

# Family Seasons

1996 Family Ministries Planbook  
by Karen and Ron Flowers

# Family Seasons

## 1996 Family Ministries Planbook

Including resources for  
Christian Home and Marriage Week — February 17-24  
Family Togetherness Week — September 14-21

Prepared by  
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# Preface

That there are predictable periods in the life span common to all people everywhere has long been understood by students of human development. It is also understood that, as personal developmental phases are traversed, the families in which these individuals reside inevitably experience related seasons in family living which have their own identifiable traits. Families routinely move through such stages as being newlyweds, having babies, rearing and launching children, becoming grandparents and laying loved ones to rest. Family process specialists offer another perspective on family development that transcends specific roles and statuses. The family as a group will pass through discernable phases such as courtship, relationship formation, and partnership establishment.

Alongside the *predictable* changes associated with the developmental periods of the life cycle and the family relational process, *intrusive* changes also create periods of adjustment which must be negotiated by families. Crises precipitate special relational processes. When unexpected events such as the loss of a job, illness, untimely death, an affair, war, or other disasters thrust themselves upon the life of the family, the relational toolbox which has served the individual and family well in the past may have to be enhanced.

To the extent that the characteristics of both the predictable and the intrusive periods in family life can be understood and conveyed to families, family members can rest in the assurance that their experience is not completely unique and be better prepared for the changes that are likely to occur. In *The Church's Ministry with Families*, Diana Garland comments, "People adjust better to developmental changes when they know what to expect. And a church can minister more effectively to families if it understands the developmental crises and issues which families face" (Garland and Pancoast, 1990, p. 35).

How such family phases are viewed is likely more important than when and how they are experienced. Framed as troublesome changes to be resisted or avoided, life's seasons put a drag on a family's relational growth. But reframed as periods which offer singular opportunities for new insights, for the development of new skills, for healing, and for growth toward family intimacy, the seasons in family living can be accepted and negotiated positively.

This 1996 edition of the Family Ministries Planbook offers resources related to the seasons of family living. Helps for sermons, children's stories, mini-seminars, and special services such as baby dedications, baptisms, weddings, etc. are found here, to help the church enter meaningfully into the life events of individual families. Other resources to enhance the family ministries of the local church are also included. As we send off this year's Planbook, we hope that the inspiration and stimulus for family ministries leaders found in its pages will lead to richer family living throughout life's seasons and closer ties with one another in the church—the household of faith.

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# Marriage: A Godly Design

by Willie Oliver

Family Ministries Director, North American Division

## Theme

God designed marriage to help meet the multiple needs of men and women in a context of affirmation, safety, and security.

## Theme Texts

Genesis 1:28; 2:18-24

1 Corinthians 7:5

Ephesians 5:22-32

## Presentation Notes

Throughout the following outline, superscripts such as <sup>1,2,3</sup> 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

Today we celebrate marriage as a gift of God to His people. While it is true that not everyone will marry or needs to be married, it is significant to note that marriage is God's ideal for men and women to help bring about growth and fulfillment in several areas of their lives.

Whereas many objectives were envisioned by God in the establishment of the marriage relationship, several should be highlighted as basic. Recognizing these most foundational objectives will help to give us a proper perspective as we confront the problems of marriages and families and as we contemplate the strengths of a well-functioning home.

## Propagating the Race

One of the objectives of marriage is that of having children to propagate the human race. God's first command to the couple in Eden was "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The wise man Solomon states, "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him" (Psalm 127:3).

It was God's plan for men and women united in holy matrimony to have children. In addition to the obvious reason for having children, that of continuing the race, God gave human beings the ability to reproduce so that we might more fully understand His relationship with us as His children.<sup>1</sup> God also gave in marriage the capacity to procreate so that men and women would learn to share instead of thinking only of themselves.<sup>2</sup>

## Promoting Personality Growth and Grace

The marriage relation is not just a medium of God to propagate the race. God could have multiplied the human race through other means, as He did the angels. The more immediate purpose is to develop and mature two different personalities in a relationship of mutual fellowship and responsibilities. This is not to suggest the fiction of couples marrying and living "happily ever after." That happens only in storybook fantasies. The real life marriage of the Bible doesn't necessarily promise a dream life of

perpetual bliss. Rather, marriage is the joining of two individuals of opposite sexes who vow to live, love, and work together through rain and shine, sickness and health, adversity or prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

