of family difficulties with Wimpole Street.

The day or two following the birth of their only son Pen, news arrived that Robert's mother was gravely ill. In reality, she had died before the letter arrived. She had been Robert's joy as a child and an ongoing source of encouragement through all the ups and downs of an artist's career. She had believed in him when the acclaim of others had faltered. It was to her that he first entrusted his works, knowing she would be gentle in her criticism, lavish with her praise.

It was one of the darkest moments of Browning's life; there was little that would cheer him. Now the roles of the two lovers were reversed. It was Robert who was preoccupied with death, and it fell upon Elizabeth to guide him through the shadows back into the world.

Many passages in their letters to family and friends attest to her patience, her tact, her understanding. But when all else failed, she held one last gift to call him from his intense grief—the sonnets she had written three years before about their love. She had been shy about showing them to Robert then, but knowing the high value he set upon her poetry, she now presented him with her journal and the question, "Do you know I once wrote some poems about you?"

Later he wrote of standing at the front window, lifting his eyes from time to time to gaze at the tall mimosa tree in full blossom in the garden, as he read from the little book of love poems penned in his wife's fine hand.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach . . ."

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Empowerment had come full circle in their relationship as Robert, the fountain of love and enabling from which Elizabeth had drawn so deeply, now turned to his beloved for strength.

[All references to the Brownings' correspondence are from Kintner (1969), cited in Irvine and Honan (1974).]

Talk together as a group about insights into the empowerment process in marriage which you have gleaned from this story and other empowering relationships you have witnessed.

The dictionary defines "empowerment" as "enabling" or "establishing power in another." Balswick and Balswick (1991) describe the empowering process as ". . . the active, intentional process of enabling another person to acquire power. The person who is empowered has gained power because of the encouraging behavior of the other" (p. 28).

Empowering is the process of helping another recognize strengths and potentials within, as well as encouraging . . . the development of these qualities. It is the affirmation of another's ability to learn and grow and become all that he or she can be. It may require that the empowerer be willing to step back and allow the empowered to learn by doing and not depending. The empowerer must respect the uniqueness of those being empowered and see strength in their individual ways to be competent. Empowering does not involve controlling or enforcing a certain way of doing and being. It is, rather, a reciprocal process in which empowering takes place between people in mutually enhancing ways. . . .

Empowering is the action of God in people's lives (p. 28).

Jesus summed up the purpose of His mission among human beings as one of empowerment. In John 10:10 (NIV) He said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." It is the mission to which we are also called in our relationships with one another.

John explained Jesus' mission of empowerment in this way: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13, RSV). Power to become children of God, according to John, did not come as a result of birth into the right family, or through obedience. Rather the empowerment Jesus offered was of a different nature. Jesus came to make it possible for sinful, powerless human beings [despite all our pretense to power in our relationships with one another] to become, "in Him," the children of God (compare Gal. 3:26). Christ then becomes our enabler, our empowerer (compare Phil. 4:13, Eph. 4:12-16).

An understanding that power is not intrinsic to human beings, but is a gift from God, calls for a radical change in the use of power in human relationships. Jesus rejected the widespread

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misconception that persists wherever sin reigns that power is a commodity that is in limited supply. (Hence it is regarded as something to be coveted, acquired by any means, carefully guarded once acquired, and used wherever possible to further one's own desires and to control others.) Jesus subtly overturned all prevailing notions of hierarchy and power in family relationships by making agape love the foundational principle of His kingdom (1 John 4:7-11). His affirmation of the appropriate use of power "to serve others, to lift up the fallen, to forgive the guilty, to encourage responsibility and maturity in the weak, and to enable the unable" (Balswick and Balswick, 1991, p. 29) sets the standard for the Christian's use of power in relationships. (See, for example, Matt. 20:25-28; John 13:3-15; Phil. 2:3-8; Eph. 5:21-29; 1 Peter 3:7).

A corollary concept is the New Testament emphasis on "one-anothering," that is, love one another deeply from the heart (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:11); seek the good of others (1 Cor. 10:24); look to the interests of others (Phil. 2:4); bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2); bear with one another (Col. 3:13); pray for one another (James 5:16); build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11, Rom. 14:19). Gordon and Gail MacDonald (1992) call this "making an investment" in each other, and they place it at the heart of the empowering process:

Empowering has to do with the investments people make in one another. It is what happens when we concern ourselves with the question, Is the person with whom we are friend, spouse, or family a growing person because he or she is in intimate connection with us? (p. 159).

COUPLE ACTIVITY

Empowerment and marital growth rarely "just happen." Spend the rest of the evening together as a couple: reflect on the implications of this evening's discussion of Christ's call to be empowerers of one another in your marriage and create a marital growth plan for the next 12 months. Begin by writing separately, and complete the following three sentences. Think in terms of your relational goals as well as the more tangible things you might like to accomplish.

Things I want for you . . .

Things I want for me . . .

Things I want for us . . .

Share what you have written with each other. Decide together on the top three priorities in each section and how you will empower one another and together achieve these mutual goals and desires.

Evening 4
Stretching Toward a Full Measure of Intimacy

Ironically, in an age of ever-expanding communications technology, crowded cities, and overpopulation, many people, even within their marriages, confess they feel lonelier and more isolated than ever. Caught up in the whirlwind of modern life, they speak wistfully of relationships that they wish could fill the void, but with a resignation in their voices calculated to protect them from disappointment. Yet the "vast and empty inner ache to know and be known" (Achtemeier, 1976, p. 133), remains.

Intimacy—the experience of knowing deeply and being known by significant human beings in our lives—is not optional for human beings. Either we experience it, or we will spend our lives developing coping mechanisms to survive as best we can.

Gordon and Gail MacDonald (1992) believe that intimacy became an issue the moment we were conceived (p. 22). For some, there may never come any improvement on the intimacy experienced in the womb, where from the earliest moments of life they floated in warm fluid, — secure, warm, and nourished in a total embrace close to their mother's heart.

A Kikuyu chief from East Africa, even at 80 years of age, speaks with satisfaction of his continued intimacy with his mother and remembers how as a small babe he was tied snugly to his mother's back:

My early years are connected in my mind with my mother. At first she was always there: I can remember the comforting feel of her body as she carried me on her back and the smell of her skin in the hot sun. Everything came from her. When I was hungry or thirsty she would swing me round to where I could reach her full breasts; now when I shut my eyes I feel again with gratitude the sense of well-being that I had when I buried my head in their softness and drank the sweet milk that they gave. At night when there was no sun to warm me, her arms, her body, took its place; and as I grew older and more interested in other things, from my safe place on her back I could watch without fear as I wanted, and when sleep overcame me I had only to close my eyes (Ashley Montagu, 1971, p. 79).

Intimacy remains at the center of our journey, even into adulthood. Studies proliferate about the importance of human intimacy to basic health and well-being, even to survival. As a leading specialist in psychosomatic medicine at the University of Maryland explains, "Simply put, there is a biological basis for our need to form human relationships. If we fail to fulfill that need, our health is in peril" (James J. Lynch, *The Broken Heart: The Medical Consequences of Loneliness*, 1979, quoted in MacDonald, 1992, p. 24).

Hopefully, as we mature, our quest for closeness will include a balanced concern for the

Mini-Seminar Resource

needs of others as well as for our own. But while it is instinctive for us to seek intimate relationships for ourselves, the capacity to meet the intimacy needs of another must be learned.

One fundamental aspect of God's character is that He is a social being who delights in relationships with His creation. To be made in His image is to be created for relationships, born for intimacy with Him and with each other. Scripture is replete with evidence that God wants to know us and be known by us.

The testimony of Scripture is sure: God knows us through and through.

Jer. 1:5 He knew us before we were born.
Ps. 139:15

Ps. 103:14 He knows our makeup, for we are His creation.
John 2:25

Ps. 44:21 He knows the secrets of our hearts.

Ps. 139:1-4 He knows our thoughts and our words before they are spoken.
Luke 11:17

Ps. 69:5 He knows everything we have done.
Ex. 3:7 He knows our sufferings.

Ex. 33:12 He knows us by name.
Isa. 43:1
John 10:3

God is also a God who reveals Himself to us, that we may know Him (Rom. 1:20). He revealed Himself fully in Jesus (John 1:14; 14:8-11; 15:15; Hebrews 1:1-3).

Elizabeth Achtemeier (1976) concludes:

Certainly we never can know one another as completely as our Lord knows us. Yet, because marriage is to be the imitation of Christ's love for His church, we are to know our mates with a knowledge approaching His. We too are to be able to say, "I know my own and my own know me."

It is this task of developing such communication and intimacy within our wedded unions which forms another of the major responsibilities of Christian marriage partners. By working at that task, by constantly striving to know and be known, . . . Christian partners deepen their intimacy and their commitment to each other and thereby live out their commitment to Jesus Christ (p. 134).

Mini-Seminar Resource

Human beings are unique in God's creation in their ability to use language to communicate and thus know one another intimately. In his book *The Secret of Staying in Love* (1974) John Powell outlines five levels of communication, which can be likened to a person coming out of the forest into a clearing. In the deep recesses of the forest, little about a person is open to view. But as a person moves toward the edge of the forest, more and more light penetrates through the trees, and more and more can be seen. Out in the open spaces of a clearing, the person steps into full view.

1. Cliche Level

The first level of communication that John Powell speaks of is the cliché level. At this level, the person is still figuratively deep in the forest, sharing in mere chit chat with another. Couples use chit chat to enter and exit one another's presence and to "test the waters" as they contemplate deeper levels of communication, to determine whether or not to proceed.

Conversation at this level includes comments like, "How was your day?" "Sure glad it's Friday!" "Aren't those flowers beautiful?" "It's good it rained today; the lawn is so dry!" Nothing of any personal significance is revealed at this level. But it is useful in a relationship as we move in and out of one another's lives.