A man and a woman each come with a unique personality to marriage. They also have been reared in different families, and though they may have similarities in culture, education, race, religion and social class, they often bring to marriage a different set of expectations. It is when these expectations are not met that conflicts arise and disenchantment sets in. After the honeymoon, a couple may find that the gears don't all mesh without squeaking; one zigs when the other zags, and the anticipated harmony and heaven do not seem to materialize. This discovery can be traumatic. The feeling may gradually develop that "we were not really meant from each other, we are incompatible."<sup>4</sup> This excuse, popular though it may be, is really an avoidance of reality. Marriage partners are not custom made before marriage. If a husband and wife think they have no problems or personality difficulties to work out together, they are in trouble. They have missed one of the real objectives for marriage, growth and personality development, which come through struggle. We should recognize that every individual created by God is a diamond in the rough. Diamonds, however, need grinding and polishing to develop their beauty. God instituted marriage as one of the central workshops in which that grinding and polishing process takes place. The dust and sparks may have to fly a bit in the workshop, but the two need each other in the refining process just as the diamond needs the grindstone.

Viewed in this way, marriage becomes a most significant divine arrangement in which a couple seeks to respond to God's call for personal growth, to understand the work of grace in relationships, and to learn more fully the lessons of interdependence upon one another and ultimate dependence upon Him. Problems and grievances they didn't know they had are brought to the surface and confronted. In wholesome and intimate communication, they tactfully help each other to "see themselves as others see them."<sup>5</sup>

### **Developing Intimacy**

A third objective in marriage is to develop intimacy<sup>6</sup> and give expression to the appropriate sexual passions which God has built into human beings. This objective is related to the previously noted one of propagating the race, but is certainly not limited to that. Sexual desires do not automatically subside when child-bearing for a couple is ended. Paul recognized this fact by exhorting: "Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:5). The apostle saw this as a legitimate and necessary function of the marriage relation and gave this admonition to married couples, not as a suggestion, but as an imperative command.

It should be noted further that Paul saw the possession of such sexual drives as one of the reasons for which God has instituted the marriage relationship. To prevent an improper expression of these passions, the apostle commanded that "each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). Although this chapter in 1 Corinthians is often thought of as Paul's great treatise on the greater benefits of being single, it is here also that he solemnly recommends marriage for many as an appropriate setting in which a couple might give proper expression to their God-given sexuality.

As we deal with the matter of intimacy, it is important to understand that intimacy is not necessarily tantamount to sexual intercourse. It is especially important to note the differences that often surface between men and women as they relate to the matter of intimacy.<sup>7</sup> As married couples consider 1 Corinthians 7, it would be wise for husband and wife to talk together and reach a mutually satisfying understanding so that their different sexual expectations do not become a matter of insurmountable conflict in the marriage.

### **Representing Christ's Marriage to the Church**

A final objective in marriage is suggested in Paul's counsel to the Church in Ephesians 5. There Paul gives instructions to husbands and wives, declaring that the marriage relationship is really a representation or picture of the union of Christ with His Church. In several ways Paul relates the marriage of husband and wife to that of Christ's relationship with His church family (Ephesians 5:22-32). In fact, Paul uses the words of institution of marriage in Eden to describe this divine-human relationship. The mystery of two lovers becoming "one flesh" in marriage is fulfilled in a special way in Christ's marriage to the church.

This cosmic and divine relationship gives marriage a whole new perspective. It puts marriage on the highest plane imaginable. It declares that God is specifically using the institution of marriage to portray that eternal union of Christ the Son of God with His people, the Church. No event in all the divine calendar is as important as the coming event in which the Father will consummate the union of His Son with His "glorious bride" (Ephesians 5:27). Although human relations are often temporary and unsatisfying, the divine-human relationship will be permanent and completely fulfilling. The people that make up that bride are those whom God is seeking today as He builds His church. They will forever be His closest companions as He reigns over the universe and institutes the high adventures of His eternal enterprises and delights.

No wonder then that the high ideals of faithfulness, purity, and love are strictly enjoined on the marriage relationship. They portray Christ's relationship with His eternal bride, a relationship of the highest order. That is why we are to love each other despite differences, for we dimly portray Christ's love for the Church. Paul strongly implies that this is one of the principal objectives in marriage in the divine agenda. Even the objective of propagating the race is really secondary to the divine portrayal of Christ's eternal relationship with His people. The real objective of marriage is to reflect, in a typical way, the love relationship between God and His people and to implant and perfect that love in human personalities. "Marriage is God's workshop or garden in which He is growing and maturing personalities for eternity." This objective should be recognized by every Christian couple so that the ups and downs of their marriage experience can be taken in proper stride. The rose garden they had hoped for in marriage can materialize only as God is recognized as the Gardener and the pruning and praising processes are properly appreciated. The fragrance and beauty of the relationship are brought out by their mutual discipline and delights in the plan of God.

### **Conclusion**

God's plan is a perfect plan. God created marriage for children to be born and nurtured in a home where there is love and peace. God created marriage for husbands and wives to grow in their marriage relationship and grow as human beings. God made marriage so that men and women could enjoy the sexual passions that He has given to them, in a context of intimacy, love, affirmation, and commitment. God made marriage to help us understand more fully His love for the Church, His bride.

May this Christian Marriage Day be one of rejoicing, as we recommit ourselves to permanence and peace in our marriages, endeavoring to give glory and honor to God for the things He has done and continues to do for us.

### **Sermon Illumination**

#### **1. The Influence of Bearing and Rearing Children**

"After the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that first-born son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in



the gift of His Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father” (White, 1952, p. 160).

## **2. God Planned for Families**

“A childless house is a desolate place. The hearts of the inmates are in danger of becoming selfish, of cherishing a love for their own ease, and consulting their own desires and conveniences. They gather sympathy to themselves, but have little to bestow upon others” (White, 1952, p. 159).

## **3. The Blending of Two Lives**

“The blessing of God in the home where this union shall exist is as the sunshine of heaven, because it is the Lord’s ordained will that man and wife should be linked together in holy bonds of union, under Jesus Christ, with Him to control, and His spirit to guide. . . .

“God wants the home to be the happiest place on earth, the very symbol of the home in heaven. Bearing the marriage responsibilities in the home, linking their interests with Jesus Christ, leaning upon His arm and His assurance, husband and wife may share a happiness in this union that angels of God commend” (White, 1952, p. 102).

## **4. Alienation in Marriage**

“Satan is ever ready to take advantage when any matter of variance arises, and by moving upon the objectionable, hereditary traits of character in husband or wife, he will try to cause the alienation of those who have united their interests in a solemn covenant before God. In the marriage vows they have promised to be as one, the wife covenanting to love and obey her husband, the husband promising to love and cherish his wife. If the law of God is obeyed, the demon of strife will be kept out of the family, and no separation of interests will take place, no alienation of affection will be permitted” (White, 1952, p. 106).

## **5. Christ Brings Unity**

“If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence. Anything that would mar the peace and unity of the family should be firmly repressed, and kindness and love should be cherished. He who manifests the spirit of tenderness, forbearance, and love will find that the same spirit will be reflected upon him” (White, 1952, p. 120).

## **6. Intimacy**

“Becoming one flesh involves sexual union: ‘Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived’ (Gen. 4:1). In their drive to be joined together, a drive men and women have felt since the days of Adam and Eve, each couple reenacts the first love story. The act of sexual intimacy is the nearest thing to a physical union possible for them; it represents the closeness the couple can know emotionally and spiritually as well. Christian married love should be characterized by warmth, joy, and delight (Prov. 5:18,19).” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 298)

## **7. More on Intimacy**

“In that most intimate of friendships called marriage, the opportunities and demands for a relationship of depth are pervasive. Intimacy is an art with as many expressions as there are artists to express it. It is often expressed in the sharing of thoughts and ideas and feelings. It is expressed in shared joys and sorrows, in respect for the deepest needs of the other person, and in the struggle to understand him [or her]. Intimacy does not suggest a saccharine sentimentalism; it can be expressed in constructive conflict which is the growing edge of a relationship. . . .

*“Intimacy grows as couples dare to risk greater openness. As each partner becomes more honest with himself/[herself] and more aware of his/[her] own faults, and his/[her] own needs to blame the other for their conflict, the wall between them begins to come down, block by block. Each of us feels the need to hide at times, behind a mask of self-sufficiency or self-justification, particularly when conflict threatens or self-esteem is weak. Only as each individual relaxes his/[her] mask and becomes more transparent (openness) can intimacy develop in the relationship”* (Clinebell & Clinebell, 1970, pp. 24,25).