2. Facts Level

Moving only slightly out of the recesses of the forest of personal privacy, a couple communicating at the facts level report the news and events of their daily lives to one another. It is at this level of communication that we make one another aware of the facts necessary to care for the details of life together as a family and to coordinate everyone's needs.

Conversation at this level runs along these lines: "Joe has a dental appointment right after school tomorrow and will need to be picked up fifteen minutes early." "I will be home late this afternoon because I need to stop at the market." "Jeff got his final examination scores today and he did really well in history." "The chain came off my bicycle and I had to push it home." "The pastor called and the Church Board meeting has been changed to Monday night."

3. Ideas Level

At this level the couple figuratively take further steps toward the sunlight of the clearing. Here disclosure cautiously moves beyond mere facts to the sharing of ideas. "I prefer the darker color to the lighter one." "I think we should see what books are available at the library before we spend the money to order these." "You could push your bicycle over to Uncle Jim's house and maybe he could help you fix the chain." "Let's plan to do something as a family Monday night since Mom's meeting has been cancelled."

4. Feeling Level

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While the first three levels are important to the smooth running of a household, intimacy cannot be achieved when communication is limited to them. Couples limited to these levels may enjoy "meeting minds," and share considerably at the intellectual level. But to this point, emotions are still carefully guarded. It is at the feeling level that couples really take significant strides toward the light, moving toward intimacy with every step.

At this level, feelings are attached to information. With the disclosure of feelings, couples become increasingly more vulnerable in their relationship, risking personal safety for intimacy. Someone has said that feelings can be sorted into four main categories: glad, mad, sad, and afraid. Learning to share negative feelings in a constructive manner particularly represents an important step toward intimacy.

5. Self-disclosure Level

It is at this level of communication that intimacy is built. The term *intimacy* is often equated with sexual intercourse. But to clamp so narrow a limitation on the term is to cheat it of its fullness. Scripture uses the imagery of "naked and unashamed" to describe the intimacy of marriage in God's original design. To stand naked and unashamed in a relationship is to risk being fully known that you might stretch toward fully loving. Nothing is hidden. There is no reason to hide. Each feels safe in the other's love, able to risk any disclosure because of trust built over time. This is no experience of illusion, however. As Elizabeth Achtemeier (1976) explains it:

In the biblical faith, there is never any illusion that you and I are saints, at least not according to the usual definition of the term. When we share that faith, we therefore do not take with us into marriage unrealistic expectations about what we are like or are apt to do. We are, according to the Christian faith, a unique blend of saint and sinner, capable of the highest and most tender love and equally of the lowest spite and selfishness. Usually both sides of our natures are in full operation at any given time. . . .

If we can acknowledge that in our marital unions, if we know we are both saint and sinner, if we realize that we live by the grace of love, rather than by earned merit and admiration, then we have the freedom to come out from behind our facades and to bare our souls, warts and all (pp. 136-137).

Interestingly, however, the Hebrew verb "to know," is the word used in the Old Testament for sexual intimacy (compare Gen. 4:1; 1 Sam. 1:19). It is the same language used to speak of God's desired relationship with His people (Ps. 139:1; Jer. 9:3; Hosea 13:4; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:3). It is much more than mere knowledge *about* a person. It connotes a profound relationship *with* another. One who *knows* God and is *known* by Him experiences a sense of total acceptance, assurance, and peace. *Knowing* one's spouse and being *known* provides for the most complete, fulfilling, and at the same time pleasurable and satisfying experience known to humans. Physical intimacy then becomes a "bright thread of joy woven in the ordinary colors

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of daily life" (Grace and Grace, 1980, p. 81), a celebration of the vitality that surges in us as His creation as male and female, of the experience in knowing intimately—which we pursue together in marriage, and of the joy which is beyond belief as we enter into intimacy with the Giver of every good gift.

Discuss together as a group some of the barriers to this kind of "terrifying closeness" (Achtemeier, 1976, p. 136) between couples today. For starters:

- fear of the response that sharing at this level or about this issue might elicit
- fear of rejection or ridicule
- resignation that no one listens, so why talk
- inability to be in touch with or express feelings
- too much "togetherness," need space to develop as persons
- withholding communication to punish
- lost touch with each other over time
- fatigue, time pressure
- cultural norms
- unwillingness to be drawn from the pursuit of personal development and desires
- the reality of life that there is an ebb and flow in relationships, seasons when we move close and taste intimacy at the deepest levels and other moments when the best we can do is live together side by side

COUPLE ACTIVITY

Write separately and then share alone as couples on the following:

1. Ways in which I feel I really know you . . .
2. Ways in which I feel known and understood by you . . .
3. Barriers we are experiencing that inhibit intimacy . . .
4. Areas in our relationship where there is still distance, intimacy to be stretched toward . . .
5. Things I can do to bring down the walls between us . . .

Mini-Seminar Resource

ALTERNATE COUPLE ACTIVITY

On a large sheet of paper, create a map of your journey toward intimacy together over the years of your marriage. What events mark the valleys, the mountain peaks? During what seasons in your marriage have you made the best progress? What circumstances sent you off on a detour? Where are you right now? Where would you like to be tomorrow? next month? next year? What can you do to encourage new levels of intimacy between you?

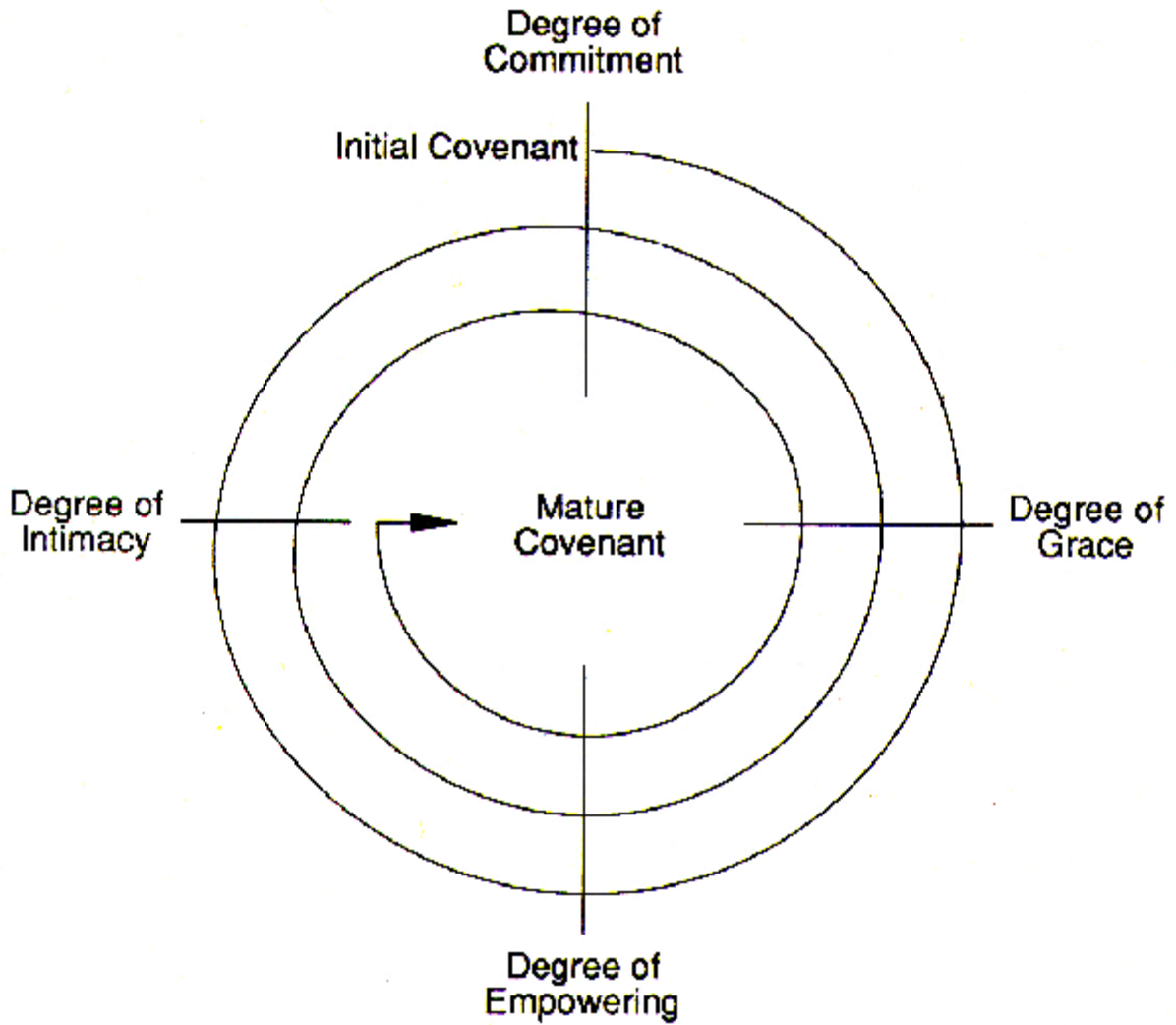
A closing thought —

To plumb the depths of one another in search of intimacy in marriage is a rewarding experience within God's plan for every Christian couple. But we must not forget that we are also called as individual Christians and as couples to more than a quest for personal joy. As children of the light, we are challenged to turn from the total pursuit of our own happiness to become involved in one another's lives. All that we achieve together toward wholeness and intimacy must eventually be placed in service, service which "outlasts our waxing and waning, and that finally issues in an eternal kingdom . . . of love and joy and righteousness" (Achte-meier, 1976, p. 150). It is to this end that couples come together for growth and move apart from the circle of support and encouragement they have created together to become the salt of the earth.

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FIGURE 1 **Marital Growth in Christian Marriage**



Adapted from Jack O. Balswick & Judith K. Balswick,
The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home, Grand
Rapid MI: Baker Book House, 1991, p. 21. Used by permission.