**References**

- Clinebell, Howard J. & Clinebell, Charlotte H. (1970). *The Intimate Marriage*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- White, Ellen G. (1952). *The Adventist Home*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association.
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# Childish Things That Should Not Be Put Away

by Karen and Ron Flowers, Directors  
Department of Family Ministries, General Conference

## Theme

An important aspect of becoming an adult is to retain the simple lessons about life and relationships learned in childhood.

## Theme Texts

1 Corinthians 13:11; Matthew 18:3; Luke 18:15-17

## Presentation Notes

While adults will no doubt receive a blessing from this message, the target group are adolescents, young people on the verge of adulthood. Throughout the following outline, superscripts such as<sup>1,2,3</sup> 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

Pastor, philosopher and author Robert Fulghum says that all he ever needed to know he learned in kindergarten.

These are the things I learned: Share everything. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the styrofoam cup—they all die. So do we. (*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, 1988, pp. 4, 5)

As we become adults we would do well to remember the simple relationship lessons we learned as children. Fulghum goes on to say:

Think what a better world it would be if we all—the whole world—had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess. (pp. 5, 6).

Jesus said something similar about being childlike as adults: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (Luke 18:16, 17).

No doubt at this stage in your lives you are much more attracted to the statement of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” How can both these texts be true? On the one hand, childlikeness is commended by Christ himself. On the other hand, Paul says childish things are to be put away. Is there a difference between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Paul? Or are both presenting truth?

**Scripture paradoxes.** Scripture at times presents paradoxes such as: leave father and mother, yet honor father and mother; whosoever save his life shall lose it, but whosoever loses his life for my sake shall find it; the first shall be last and the last first; the greatest shall be a servant. The statements about childlikeness by Jesus and Paul present another paradox. Often in the study of such paradoxes we discover profound truth.

### **Growing Up**

Students of child growth and development have charted the growth of children from pre-birth through adulthood.<sup>1</sup> You are on the far end of the transition between childhood and the full responsibilities of adult life. Much of the personal work you are engaged in has to do with separating yourself from your parents, becoming a unique individual, developing your own perspective on things, and your personal value system.<sup>2</sup>

You used to think as a child, to reason as a child. You grew through the time when your thinking wouldn't allow you to comprehend that a tall thin glass didn't hold more water than a short fat one. Your understanding of the world around you and its dilemmas was simplistic. Everything was either black or white, there were no shades of gray. Spiritually your faith was simple too.<sup>3</sup>

But now you are putting away childish things. Adulthood looks so attractive, so exciting, you are anxious to put childhood behind you and get on with your life. You are in the midst of making some of the most important decisions you will ever make, decisions for a career, decisions about a life partner, decisions which will set the sails for your life.

You are processing your parent's religion at new levels. Your questions have changed from the “Where does God live and what does He look like?” of childhood to the “How do I know God really exists and do I really want Him in my life” questions of the emerging adult mind. If these are the kinds of questions in your mind today, you are exactly where you need to be as a young Christian adult. They are questions we adults have had to think about and make decisions about for ourselves, and we want to be there with you while you do your processing for whatever help our testimony can be. However, we cannot do the study or the thinking for you. This is part and parcel of the process of growing up.

### **Things That Should Not Be Put Away**

In the fanaticism of the 1800's, as revival swept through America, one group interpreted the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:3 literally. They went about on all fours, imitating children and babbling. But Jesus is not speaking about the physical attributes of childhood. Jesus and Paul are both right. Childhood gives

way to maturity, in physical, mental, and emotional development. Moral reasoning also progresses. Spiritually we mature, yet our spirituality contains simple, childlike elements. Growing up does not necessarily mean growing away from the simple lessons learned in childhood. You are putting away immaturity for maturity, but part of that maturity is the maintenance of the uncomplicated, innocent aspects of childhood. Thus, when you are tempted to throw away childish things like worn-out toys that are no longer interesting, consider putting a few of childhood's characteristics on the shelf for later.

**1. Children love presents and receive them gladly.** They don't scrutinize the gift and wonder about the shop it came from. They don't ask, "Did she get this on sale or pay full price for it?" And they are never burdened by the thought, now I must reciprocate. I'll have to give back something of similar value.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these because they receive it as a gift, because the Giver loves them and offers it to them freely. As you move through the challenges of adult life, you will likely be more and more tempted to think this is too simple, that there must be something you must do to be saved. But remember, the question of the Pharisees was always the wrong question. They always asked, "What must I do . . . ?" Jesus, however, came to address a different question, the most fundamental question of human existence, Who am I? God's answer to that question is that He put you in Christ and declared you thereby to be His Sons and Daughters.<sup>4</sup> You were crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), you died with Him (Rom. 6:5-8), you were resurrected with Him and are now seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:5, 6). From the vantage point of this spiritual reality He now calls you—to walk as children of the light (Eph. 5:8), to walk worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in your lives (Col. 1:10), to become in the ordinary reality of everyday life all that He has declared you to be in Christ.

**2. Children are spontaneous, acting at once on what they understand.** Their impulses are not strangled by cautious calculations and skepticism. They have no defense mechanisms in place to protect themselves from embarrassment or to hide their shame.<sup>5</sup>

What changes your generation could bring into our churches if you could hold on to your openness and your vulnerability! If you could invite us all, by your example, to leave our masks at home and share openly with one another both our joys and our troubles. You could be the generation who leads the church into a new sense of community. We need you to help us enter into "one anothering" at the levels the early church understood about. It's too easy for adults to judge one another, envy one another, lie to one another, murmur against one another. Don't lose your ability to accept one another, confess your sins to one another, serve one another, bear one another's burdens, or build one another up. We need you to stay willing to spontaneously respond, whatever the truth may be. In many of our churches we need to have more spontaneity, more praise and expressions of delight in the Lord.

**3. Children never stop asking questions.** Adults often weary of children's questions: "Dad, what makes the sky blue?" "Do worms sleep at night?" "What makes toenails tougher than fingernails?" "When are we going to get there?"<sup>6</sup>

Your generation is full of questions. Questions that may make adults uncomfortable, frightened, sometimes even angry because they may seem to threaten the pillars of our faith. You're often not content with trite, common answers. You challenge our thinking. You press us into uncomfortable levels

of thought about issues we would rather not address. However, this may be the best gift your youthfulness brings to the church. You may be the generation that keeps this Church a movement that refuses to settle down complacently with a list of fundamental beliefs that we can recite by rote. Studies show that such lists tend to lose some of their meaning as generations pass. They are less meaningful in your lives and will eventually be less important to your children to the extent that they are no longer fresh from the word of God. So, keep asking questions. God can communicate with questioning minds.

**4. Children are trusting and dependent.** At an early age, a child looks on the world with wondering and expectant eye, and lives in glad trust. Children whose trust has not been betrayed by abandonment, abuse or violence done toward them tend to continue to have a very confident trust in life. Children are not bothered by being dependent. When crises come, they do not pretend to be self-sufficient. They turn to those they trust with simple faith that there will be a response.

Many of us as adults have grown jaded, suspicious, cynical. Like the Pharisees, we have turned to our own self-sufficiency as the only thing dependable in our world. However, the arrogant, proud and self-sufficient cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why the narrative about Jesus and the children, which is universally acclaimed to be one of the loveliest stories in the New Testament, is also in its implications one of the most challenging and disturbing. It was an invitation to children. It was also a rebuke to pride and self-righteousness.

It is important as you pass through this period in your life that you separate from us as your parents and become your own persons. This is absolutely necessary for the health of us both. But try never to lose your capacity to ask for help and to accept gestures of kindness in your times of need. Across life you will pass through seasons when you can minister to others and seasons when you will have a need for someone to minister to you. Remember, there is nothing wrong with needing the support of another, that's why God made us family. Learning how and when to rely appropriately on others makes understanding our reliance upon God easier. You could help us all pass through our self-sufficiency to a child-like faith, to a full and complete dependence on God's mercy.

**5. Children love to play.** For adults, life is too often a serious business with little or no time for play. A lot of us grew up with the notion that play is worthless, something you can't afford to do. But we like to think that Christ was playful, spontaneous, that He and His disciples dived into the water as they were walking beside the Sea of Galilee or the Jordan.