Parenting to Empower Children

by May-Ellen Colon

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Theme

While children must first learn to trust their parents, parents must also learn to trust their children. This is the key component of the empowering process. (Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 244.)

Objective

To identify a parenting path that leads to the empowerment of children in the home setting.

How to Use This Resource

These resources can be used in the development of a workshop for parents in any suitable setting.

Materials Needed

Chalkboard, easel, or overhead projector, Bible for each participant, concordances, dictionary, handouts (masters provided).

Resource Book

The book *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), by Jack O. & Judith K. Balswick provides an excellent additional resource for leaders.

Program Ideas

If the given time frame and group size allows, take time for each person in the group to introduce himself/herself and to tell the names and ages of their children and briefly share one thing about each child.

When possible, present this seminar as a husband and wife team, thus enabling you to share more effectively your struggles and lessons learned in parenting. If you are a single parent, sharing your real life experiences in parenting can help other single parents, and make two-parent families more aware of some of the struggles single parents face. Whoever you are,

Mini-Seminar Resource

be yourself. You don't need to be an expert to hold this seminar; you are merely endeavoring to share some insights you have learned as you have studied and experienced parenting. Make it clear that you are holding this seminar to provide a forum and a setting for all the parents present to share with the group their ideas and experiences. Thus we can all help one another. As you begin, pray together and invite God's Spirit to be present, to bless the program, and to empower each parent who has come.

Suggested songs:

"Without Him," by Mylon R. LeFevre (*Advent Youth Sing*, No. 208)

"I Need Thee Every Hour," by Annie Hawks and Robert Lowry (*New SDA Hymnal*, No. 483)

"I Need Thee, Precious Jesus," by Frederick Whitefield and Chretien D'Urhan (*New SDA Hymnal*, No. 484)

Presentation Helps

Agree-Disagree Icebreaker

To start the group thinking about Christian parenting, invite them to respond to the following agree/disagree statements. Do not discuss the statements now or offer your opinion. (They are designed to be somewhat ambiguous and controversial, and to get people to start thinking.) Tell the participants to put their thumbs up if they agree, and down if they disagree.

Agree___ Disagree___ Spare the rod and spoil the child.

Agree___ Disagree___ When children don't turn out well, it is their parents' fault.

Agree___ Disagree___ Power in the family must reside with the parents.

Agree___ Disagree___ Parents must change their style of parenting as their children mature.

(Adapted from John & Millie Youngberg, *Family Wellness Digest*, 1993, p. 53.)

Definition of Terms

This seminar has been called "Parenting to Empower Children." Ask the group "What is empowerment?" Write the ideas expressed on a chalkboard or easel. Use the dictionary to summarize.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines "empower" as "to give power to; authorize; to enable."

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The search for power is a universal quest at all levels of existence. People desire to influence or control the behavior of another (Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 28).

The secular view is that power is a commodity which has a limited supply. . . . Traditional thinking about parent/child relationships is also based upon the false assumption that power is in limited supply. Thus, it is often feared that as children grow older and gain more power, parental power is automatically reduced (Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 29).

Empowering is a biblical model for a use of power which is completely contrary to the common use of power in the family or in society at large. *Empowering can be defined as the attempt to establish power in another person.* Empowering does not necessarily involve yielding to the wishes of another person or giving up one's own power to someone else. Rather, empowering is the active, intentional process of *enabling another person to acquire power.* The person who is empowered has gained power because of the encouraging behavior of the other (Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 28).

Thus, contrary to popular belief, power shared is power multiplied. Parents who empower their children toward responsible interdependence have prepared them to live as healthy adults capable of taking increasing charge of their own lives as they mature while at the same time building and maintaining a strong network of healthy relationships with others, including family. Parents whose style of parenting either breeds unhealthy dependence or premature or excessive detachment from the family will in the end diminish parental power and influence as relationships are strained and appropriate development in the children is thwarted.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Consider the following passages: Psalm 27:14; Psalm 29:10,11; Ex. 3:11,12; Ex. 4:1-4, 10-12; 2 Chron. 14:11; John 1:12; 2 Cor. 12:9; Ezra 1:1-6; Jer. 1:1-10; Neh. 8:10; Phil. 4:13; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 4:20; Eph. 1:17-19. What conclusions can you draw about empowerment from a biblical perspective? Are there some additional texts regarding empowerment that come to mind? Give small groups approximately 15 minutes for this exercise, then share ideas as an entire group.

Let's Make it Personal

Invite a couple of people to share briefly with the entire group a personal experience of a time when they felt empowered by the Lord in a special way. Or, you can tell a brief story from your own experience. If no one can think of an appropriate story, this experience of May-Ellen Colon could be used:

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As I was constructing this seminar on "Parenting to Empower Children" I had a great struggle. I was in the midst of chemotherapy treatments, which came after my surgery for cancer, and I was experiencing the promised side effects. I would read and then sit at my computer to write. I felt dizzy, and my mind would go blank. As hard as I tried, nothing would come to mind. This happened for several days. I prayed for help. Emotionally, I was discouraged and frustrated. Physically and mentally, I was constantly tired. I had no "get up and go." My creativity "got up and went." Spiritually, I was crying to God to empower me to finish this project, for it had to be finished soon. Finally, I threw myself down on my knees beside my bed and opened my Bible to Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens [or, empowers] me" (NRSV). I told the Lord that I really believed what He said in that verse, and I was sure that the only way I would finish this seminar on empowerment was if He empowered me to do it. I lifted my head to heaven, and showed Him my hands. I told Him that He could use my hands to type and my head to think of what to type, even though it was a very foggy head. At that moment He broke through the fog. I thanked Him and sat down at my computer. The thoughts started flowing. My hands started typing. He freed me and empowered me to do this project that I just couldn't do on my own.

In order to empower our children, we ourselves must first go through the wonderful experience of being empowered. This experience must be in our heart—a real part of us. (See Deuteronomy 6:5, 6.) Then we will long to have our children enjoy the same experience. Christ wants to empower them too. He can use you and me, their parents, to be a channel through which to empower them.

Considerations Along the Path to Empowering Our Children

Parenting Styles

At Andrews University's Family Life International, 1993, Kay Kuzma shared a definition of parenting that we can all appreciate: "Just err and err and err again, but hopefully less and less and less." There is no one foolproof method that develops perfect children. Parenting is an art, not a science. However, it will be helpful to briefly investigate what the social science literature is saying about various parenting styles and their effect on children. (Comments here are adapted from chapter 6 of Balswick & Balswick, 1989. As you present these concepts, you might want to add brief personal thoughts or experiences to illustrate the various styles of parenting.)

Research on the functioning of small groups indicates that there are two basic styles of leadership: (1) socioemotional and (2) instrumental. Socioemotional leadership is person-oriented, concentrating on developing a healthy relationship between members of the group. Instrumental leadership focuses on tasks that need to be accomplished in the group.

Mini-Seminar Resource

Both styles of leadership are important in the family. Socioemotional parenting focuses on developing a warm positive relationship between parent and child. Instrumental parenting focuses on tasks and content, which need to be completed and learned, aiming at imparting beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Styles of Relationship-Oriented Parenting (Socioemotional Parenting)

(Refer to Handout 1, which may also be made into an overhead projector transparency. Adapted from Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 99. Used by permission.)

Handout 1 presents four styles of relationship-oriented parenting. (This concept was introduced in the *1993 Family Ministries Planbook*, p. 41.) There are two dimensions—control and support—which can be categorized as low or high. Low control parents have no control over their children. The children do as they please, with no restrictions. Parents who are high in control keep track of where their children are and expect obedience. The support dimension is also classified as low or high. Low-support parents aren't very good at showing their children that they love them. High support parents, on the other hand, are very good at showing love to their children.

Neglectful Parenting. The bottom right section of the diagram represents neglectful parents. Both control and support are low. They give neither limits nor emotional support to their children. For various reasons, their children are neglected. Many latchkey children live under this type of parenting. Either the parents are too busy to properly meet the needs of their children, or just don't care. Some parents in this category feel it is easier to give up than to maintain control. These parents also have a difficult time showing their love. It is interesting that recent literature suggests that "most recruits to the authoritarian cults come from neglectful homes" (Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 99).

Authoritarian Parenting. The top right section of the diagram portrays high control, low support parenting, which is known as authoritarian parenting. These parents are very strict, and demand obedience, but emotional support, love, and warmth between parent and child is lacking. The children are forced to comply with their parents' demands. They are not given opportunities to make choices. When they get away from their parents, they don't know how to behave. This style of parenting is found wanting, for "the object of discipline is the training of the child for self-government" (E. G. White, *Education*, p. 287).

Permissive Parenting. When control is low and support is high, we have permissive parenting, as shown in the bottom left section of the diagram. These parents give their children lots of emotional support. They say, "You are such a good girl" even when her behavior needs correction. Anything goes. No limits are set.

Authoritative Parenting. The top left of the diagram exhibits authoritative parenting—high on control and high on support. This method of parenting is a combination of the best

Mini-Seminar Resource

qualities in the authoritarian and permissive styles. Authoritative parents have good control over their children and do well in showing their love and support. Studies show that children who have authoritative parents have good self-esteem, respect for authority, are less vulnerable to the counterculture (drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, etc.), and are more apt to adopt the value system of their parents (Flowers & Flowers, 1993 *Family Ministries Planbook: Families Reaching Families*, p. 39).

Relationship-oriented parenting, however, is only part of the picture in parenting. We must also consider the dimension of teaching our children.

Styles of Parenting With Regard to the Teaching Process (Instrumental Parenting)

Handout 2 illustrates four styles of parenting with regard to how parents teach their children. (Adapted from Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 97. Used by permission.) The two dimensions here are action and content, both of which can also be categorized as high or low. Some parents are high in action. They become actively involved and demonstrate the type of behavior they want their children to adopt. Other parents are low in action, making no definite effort to demonstrate or make clear what they expect from their children. Parents who rate high in the content dimension share with their children definite beliefs, values, ideals, rules, principles, etc., while low-content parents don't bother to teach their children anything.