All too soon your lives will be encumbered with the burdens of adult life. You can't possibly imagine now all the curves and twists and hurdles life will bring. Some will be of your own making, others are such that you couldn't have done anything to prevent them. Through it all, take time to pray and to play. We need your generation to keep us from taking life so seriously that we forget to play, to enjoy, to celebrate the good things, even as we shoulder one another's burdens together. Jesus expressed his desire for his people when He said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it to the full" (John 10:10). A life fully lived is His legacy to His children.

## **Conclusion**

Fulghum's thought is challenging. How much better the world would be if we approached it with the childlike simplicity, humility, trust and dependence of children, if we all had cookies and milk in the

mid-afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap? If all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess. What if we all remembered, no matter how old we are—“when we go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together”?

In one way you are leaving childhood behind. In another way you have an opportunity to bring some of it along with you into adulthood. Let no one despise your childhood or your youth, it is a key to successful living as a Christian. “Except we become as little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Your childlikeness may yet be your best attribute and your best gift to us all.

### **Sermon Illumination**

1. Growth from stage to stage may be somewhat different from child to child and dependent upon the child’s environment, however, numerous developmental characteristics appear to be similar among children. While admitting that growth is wholistic, Berger (1994), for example, outlines biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial development through the periods of prenatal, the first two years, the play years, the school years, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood.
2. Robert Havinghurst has outlined ten developmental tasks with which adolescents are involved:
  - 1) Establishing mature relationships with peers of both sexes.
  - 2) Establishing a mature sexual role.
  - 3) Accepting one’s own body.
  - 4) Accepting emotional independence from parents.
  - 5) Developing a plan for financial independence.
  - 6) Investigating and preparing for a job or career.
  - 7) Learning patterns for his or her personal family life.
  - 8) Developing appropriate behavior and civil skills to take one’s place as an adult member of society.
  - 9) Developing social skills to discern appropriate behavior in various situations.
  - 10) Developing a workable set of personally held values. (Cutler and Peace, 1990, pp. 28, 29)
3. In another of his essays Robert Fulghum tells of hearing the Lord’s Prayer as a child and thinking it said, “Our Father who art in heaven, Howard be thy name.” Since Howard was his mother’s family name, he felt well connected, part of the family, and thus fully expected all his prayers to be answered.
4. And the word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” . . . The voice which spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul, This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 113).

5. I (Ron) once asked a child, “How old are you?” He gave me an instant answer. Holding up four fingers he replied, “I’m four,” and with the same breath asked the question, “How old are you?” I didn’t have enough fingers to hold up. When I replied, “I’m fifty,” the child looked puzzled.

6. For a year or more two little girls lived with their mother in the house next door to us. Because I (Ron) have a habit of periodically placing old, unwanted household items on the curb with a sign “Free” for the benefit of passers-by, these little girls learned to call me “Mister Free.” When I would be working on my lawn or in my flower garden, they would look at me curiously and say, “What you doin’ Mister Free?” I remember trying to explain fertilizer to them. “What’s that?” they asked. “It’s food for the grass,” I replied. “But how does the grass eat it?” “The grass eats with its toes,” I said. Seemingly satisfied, they went away with what must have been a most interesting report to their mother.

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# The Art of Being With

by Larry Yeagley

*Pastor of Charlotte S.D.A. Church and Marshall S.D.A. Church in Michigan, North American Division*

## Theme

Though we may experience grief for a season in our lives, Jesus heals our brokenness so that we can be instruments of healing to others.

## Theme Text

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

## Presentation Notes

Throughout the following outline a superscript number <sup>1,2,3</sup> will indicate illustrations found in the section called **Sermon Illumination**. You may want to use a personal illustration instead.

## Introduction

Please experience with me the rhythmic cadences of the hymn of consolation found in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. The words of this hymn form the foundation of the art of being with those who hurt. (Read the passage from one or more versions)

## The Church Is the Fellowship of the Broken

To walk with Jesus necessitates walking through suffering. If you follow the Man on the middle cross, you can't avoid the cross. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it the "cost of discipleship." In love's service, only wounded soldiers will do. We have all been wounded and broken.

- We have felt hot tears wash our cheeks as we have watched a loved one die.
- Cold fear has paralyzed as a spouse has walked away from us.
- We have been dazed in the wake of a broken relationship.
- We have walked to the unemployment office after losing a good job.
- We have watched a son pack his things and move out to avoid religion.

## The Church Is Also the Fellowship of the Comforted

"Comfort" appears 10 times in these 5 verses.

Comfort means more than consolation. It means:

- To be strengthened
- To be sustained
- To have the underpinning and inner reinforcement of the Spirit
- To come alongside a person
- To be healed of brokenness

All of us identify with the fellowship of the broken, but some may doubt the reality of the fellowship of the comforted because the fresh lacerations of loss cut into the soul until they cry out, “God, why have you forsaken me?”

I know about your pain.<sup>1</sup> Although I once feared I would never heal, I now know about the restoration of joy.

Brokenness and pain are softened by Jesus. In this place Jesus wants to begin and continue to heal your brokenness.

Lift your eyes to Him right now.

Invite Him into your brokenness.

Ask for His peace. It *will* be yours.

### **The Comfort God Gives to the Sufferer Overflows to Others**

Paul isn't explaining the meaning of suffering. He simply states that the believer shares in Jesus' suffering. He is focusing on comfort. Comfort is certain to come when we ask for it.

### **God Is the Source of Comfort**

He gives comfort to us. He uses us as vessels through which He flows sustaining strength to others.

Jesus is the modeler of therapeutic personhood. He set the pattern. The method and power to heal the broken come from Him.

The Holy Spirit comes alongside the broken and the helper.

### **How Did Jesus Comfort?**

Jesus could not immediately wipe away the sorrow and pain of the fallen world. Instead He entered our brokenness and helplessness. He went where the pain is, not to eradicate it, but to be with us in our pain.

God embraced fallen men, women, and children. Tears of divinity mingled with tears of humanity. Pain and sorrow were day to day realities for Jesus.

Jesus cared first, then He cured.

- He did this by His willing presence.
- He did this by His healing and thoughtful words.
- He did this by His powerful silence.
- He embraced sick people with His eyes.

**He was truly “with” them.** People were drawn to Him because He was truly with them in every sense. He walked their beaches, socialized with the outcasts, lingered in the loitering places of the hopelessly ill, sat in the living rooms of the freshly bereaved, and cradled sick infants in His arms.

**He spent time in the presence of the Father.** Jesus' ability to be with the broken people was made possible by spending time in the presence of the Father. There in the quiet place His heart became big enough to take in the multitudes. As long as the Father was first in Jesus' priorities, there was plenty of room for one more grieving person.

**He cared before He cured.** Jesus deliberately entered their pain before He healed. He combined caring and curing. To cure without first caring would have been dehumanizing for those who came to Him.

As we examine Jesus' method of being with people, we are forced to examine the busy church and ask a few questions. We are erecting buildings and fine tuning administrative machinery. Much energy is spent inventing new methods to finish the work. Is the church spending enough energy comforting those who hurt?

Henri J. M. Nouwen asked good questions:

You might remember moments in which you were called to be with a friend who had lost a wife or husband, child or parent. What can you say, do, or propose at such a moment? There is a strong inclination to say: "Don't cry; the one you loved is in the hands of God." "Don't be sad because there are so many good things left worth living for." But are we ready to really experience our powerlessness in the face of death and say: "I do not understand. I do not know what to do but I am here with you." Are we willing to *not* run away from the pain, to *not* get busy when there is nothing to do and instead stand rather in the face of death together with those who grieve? (Nouwen, 1974, pp. 34, 35)

It is much easier to sit at a computer laying plans for the church, but it is very difficult to walk with and sit with a friend in fresh grief. It would have been more convenient for Jesus to stay in heaven, but He put himself out for us.

### **Guidelines for Being With**

As I visit with church groups I am impressed that Christian people really desire to be with those who grieve, but they really feel awkward and incompetent. Perhaps a few guidelines for ministering to the grieving will ease the fears of doing the wrong things.