Neglecting. The bottom right section of the diagram illustrates a neglectful parenting style. Parents who fit in this category are low in both content and action. They don't bother to teach anything definite, and are not involved in demonstrating what they expect from their children. Such children are left to figure out on their own what is right and wrong, and how they will behave.

Teaching. The top right section of the diagram indicates a parenting style that is high in content and low in action. These parents impart values, rules, ideals, etc., but do not necessarily practice what they preach. Such parenting causes disrespect for parents whose lives don't match what they verbally teach. This style often breeds rebellious children.

Modeling. The bottom left section of the diagram signifies a parenting style that is low in content and high in action. The children are left to learn their values, rules, principles, etc., by observing their parents' lives. There is no direct verbal teaching. It's true that modeling is more effective than mere teaching, but studies show that models have more effect when they *model and talk* about what they are doing (Donna Habenicht, 1992).

Discipling. The top left section of the diagram indicates a parenting style that is certainly the ideal, one that is high in content and in action. Parents who fit into this category teach their children by word and by deed. The word *disciple* is related to the word *discipline*. Sometimes *discipline* is confused with *punishment*. The question often arises over whether one should physically punish children by spanking, or other means. Proverbs 13:24 says "He who

Mini-Seminar Resource

spares the rod hates his son" (NIV). In Old Testament times, a rod was used by the shepherd as an instrument to guide ignorant sheep, not to beat them into submission. The verse concludes with ". . . but he who loves him [his son] is careful to discipline him." Sometimes a spanking, administered in love, might be necessary, but the primary form of discipline should be positive guidance. As previously stated, the term *discipline* is related to the term *disciple*, which refers to someone "who accepts certain ideas or values, and leads or guides others to accept them as well" (Balswick & Balswick, 1989, p. 98). Discipling is truly positive guidance.

In most homes there is a mixture of parenting styles. For example, one parent might be more of an instrumental parent who expects obedience and teaches the children what they need to know. At the same time, the other parent might be more relational with them. Most parents are by nature stronger in one type of leadership than the other, but we can all support one another and grow.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Discuss with your spouse, or the person next to you, what style of parenting you grew up with, using the diagrams on Handouts 1 and 2 as a guide. Identify the styles of parenting that you think you are using in your family. In what ways do you and your spouse complement one another? What areas need strengthening in your overall parenting style?

God as Model Parent

We have reviewed the social science literature on the effects of various parenting styles. Now we turn to the Scriptures for a biblical model. Most students of Scripture on parenting agree that the biblical model for Christian parenting has its roots in how God functions as a Parent.

GROUP ACTIVITY

In groups study the passages listed on Handout 3 with each group taking a different group of Bible texts to study. Report to the whole group what your group discovered about the various roles God models as the ideal Parent.

Support (provision for all our needs, unconditional love, and chances to begin again) and control (guidance and correction) are significant components in this biblical model of parenting—paralleling the style recommended in the social science literature. Note also God's modeling as well as clear teaching of all He desires for His children.

(If your group desires to study further the biblical model for family relationships, see the marriage mini-seminar on pages 29-50 of this planbook. There you will find a presentation of

Mini-Seminar Resource

the theological basis of family relationships in the setting of marriage: covenant, grace, empowering, and intimacy. These concepts apply equally well to parenting.)

Christian Parenting: Empowering to Maturity

Let's return to our discussion of empowerment and what it means to parent in ways that empower children. We said that parents who empower their children (1) prepare them to live as healthy adults capable of taking increasing responsibility for their own lives as they mature, and (2) enable them to build and maintain a strong network of healthy relationships with family and others.

We have also seen that parents who combine an *authoritative* and a *disciplining* parenting style are the most effective at empowering their children overall. The combination of "love and limits," "kindness and firmness," with deliberate teaching and parental modeling greatly increases the likelihood that children will be empowered toward healthy adulthood, and that they will likely espouse family values for themselves as they mature.

We turn now to look at how parent-child relationships, even within the authoritative and disciplining styles, must change over time as children mature, if the empowerment process is to be complete.

Balswick and Balswick, adapting a concept from organizational management research, conceived an empowering curve that illustrates necessary changes in the parent-child relationship as the child matures if empowerment is to occur. (See Handout 4, which may also be made into a transparency.)

Notice that horizontally on the illustration (at the top), a time line of the child's development toward maturity unfolds from infancy to adulthood. You will see that if empowerment is to be achieved, parental control must decrease gradually across this time line. Parents who understand this and who willingly decide to release control over time, will not be as distressed by their child's desire to become more and more independent, nor will they create in their children as much unrest and rebellion as they seek to differentiate themselves from their parents and become their own persons. As children are being enabled to take more and more responsibility for their own lives as they mature, the more capably they will be able to negotiate the steps from childhood to adulthood, and the more readily parents can release control without concern.

Vertically, the illustration looks at changes that must occur in the parents' teaching style and emotional-relational involvement with the child in the accomplishment of the everyday tasks of a child's life (that is, household chores, homework, hygiene, etc.). Balswick & Balswick call this "socioemotional support." Note that "socioemotional support" does *not* refer to a child's

Mini-Seminar Resource

need for love and unconditional acceptance; this need never decreases over a lifetime. This kind of support is crucial at any age to healthy parent-child relationships, though it becomes more mutual as the child matures. It should be noted also that while one style of parent-child interaction may be perfectly appropriate and healthy for one stage of the child's development, it may be unhealthy and inappropriate at another. (For example, it is healthy and normal for a mother to bathe a one-year-old toddler. However, it would be a totally inappropriate gesture when that toddler becomes twelve!) Special situations may also affect the appropriateness of the various styles at various stages. (To continue our example, if the twelve-year-old meets with an accident and is in a body cast, a parent may need to assist in the bathing process temporarily even at that age.)

In the diagram the broken lines separating the different parenting styles and maturity levels are there to make it easier to explain these concepts. Characteristics from one parenting style may sometimes overlap with another. Rarely do we operate in one style all the time, especially when we are in transition from one style to another. This applies to kids, too. At one time they may want to be treated as if they were older and at another time they may want to be treated as if they were younger. There is a reason we haven't attached specific age levels to these maturity levels. Kids develop at different speeds. Don't pigeonhole or label them.

The parenting style typically associated with the very young child is described as *telling*. The communication in this style is basically one way—parent to child. Parents tell their children what to do, and where, when, and how to do it. This style is necessary because very young children do not know what is best for them and need clear directives. The level of parental control is high at this stage, though socioemotional support is minimal. Again, we must remember that this low level of socioemotional support refers to a low level of involvement on the part of the parents in discussing the "whys" and reasoning with the child about what he or she is told to do. In other words, this low level of socioemotional support refers to a low level of involvement on the part of children in determining their own destiny, because they are not capable of doing so (that is, what they will have for breakfast, what they will wear, when and where they will take a nap, etc.). Low socioemotional support does not mean a low level of affection and love. Unconditional love—lots of it—is always crucial to healthy development, though it may be expressed in different ways as children mature. Even at this stage, children may be offered opportunities to be involved in determining their own activities in the sense that as a reward for compliance parents may offer some control to the child. (For example, "If you take your nap now, you may play in the sprinkler when you wake up," or "If you finish your dinner in time, we can look at your new book before it is time for your bath.")

Parents move toward a *teaching* style as children develop toward low and moderate levels of maturity. As children grow, they become more willing to do various tasks, but don't automatically know how to do them. As the diagram indicates, teaching involves moderately

Mini-Seminar Resource

high levels of control and socioemotional support. This means parents are still taking the initiative, but children are able to respond with more independent action. For example, a family rule may be established that each person in the family is responsible for making his or her own bed. The child may be willing to comply, but may not know how to make a bed. The parent in the teaching mode will work alongside the child, explaining and demonstrating how it is done. It may be some time before the child is able to make the bed at the level of perfection that the parent would like, but he or she is taking more initiative. One boy was heard saying to his father, "I don't know why mother has us make our beds. She is going to make them over anyway." Perhaps it is just as challenging for parents to adapt to their children's ongoing maturity, as it is for children. We must give them room to try, to make mistakes, to learn, giving them much-needed emotional support in the process. In the bath illustration used earlier, with some assistance children at this stage may be able to learn how to remove their own clothing, soap their bodies, etc., albeit with parental supervision and assistance still very much necessary. Children at this stage often like to ask questions and learn through dialogue. Communication while teaching is two-way (as opposed to the one-way communication of the telling style), but much of the communication is still done by the parents since most of the necessary skill and information resides with them.

You will notice that the next advancement is to a *participating* parenting style. At this stage parents become like player-coaches who directly participate in activities with their children. They are still instructing their children, but they are also modeling the desired behavior at the same time. This style of parenting is well suited for children who are moderately to highly mature, and should be in place by the preteenage years. (As an example of how parents may move in this direction Dr. Ruth Murdoch tells the story of a mother who was talking with her little girl about what she would wear for the day. The mother asked the little girl to look at what she herself was wearing. She asked, "Is this my Sabbath dress?" The little girl observed that it was not and together they concluded it was not Sabbath. "Is this an outfit for work and play?" the mother queried. It was, they decided. They also discussed the weather; today was going to be hot. So the mother sent the child to her room to choose a "work and play" outfit suitable for a hot day, making several suggestions of options the mother knew were available. In a few minutes the little girl returned with a party dress which was her favorite. Patiently the mother helped her understand why it was a lovely dress but inappropriate for the day's activities. Then she sent the little girl to make another choice. This time she emerged with a pair of shorts and a shirt and was rewarded with her mother's affirmation of her choice.)

By the preteenage years, most children have developed many abilities, but may lack confidence to attempt more independent action. When parents participate with them in tasks and responsibilities, taking only the initiatives necessary to motivate and enable the child, the young person gains confidence and is encouraged to do things in his or her own individual way. As a result, the amount of parental control is reduced and the child is empowered toward

Mini-Seminar Resource

responsible independence. (Karen Flowers tells of learning painfully that to remain overly in control at this stage is to rob a child of self-confidence and the reward of accomplishment, and it temporarily thwarts the empowerment process. Her son, Jon, asked for ideas for a science fair project, but instead of offering only the assistance requested, Karen became so involved in the project it virtually became her own creation with Jon doing the "helping." Jon won first prize that year, but the recognition held little for him since his mother had done too much of the work.) Parents who participate sufficiently to offer encouragement, support, and consolation when needed, but who allow their children to learn through trial and error and to experience the joys and satisfaction of doing something themselves, are empowering their children.

The last stage of parenting involves a *delegating* style. This style is for highly mature children, who are willing and able to do tasks and take responsibilities on their own. Little control or parental involvement (socioemotional support) is needed. To continue high task-related emotional support would be interpreted by the child as a sign of the parent's lack of confidence in the young person. (For example, a college student would typically be able to gather and pack his or her own things for college. While mother might offer to do a bit of washing and ironing or father might carry a few things to the car, to actually do the packing as one might for a child of nine going off to youth camp, would be inappropriate and may well send a message parents wouldn't desire to send about how they view their child's abilities.)

One of the great rewards of moving into the delegating style is to suddenly realize that you as a parent are often empowered (encouraged, strengthened) by your child as you offer support to them. Balswick and Balswick observe that "willingness to learn from and be empowered by one's children is a sign of parental maturity. Reciprocal giving and receiving is an indication of a mature relationship" (p. 107).

GROUP ACTIVITY

In small groups, discuss where you are in the empowerment process with one of your children. Is your position appropriate to the child's level of maturity? How can you grow in your abilities to empower as a result of today's discussion? What one thing have you already done as a parent that brings you the most encouragement? What evidence do you see at this stage that your child is moving toward healthy adulthood? What concerns do you have?

Summary

Yes, it is true that a combination of high parental control and support produces the most competent children, as suggested earlier. The empowerment curve doesn't contradict this idea, but it refines it. It suggests that with increased maturity, children will need less support and control. This does not mean that we as parents will withhold unconditional support for our

Mini-Seminar Resource

children when they have matured, but only that they will become less and less dependent upon us for support. We can't always parent in the same way, be it ever so ideal at certain stages. We must be willing to make adjustments in our parenting style, and take into account the developing maturity of our children. If we don't do this we will retard the growth of all involved. "Maturation of the parental style is an essential factor in the mutual empowering process" (*Ibid.*).

Parenting that empowers children to maturity is a concept similar to the biblical portrayal of discipling. Jesus gathered around Him and trained disciples, empowering them to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, NIV). Gordon & Gail MacDonald beautifully illuminate this idea with the following thoughts:

Little by little, Jesus invested in His disciples. In the early stages of their relationship, He simply invited them to watch. Then He asked them what they were learning. It was not long before He was asking them questions, making them think. Then there came the time for "trial runs." When they returned, He would quiz them closely, making necessary corrections and suggestions.

What was the aim of all this? It was preparation for the day when He would give His mission of world evangelization over to them. He not only expected to give it to them, He looked forward to the fact that they would do greater works and accomplish more than He had. That would be the payoff of His investment.

Empowering may be one of the most difficult challenges we face in relationships—giving our best to others and then watching them move out ahead to accomplish what we've helped them learn—perhaps even better than we can do it. This is the essence of what some call discipleship. (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1992, p. 185. Used by permission).

The MacDonalds share a story from their own family which portrays what empowerment does for a kid:

When our son, Mark, turned sixteen and began to drive the family vehicles, he approached his father with the question of whether he could use our pickup truck for a big Friday evening date.

Not only was he relatively inexperienced as a driver, but the date was in the heart of Boston, and the drive into the city would be made at the peak of rush hour.

"Son, let me think about your question for a couple of hours and then get back to you," Gordon said. We talked about it and decided that, although there would be two nervous parents throughout that evening, it was time to trust our son's judgment.

Mini-Seminar Resource

Two hours later, father and son talked again. "I've decided that you can use the truck on Friday," Gordon said, "but on one condition."

"What's that, Dad?" Mark asked, obviously ready to agree to anything.

"I want to drive the entire route with you the day before, at the same time of day. What's more, I want you to demonstrate that you know how to handle any situation you might face."

"No problem, Dad," Mark responded.

On Thursday night, Mark and his dad started driving north on I-95 to pick up I-93, which would take them into the heart of the city.

Traffic was moving slowly when Gordon suddenly said to Mark, "Son, you have a flat front tire. Did you know that?"

"No, I didn't, Dad," Mark answered. "There's nothing wrong."

"You didn't hear me, Bud. You've got a flat tire because I said so. Now let's move over to the side and change it."

When they were parked on the side of the freeway, Gordon got out and sat on the guardrail. Mark came around and said, "What do you want me to do?"

"Well, if I were your date, I guess I'd want you to do whatever is necessary in order to change the tire. And I'd want you to get started, because it looks like rain is coming."

Shaking his head in consternation because the front tire looked just fine, Mark crawled under the truck to find the spare tire and jack. A few minutes later he crawled back out from the rear of the pickup and said, "Dad, where's the jack?"

"I'm your beautiful date, son," Gordon responded. "I'm not expected to know where the jack is. Sounds like you've got a problem."

Mark continued to look—under the truck, behind the seat, under the seat. For ten minutes he searched for a jack he'd never had reason to locate before. Finally he found it under the hood, and before long he had the front of the truck up in the air. It was then that Gordon pronounced the tire whole again, and they started toward Boston once more.

Mini-Seminar Resource

When the two reached the exit ramp Mark was to take, Gordon informed him that the ramp was closed due to construction. "No, it isn't," Mark said.

"I just closed it," came the reply.

Mark had to find another way to reach his destination, without benefit of map or directions. When he did, they parked the truck in the parking lot and immediately exited, much to the surprise of the lot attendant.

On the way home, Gordon pronounced the alternator sick, and that forced the two men over to the side to discuss what one would do in such a situation. When they reached home, they had lots to laugh about.

But the next evening when Mark left on his big date, he drove off confidently. He had been empowered through his dad's investment of time and teaching. He knew how well he could perform in any untoward [adverse] situation, and he knew he enjoyed the confidence of his father. He had proved himself, and both he and his dad knew what he could do. This intimacy between a father and a son was built on an empowering transfer of knowledge and the confidence to use it.

An empowering relationship flows like this: The elder leads the younger, the stronger assists the weaker, the expert teaches the novice, the experienced shares with the first-timer. One pours into the other the knowledge and the confidence necessary for maturity and effectiveness. It is an investment of sorts, a transfer of resources that results in growth. (*Ibid.*, pp. 182-185. Used by permission).

Finishing the Seminar

If there is time, ask if there are any questions or comments on the material that you presented. It would be well to close by inviting each person to choose a partner in the group and share together what they got out of the seminar, then pray together.

A Few Empowerment Quotations to Enjoy:

"All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 827).

"By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 182).

Mini-Seminar Resource

"As the will of man [and woman and child] cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333).

"Every human being . . . is endowed with . . . power to think and to do" (*Education*, p. 17).

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Suggested Reading

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- Larson, R., & Larson, D. with Gillespie, V. B. *Teaching Values*. Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992. (This book contains many excellent activities for parenting support group followup sessions.)
- Glenn, H. S., & Nelsen, J. *Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World: Seven Building Blocks for Developing Capable Young People*. Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1989.

Styles of Relationship Oriented Parenting

(Socioemotional Parenting)

Support

		High	Low
Control	High	Authoritative	Authoritarian
	Low	Permissive	Neglectful

Adapted from Jack O. and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991, p. 99. Used by permission.

Styles of Parenting with Regard to the Teaching Process

(Instrumental Parenting)

Action

		High	Low
		High	Discipling
Control	Low	Modeling	Neglecting

Adapted from Jack O. and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991, p. 97. Used by permission.

GOD AS MODEL PARENT

Study the following passages to determine the roles in which God functions as a Model Parent.

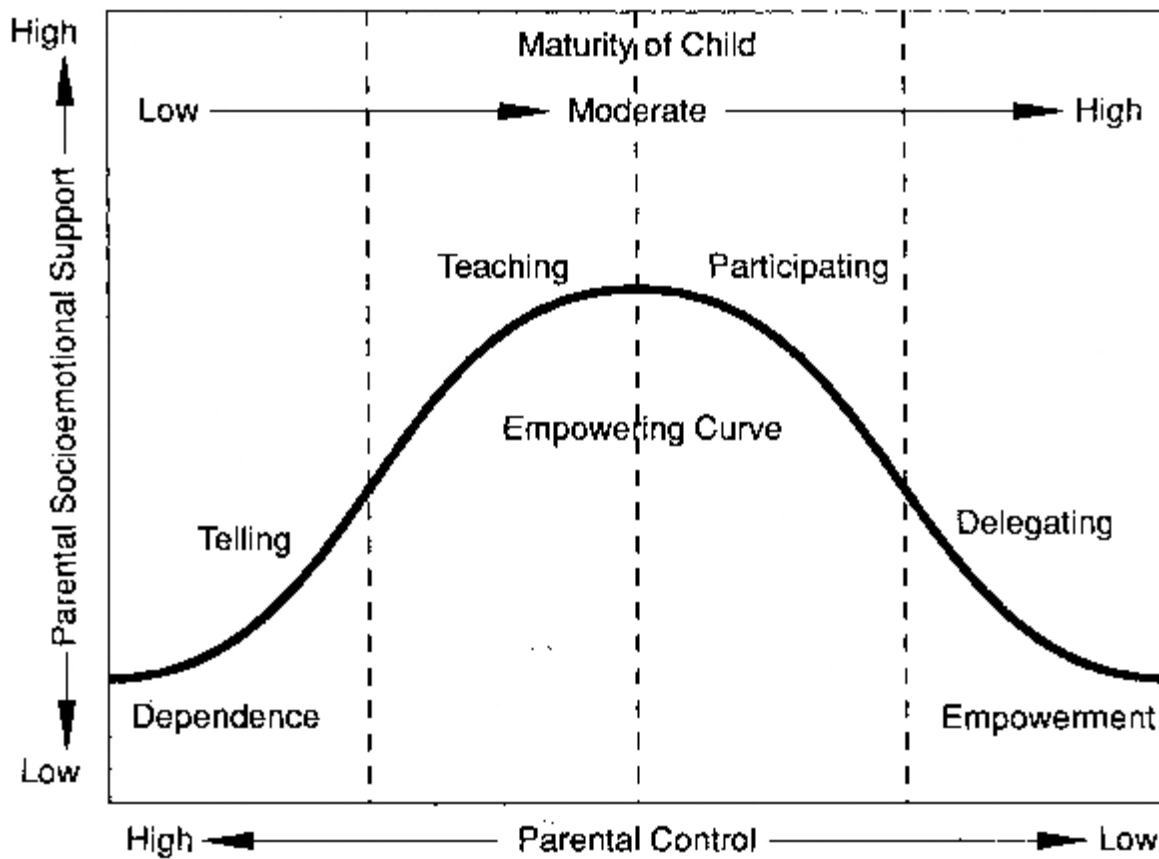
Deuteronomy 1:31
Exodus 16:11-12
Exodus 17:6
Exodus 20:2
Hosea 11:4
John 10:26-28
Philippians 4:19

2 Samuel 12:1-12
Psalm 39:11
Psalm 139:10
Proverbs 3:11-12
Matthew 16:22-23
Hebrews 12:10
Revelation 3:19

Deuteronomy 6:1
Psalm 25:4
Psalm 27:11
Isaiah 2:3
Hosea 11:3
Matthew 7:29
John 8:28

Psalm 32:5
Psalm 86:5
Daniel 9:9
Matthew 26:28
Luke 23:34
John 3:16-17
Ephesians 1:7

Christian Parenting: Empowering to Maturity



From Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988, p. 287. Used by permission. Adapted by Balswick & Balswick, 1991, p. 105.



Family Transitions

Introduction

Weddings, funerals, baby dedications, baptisms and other life cycle ceremonies offer unique opportunities for ministry to families. Family therapist Edwin H. Friedman (1985) says that "the family itself . . . is going through the passage, rather than only some 'identified' celebrant(s), and the family may actually go through more change than the focused member(s)." Such rites of passage, he continues, "function as 'hinges of time.' All family relationship systems unlock during these periods. More doors open or close naturally between various family members than can be swung at other times, even after years of agonizing endeavors" (p. 164).

Family members tend to view such events with such significance that they will often hurdle barriers of time and distance to participate. They will reopen communication with each other in extraordinary ways, go to great expense to take part in celebrations, even traverse great distances to be present. Friedman sees religious significance in such life cycle ceremonies and unprecedented opportunities for healing and growth.

Where clergy can utilize the opportunity presented by such family life-cycle crises to foster increased mutual respect for the personal integrity of one another, the *religious* functioning of everyone actually reaches a higher level. . . .

For example, let us say a family happens to be seeking help on some problem regarding a child, a marriage, a physical illness, or an aged person. If during the course of that counseling the family begins to go through a passage, then because of the loosening up of family relationship systems during such periods, the time is especially propitious for facilitating change even if the event seems totally unconnected with the focused problem. This is healing at its best (pp. 167, 168).

What follows is a list of family transitions and how family ministry may be built around them. For much of the material we are indebted to "Family Transitions," *Resources for Family Ministry*, Southeastern California Conference, 1990.

ADOLESCENCE

One of the most exciting, challenging, and difficult times of transition for families is adolescence. Beginning with the junior high school years and extending all through high school, it is a time marked by major changes in the relationship between teenagers and parents.

Ideas for Family Ministry

Teenagers struggle through the process of developing their own sense of identity and choosing the values that will guide them toward adulthood. Parents struggle to find balance between "letting go," and providing appropriate structure as their teenager begins to assume more independence and responsibility. This is indeed a time when families can benefit from the nurturing support of their church.

Avenues of Ministry

- Parent-teen communication seminars.
- Special seminars for teens on topics like dating, how to be a good friend, how to talk to your parents, what to do when it seems that everything is falling apart, how to choose a career, developing self-esteem, sexuality.
- Programs that provide opportunities for youth to be together in various settings—Bible study, social events or outings, projects, special church services or Sabbath School programs.
- Parent-teen outings.
- Involve young people in church service and programs. They can greet people, distribute bulletins, take up the offering, read Scripture, provide special music, offer prayer.
- Involve youth in planning personalized and innovative church services.
- Plan a special youth church service once a quarter.
- Visit the young person at home to acknowledge this important time in his or her life.
- Give priority to developing a youth program if your church does not have such already.
- Share information on programs and services of the church that are targeted for youth and extend personal invitations for them to participate.
- Attend school events or drop by school for lunch once in a while just to get to know youth and let them know you are interested in them.
- Give a gift book to young people as they join the youth or earliteen Sabbath School division.
- Give a gift book to parents of youth who are entering junior high and high school years.
- Provide appropriate books, tapes, videos in the church library on parent-adolescent relationships.

BIRTHS/ADOPTIONS

The arrival of a new child is an occasion anticipated with great joy or perhaps with great apprehension. The pleasure of ushering a new life into the world and watching a child develop and grow is accompanied by a deep sense of responsibility. Through preparation and planning some of the rough spots of this transitional time may be smoothed and the celebration of a new

Ideas for Family Ministry

person be made more meaningful. The church is in a position to provide support and contribute to the celebration.

Avenues of Ministry

- Childbirth preparation classes.
- Parenting classes.
- Class for first-time parents.
- Family financial planning seminars.
- Baby dedication.
- Seminar on family worship responding to such issues as, How do we worship as a family and as a couple?
- Pastor or church leaders visit prospective parents with gift or book from church. This may be a good time to talk about baby dedication service.
- Letter or card of congratulations both at time of anticipation and at birth.
- Provide a shower of gifts and well-wishes for prospective parents.
- Hold a personalized baby dedication service.
- If available, give a subscription to a Christian journal on parenting.
- Offer an alternate Sabbath School class for new parents.

DEATH

Death causes families to grieve the loss of their loved one. The period of grief affords an opportunity for family ministry. Grief is intense and may last for years until the process of grieving has been sufficiently accomplished. Anger, blaming, poor communication, all build pressure on the family. Some marriages may end in divorce following a child's death. In his article on the death of a child, author Greg Hubbard (1992) provides tangible directives to those who would offer comfort.

Avenues of Ministry

- Visit grieving families and give them opportunity to talk about their loved one.
- Remember and speak about the loved one with the family. Keep the memory of the loved one alive. Look for opportunities to mention his or her name. Ask about his or her favorite sports, interests, friends. Of parents grieving the loss of their child Hubbard (1992) says, "They long for someone, anyone, to speak their child's name just once without apologizing for it. They wish someone would talk about their child."
- Don't try to answer the "Why" question. Say, "I don't know why. All I know is that I miss your loved one too, and I care about you."
- At a time when things seem out of control, help the family to maintain as much control over the situation as possible.
- Assure them that the things they are experiencing are normal.

Ideas for Family Ministry

- Discourage friends or family from disturbing the loved one's personal effects. These are associated with the memory of the loved one and handling (and at the right time disposing of) them is part of appropriate grieving.
- Help would-be comforters to understand the grief process and to realize that those suffering from the death of a loved one need a number of months, perhaps years to heal.
- Remember grieving ones in prayer during worship at church for a period that is commensurate with their grief.

DIVORCE

Divorce constitutes a substantial transition point in many families today. Generally it follows a period of turbulence in marriage and family living. Over the years, the church has come to recognize that those who have experienced brokenness of relationship have need of loving ministry from the followers of Christ, who understands and accepts people in all human conditions. Ministry is necessary for the personal needs of adults who are involved as well as the personal needs of the children of divorce. In addition there are single parenting needs in homes with children.

Avenues for Ministry

- Visit divorced individuals, offering pastoral care. Loving ministry must be provided irrespective of the individual's behavior and experience. Often such ministry may be best effected by listening, allowing the hurting one to sort through feelings, and assisting him or her to explore options.
- Help the divorced individual to identify resource persons who can provide necessary specialized help such as pastoral care, personal counseling or therapy, social services, legal counsel.
- Assist the divorced individual in establishing a personal support group.
- Provide a divorce recovery seminar.
- Provide a single-parenting seminar.
- Encourage increased sensitivity on the part of church members to the needs of single parents. Avoid stereotyping "family" in ways that discriminate against single parents.
- Seek ways to assist single parents with needs related to reduced income, child care expenses, work overload, and child-rearing issues.
- Continue to involve divorced persons in church life, helping them to heal from damaged emotions, to trust and be trusted.
- Be sensitive to the needs of children of divorce to be treated normally, yet with an awareness of the hurt, rejection, and confusion they often feel inside. Help to lift the feeling of blame for the divorce which children often feel.

GRANDPARENTING

One of the happiest experiences of the life stages may be the expectation and the arrival of a grandchild. This is often marked by sharing the news, pictures, and stories. As the grandparents share this with church family there are some ways the church can provide support and meaning to the occasion.

Avenues of Ministry

- Have a grandparenting seminar.
- Begin an 'adopt-a-grandchild' program for children without grandparents or for grandparents who could benefit from such an experience.
- Include grandparents in the child dedication service.
- Send a letter or card of congratulations.
- Provide an appropriate gift book.

GRADUATION

Not only does graduation mark the completion of a long course of study, but it also heralds a new beginning. High school graduates face a wide variety of new tasks and responsibilities. Some of these include participation in the political process, choice of a career or further education, selecting a life partner and establishing a home, redefining relationships with parents, and determining the role that God and church play in their lives.

Avenues of Ministry

- Seminars on how to choose the 'right college for you' and how to finance your education.
- Seminars on career choice.
- Seminars/programs on personal financial management and budgeting.
- Social programs, especially for those not attending college, that provide opportunities for social interaction and developing relationships with people of their own age.
- Send a card or letter of congratulations from the church.
- Visit with the graduate and talk over plans for the future.
- Provide information on Christian colleges.
- Have a 'going away to college' shower of gifts and well-wishes for students about to embark on their first boarding school experience.

REMARRIAGE

The marriage of people who have been married previously, especially if there are children involved, needs support and encouragement from the church family. There are often

Ideas for Family Ministry

conflicting emotions. "People who remarry are generally poorly prepared for the special complications of remarried family life" (Messinger, 1990). Remarried families constitute a high-risk group with breakdown often occurring within the first five years at rates higher than the rate of first marriage divorce.

Remarried issues include concerns over children—their financial support, the custodial arrangements, and parenting by the step-parent. Other issues include personal resolution of the married partners' feelings about the prior marriage, boundary issues between families, family financial management, and concerns about revising wills, insurance, and property assets.

Too often differing views about divorce and remarriage held by church members constitute additional stumbling blocks for the remarried family. Divorce and/or remarriage seem at times to be unpardonable sins beyond which there is no possibility of spiritual life or fellowship. It will test our concepts of community and our understanding of grace to the utmost perhaps, but the gospel must be allowed to work its work of repentance, confession, forgiveness, and renewal. A growing population of divorced individuals begs for a ministry of redemption. The church could help in numerous ways.

Avenues of Ministry

- Shower of wedding gifts and well-wishes. Children of the couple could be included in the festivities.
- Letter or card of congratulations and encouragement.
- Seminars or programs on stepfamily issues.
- Introduction/recognition during the worship service of a family that has just merged.
- Give a gift or book in recognition and support of the new family.
- Present gift or 'Sabbath candles' or flowers in a house-warming setting.

RETIREMENT

Few events in life are greeted with such mixed feelings as retirement. While it represents the culmination of years of effort and accomplishment, there is also apprehension and even resentment with the fear of what lies ahead. Anticipation of new roles and new sense of meaning may bring joy. The church can join in the celebration and affirmation of those who retire.

Avenues of Ministry

- Retirement preparation classes.
- Financial planning for retired persons.
- Grandparenting classes.
- Health classes for those in retirement years.
- Give special recognition during worship service.
- An appropriate gift might be given to the new retiree.

Ideas for Family Ministry

- Visitation by pastor before and a few weeks after retirement date.
- Monthly meetings and/or activities for retired persons.

SCHOOL DAYS

As children grow older, one of the events that marks a significant transition for both parent and child is the beginning of school. For many children this may be the first major venture into the world on their own. It is both exciting and frightening for both child and parents. They will form new relationships with other significant adults and further develop their own social skills through interacting with other children. For parents, there is the excitement of watching their child grow, mixed with apprehension at no longer being able to `shield' him or her.

Avenues of Ministry

- Arrange for an orientation program for new students and parents. Cover what a typical school day is like, the goals of the teacher and school, how parents can give input and be involved in the program.
- Provide a parenting seminar that focuses on school-age children. Include material that would be of interest to parents who will return to work full or part-time.
- Work in cooperation with Home and School leaders to provide continuing programs for students and parents.
- Take time during worship service at the beginning of the school year to recognize students starting school for the first time.
- Give a small gift that will help kindergarten or first-grade children remember that God is with them in this new venture.
- Plan worship services so that school-age children can participate in a meaningful way. This could include a children's story or special feature. Children might assist with parts of the program: helping receive the offering, handing out bulletins, reading Scripture reading, providing special music.
- If possible have Children's Church periodically. Such a service, usually held at the same time as the regular worship service but geared for school-age children, helps children to know that church is not just for adults, but for them as well.
- Send a card or note to the child to recognize this special time.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The celebration of wedding anniversaries can be a time of real significance and joy, particularly when milestones are reached such as the twenty-fifth or fiftieth anniversary. The tenth anniversary of a second marriage of an older couple may also be a very significant time.

Ideas for Family Ministry

Avenues of Ministry

- Recognition during worship service.
- Recommitment services.
- Give rose or appropriate gift in a special presentation.
- Ask for letter of congratulations from conference president for significant anniversaries.
- For a fiftieth anniversary letter, notify local officials/heads of state who often will provide letters of commendation and recognition.
- Sponsor an anniversary party, particularly if children live far away. A conference telephone call with those children may be a possibility in some areas.
- If children are unable to be present, invite them to send letters to the church which can be read to their parents at an appropriate time during the service.

References

- Friedman, E. H. (1985). *Generation to generation: family process in church and synagogue*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Hubbard, Greg. "Helping parents grieve." *Leadership*, Winter Quarter, 1992.
- Messinger, Lillian. "Reflections on a study of remarriage: ten years later." *Marriage Encounter*, July/August, 1990.



Resources on Change and Empowerment

Books

Balswick, J. O., & Balswick, J. K. (1989). *The family: a Christian perspective on the contemporary home*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 325 pp.

A key resource for family ministries. Establishes a solid theological and social foundation for the study of the family. Covers marriage, parenting, sexuality, communication, social dynamics (empowerment, stress, divorce, remarriage), and family issues in modern society.

Bustanoby, A. (1978). *But I didn't want a divorce*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 174 pp.

A serious attempt to deal with the issues of divorce from a biblical Christian perspective. Helpful for those recovering from the trauma. Especially good on the emotions that accompany divorce, handling loneliness, and parenting your child after divorce.

Carter, E. A., & McGoldrick, M., editors. (1980). *The family life cycle: a framework for family therapy*. New York: Gardner Press, Inc. 468 pp.

A conceptual overview of the life cycle of the middle class American family with definitions of tasks required of family members at each stage of the cycle. Suggestions for working with families who are having problems negotiating these tasks are included in each chapter.

Edwards, H. G. (1991). *The immigrant family*. Oshawa, ONT: Maracle Press, Ltd.

Addresses the crises in the lives of first and second generation immigrant families. Helpful material on handling changes in family roles, marital roles, and parenting.

Friedman, E. H. (1985). *Generation to generation: family process in church and synagogue*. New York: The Guilford Press. 319 pp.

Covers family dynamics across the life cycle and how to change an individual by coaching him or her to deal differently with spouse or extended family.

Landorf, J. (1981). *Changepoints*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company. 190 pp.

A spiritual road map through turning points and turmoils of life. The author displays her extraordinary empathy and keen insight, as she reminds us that life, with its multiplicity of

Resources

changes, is a "never-ending time of needing the Lord." The real question becomes not what *you* will do with another "change point" but what *God* will do with it.

Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Ballentine Books. 363 pp.

Explores and explains the specific periods of personal development through which all human beings must pass and which together form a common pattern underlying all human lives.

May, G. G., MD. (1988). *Addiction and grace*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. 200 pp.

Explores the psychology and physiology of addiction and maps a process of change based on the Christian understanding of grace. Dr. May examines the "processes of attachment" that lead to addiction and describes the relationship between addiction and spiritual awareness. He also details the various addictions from which we can suffer, not only to substances like alcohol and drugs, but to work, sex, performance, responsibility, and intimacy.

McMillan, L. D. (1986). *An owner's guide to male midlife crisis*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc. 119 pp.

Addresses issues related to the midlife segment of the lifecycle—physical changes, emotions—and their effects on personal life and marriage. Includes two chapters by Karen McMillan on the female mid-life.

Schiff, H. S. (1987). *The bereaved parent*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 160 pp.

A book for parents at any stage of anguish: facing an imminent death, shocked by an accidental death, having just buried a child, or caught up in the turmoil and depression of the long aftermath. A practical look at changes, the emotions that accompany them, and the consolation that bereaved individuals may find as they traverse the grief process.

Wiebe, K. F. (1976). *Alone: a widow's search for joy*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 303 pp.

Addresses questions arising from the suffering and death of a spouse. Offers much hope and encouragement for widows with keen insights and practical suggestions for those who would minister to them.

Yeagley, L. (1986). *Life after loss*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association. 32 pp.

A very concise booklet, written in a compassionate way. Yeagley outlines the process of dealing with grief and how one deals with the feelings that are generated by crisis.

Films

Adolescence: Crisis or Opportunity? (1973). 12 minutes.

Resources

Filmfair Communications, Inc., 10900 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, CA 91605, (213) 877-3191.

The thoughts and experiences of a teenage girl and comments of a psychiatrist portray the difficult search for personal identity in this crucial stage of the life cycle.

Aging. (1973). 22 minutes.

CRM Films, 2233 Faraday Avenue, Suite #F, Carlsbad, CA 92008, (800) 421-0833.

Excellent film on aging. Covers activity and disengagement patterns. Good for those thinking of retirement.

In One Blinding Moment. 17 minutes.

Brigham Young University, Rentals—Audio Visual Service, 290 H.R.C.B., Provo, UT 84602, (801) 378-2713.

After his son is killed by a reckless driver, a father experiences hatred, vengeance, forgiveness, and ultimately peace.

Sand Castles. (1981). 80 minutes.

Evangelical Films, 1750 N.W. Hiway, Suite 250, Garland, TX 75043, (214) 270-6675.

Depicts the stresses of marriage—materialism, role conflicts, parenting problems, husband's unemployment, breakdown in communication, anger, violence, and separation. Shows how Christianity can make a difference.

Single Parenting: Crisis and Challenge. 29 minutes.

Parents Without Partners, Inc., 8807 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 585-9354.

The crises, emotions, and adjustment of four single-parent families as a result of separation/divorce (three families) and widowhood (one family). Movingly depicts the feelings—abandonment, loneliness, inadequacy, rejection, grief, and guilt—which both parents and children have. Comments by child psychologist Dr. Lee Salk are interspersed to give understanding of the various episodes shown.

Things Are Different Now. (1977). 15 minutes.

Paulist Productions, 17575 Pacific Coast Highway, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272, (213) 454-0688.

A helpful film for both children and adults who find themselves in a separation/divorce situation.

Videos

Grief Recovery Seminar. (1984). Five 45-minute video cassettes.

Adventist Life Seminars, Route 1, Box 248, Crystal Springs, MS 39059.

Resources

Chaplain Larry Yeagley helps those who have experienced the major family crises of death or divorce.

Growing Kids. (1988). Six 55-minute video cassettes.

Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20912.

Psychologist and educator Ruth Murdoch explores the fundamentals of child growth and development with special attention given to character development.

Renewing Family Life. (1987). Six video cassettes.

Herald Press, 616 Walnut Ave., Scottsdale, PA 15683.

Covers the life cycle from early marriage to parenting of young children and teens to mid-life and retirement.

Welcome Baby. (1991). 14-minute video cassette.

Family Matters, Inc., P. O. Box 7000, Cleveland, TN 37320.

Outlines the 3-step method of reaching families of newborns: sending a greeting card, making an initial visit, and following-up with monthly visits during the baby's first year.

Curriculum Resources

Dealing With Divorce. (1991).

NAD Distribution Center, 5040 Prescott Ave., Lincoln, NE 68506.

Outlines 10 sessions for a seminar or support group. Covers topics such as anger, overcoming heartache, accepting responsibility, improving one's self-concept, new friendships, giving oneself to others.

Welcome Baby Program. (1991).

Family Matters, Inc., P. O. Box 7000, Cleveland, TN 37320.

A resource for a new, effective, and simple method of friendship evangelism that addresses needs of a particular point in the family life cycle: the birth of a child.



Sabbath Is for Love

At creation, God provided two complementary institutions designed to provide security, stability, and peace in the midst of turbulence and change: the Sabbath and the family. "Over the Sabbath He [God] places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature and with one another" (*Education*, p. 251).

"Sabbath Is for Love" calls attention to the indissoluble link between Sabbath and family. It affords an opportunity to understand God's love for His family and to express His love in our families. Families are invited to find special ways of showing love at home. Perhaps a new and lasting tradition of showing love in your family on Sabbath can emerge during this International Year of the Family.

Changes in Families

During the 1993 National Christian Family Life Conference in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, South Pacific Division Family Ministries Director Bryan Craig delivered an address on the effects of urbanization and modernity on families. Several of the tables presented in that address are included in this Appendix.

Table 1. *Changes in Families.* Families change as society moves from the agricultural era to the industrial era to the technological era.

Table 2. *Traditional Societies - Modern Societies.* Much of the earth's population now resides in urban areas. Modern urbanization has characteristics that differ from the traditional, more rural society. Families must change and adapt to the new setting.

Table 3. *Generational Differences.* This table and **Table 3a**, *3 Generations of Worshipers*, show the relative characteristics of individuals brought about by changes during the 20th century.

These charts graphically portray that families change. They also help us to see that our convictions regarding the "ideal" family are likely to be related to the era in which we grew up and with which we are most familiar. Further, they help point us in the direction of effective family ministry for differing populations.

Family Ministries Survey

The *Family Ministries Survey* will assist in the process of data collection on congregational families and in needs assessment for effective planning of local family ministries. An adaptation of this survey could be made for use in the community surrounding the church.

CHANGES IN FAMILIES

ERA	AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION	INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION	TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION
FAMILY TYPE	Extended family	Nuclear family	Variety of families
SUPPORT SYSTEM	Stable kinship network Self-sufficient	More primary group focus Less kinship contact/support Less self-sufficient	Family isolated and fragile Loose kinship network
FAMILY VALUES	World - Unified whole Belief in supernatural Myths/rituals Strong traditions Relationships are personal	Rational/analytical thinking Religion institutionalized Values influenced by work ethic Family life and work separated	Life compartmentalized Loss of meaning Loss of traditional values Success and self-oriented
MARRIAGE	Ties all relationships together - gives order Arranged marriages Marriage for economic security	More personal choice in love relationships Marriage more for personal fulfillment	Emotional fulfillment Companionship, intimacy Personal autonomy vs. social interdependence
MARITAL ROLES	Traditional roles Clear sex roles	New division of labor Modified traditional roles	No role models Egalitarianism
FAMILY SIZE	Large families Children - an economic necessity	Smaller families	Small families Delayed childbirth Children - an economic liability
CHILDREN	Values and skills taught by family	Family and social institutions socialize children	Media and social institutions take over family roles in socialization process
PARENTING STYLES	Structured authority	Authoritarian	Permissive

TRADITIONAL TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

MODERN SOCIETIES

Rural

Urban

Illiterate

Literate

Agricultural

Industrial

Designative political structure

Electoral political structure

Extended family system

Nuclear family system

Low economic participation

High economic participation

Low per capita income

High per capita income

Low productivity

High productivity

Little commerce

Much commerce

Poor transportation system

Developed transportation system

Oral media system

Mass media system

Poor nutrition

Good nutrition

High birth and death rates and short life expectancy

Low birth and death rates and extended life expectancy

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

	SURVIVORS	BABY BOOMERS	BABY BUSTERS
COMMUNITY LOYALTY	Church and Institutions (Belonging)	People (Mobility)	Local Causes (Networks)
ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS	Formality and Order	People and Relationships	Spontaneity and Experience
ATTITUDE TO CHANGE	Status Quo	Applaud Innovation	Variety and Change
ATTITUDE TO REVERENCE	Silence Quietness	Accommodates Talking	Accommodates Talking
FOCUS OF COMMITMENT	Christ and the Church	Christ and Relationships	Christ and Community
LEADERSHIP STYLE	Authoritarian	Democratic	Laizze-Faire
SERMONS	Expository Bible Topics	"How To" Sermons	Issue-oriented Sermons
COMMUNICATION STYLE	Formal Oratory	Informational Conversational	Media Style Group Centered
FOCUS OF EVANGELISM	Revival Evangelism	Friendship Evangelism	Support Group Evangelism
MUSIC	Organ, Piano Hymns, Choruses	Guitars, Strings, Hymns, Praise Songs	Band, Orchestra Praise and Scripture Songs
GIVING PATTERNS	Related to Evangelistic and Institutional Needs	Related to People and Projects	Related to Issues and Causes
LEARNING STYLE	Auditory	Auditory & Visual	Experiential

3 GENERATIONS OF WORSHIPPERS

SURVIVORS (1918-1945) "WE" GENERATION

Traditional, conservative values shaped by two world wars and a great depression

Work ethic; self-denial ethic

Loyalty to group needs

BABY BOOMERS (1946-1969) "NOW" GENERATION

Values shaped by post-war optimism, prosperity, and consumerism

The first generation to live with - TV, mobility, and the threat of nuclear war

Well educated → questions authority, demands rights

Experimented with alternate lifestyles

BABY BUSTERS (1970 - 1993) "ME" GENERATION

Attitudes and values shaped by media (Hi-Tech, Hi-Touch)

Highly educated with a sense of entitlement

Disillusioned, indecisive, and apathetic
Postponed responsibilities (enjoy yourself-pay later)

Family Ministries Survey

Part 1

Name _____ Birth date _____
Month Day

Age group 18 - 30 31 - 40 41 - 50 51 - 60 61 - 70 71 - over

Address _____

Telephone (home) _____ (work) _____ (hrs.) _____

Baptized SDA yes no
 If yes, local church membership _____

Marital status:

married — spouse's name _____ Birth date _____
Month Day

- spouse is a SDA — Local church membership _____
- spouse is not a SDA
- single, never married
- single, divorced
- single, widowed

Children whose primary residence is with you:

Name	Birth date	Grade in school	School attending	Baptized SDA?	Local church membership

Children whose primary residence is elsewhere:

Name	Birth date	Baptized SDA?	Local church membership

Other family members living with you:

Name	Birth date	Baptized SDA?	Local church membership	Family relationship

What is the most significant thing the Family Ministries Committee could do this year to address the interests/needs of your family?

I am interested in Family Ministries and am willing to help by:

- telephoning as needed
- participating in planning sessions
- child care
- preparation for events
- advertising
- presentations

interest area(s)

- other

Family Ministries Survey

Part 2

Listed below are various areas of interest from which the Family Ministries Committee of the church would like you to select those of greatest interest to you. Please indicate the five areas that interest you the most. Rank them from one to five (put a one by your first choice, two by the second, and so on).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> preparation for marriage
<input type="checkbox"/> family finance
<input type="checkbox"/> discipline in the home
<input type="checkbox"/> parenting teenagers
<input type="checkbox"/> preparation for childbirth
<input type="checkbox"/> divorce recovery
<input type="checkbox"/> single parenting
<input type="checkbox"/> sexuality
<input type="checkbox"/> enriching your marriage
<input type="checkbox"/> grief recovery
<input type="checkbox"/> understanding temperaments | <input type="checkbox"/> worship and devotional life
<input type="checkbox"/> communication
<input type="checkbox"/> single adult living
<input type="checkbox"/> improving self-worth
<input type="checkbox"/> faith development
<input type="checkbox"/> television and media
<input type="checkbox"/> preparation for retirement
<input type="checkbox"/> chemical dependency issues
<input type="checkbox"/> blended families
<input type="checkbox"/> death and dying
<input type="checkbox"/> coping with widowhood |
|--|---|

Other areas of interest to me are: _____

Suggested guest speakers:

Name	Address	Telephone	Area(s) of specialty
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____