1. *Grief is not a sign of weak faith.* Running away from grief can actually prolong the pain. Allow people to grieve because it is a healthy attempt to regain equilibrium after a devastating blow.
2. *Grief is normal.* It is a gradual movement from life out of focus to refocus. It takes time. C.S. Lewis likened it to the warming of a room or the coming of daylight.
3. *Anticipate the needs of the grieving family.* Never say, "Call me if I can do anything to help you." Initiate the acts of helping.
4. *Talk about the person who is missing.* Grieving families need to know that the life of their loved one was of value and that he or she still impacts on the lives of others. Reviewing the relationship is a vital part of the grief. Your talking about the one who died helps the family to do that reviewing.<sup>2</sup>
5. *The greatest tool you have is a listening ear.* Listening love, quietly and patiently hearing a person's pain is just as effective as the use of Scripture and prayer.<sup>3</sup>
6. *Temporary loss of faith is very common when death occurs.* Don't be shocked when your Christian friend expresses doubts about God's existence or lacks interest in the details of life. When death strikes a family, the members of the family are looking at God through the shadows of their own sorrow. Their view of God is distorted. They may doubt that God loves them. They may not see that He has a purpose for their life. This is temporary. Your attitudes and actions of acceptance can renew the grieving person's conviction that God is present. If you are present with them, comfortable with their agony and not eager to make them better so you can be comfortable, and if

you listen nonjudgmentally, their faith will be restored. Your steadying love will make you a living reminder of Jesus.

7. *Remember that there are three types of ministry to the grieving. **Ministry of word** is important. You should ask God to give you words to speak and the wisdom to know when to be silent. If God promised to give you words to speak when you are called before earthly kings, He will surely give you the right words to speak when you sit with the children of the King of kings.*

**Ministry of presence** is more than being physically present with a grieving person. It is being there because you want to be there. Grieving people are very perceptive. They can sense your reticence.

**Ministry of absence** happens when you have truly been present with a person. There is a time to leave. If you have been present with a person in every sense of the word, the Holy Spirit will take what you have left behind—your words, your silence, your tears, your touch—and turn them into a ministry you could never have done by staying longer.

I once heard it said that before you go to the side of a grieving person, the Holy Spirit is there. When you arrive the Holy Spirit comes alongside you and the grieving person. When you leave, the Holy Spirit remains to magnify your ministry.

Those who can sit in silence with their fellowman not knowing what to say, but knowing that they should be there, can bring new life to a dying heart. Those who are not afraid to hold a hand in gratitude, to shed tears in grief, and to let a sigh of distress arise straight from the heart, can break through paralyzing boundaries and witness the birth of a new fellowship—the fellowship of the broken. (Nouwen, 1974, pp. 40, 41)

This is the ministry of comfort that flows into our lives from Jesus. When it flows into us and then overflows to others who are broken, we have sung the hymn of consolation.

### **Sermon Illumination**

1. Shortly after our son died I went to church. All the children were invited to come up on the platform and sing “Jesus Loves Me” for the congregation. Every little boy who sang that song reminded me of my son. This was Jeff’s favorite song. He spent a night in a hospital prior to his tonsillectomy. He kept all the children awake because he sang “Jesus Loves Me” at the top of his voice. As I watched those little boys singing in church I felt like a huge knife was cutting out my heart.

A year after Jeff died I attended a summer camp. During the campfire, pictures of children romping through a daisy-filled meadow with Jesus were projected on a large screen. As picture after picture appeared, a soprano soloist sang “Welcome Home Children.” The pain inside of me was so excruciating that I felt nauseous. I looked away to keep from becoming sick. I never dreamed that I would experience such pain.

2. After our son died I wanted to talk about him with everyone I met. The lady at the grocery checkout, the owner of the lumber yard, and the mechanic at my favorite garage were people I longed to talk with, but I knew I could not impose on them. Finally I found someone who invited me to tell my story. Kim Johnson drove me to the Boston airport just a few months after Jeff died. He pulled the car onto the Massachusetts Turnpike, put his little Plymouth into cruise, and said, "Larry, I was sad that I could not be with you when Jeff died. Now I want to listen and have you tell me what it was like for you."

For the next 40 miles I talked and Kim wept. His compassionate listening was a healing balm to my soul. His willingness to mention my son's name proved to me that Jeff had made a lasting impression on Kim.

3. I entered the room of a cancer patient at the request of a nurse. I said, "Lida, the nurses tell me that you and I would get along real well."

"Well, sir, I think I'd get along right well with a preacher. You see, I'm a preacher of sorts. Not like you. I preach about a little white church at the end of a gravel road. My husband was a wholesale grocer. I used to go with him now and again. One day we was riding down this gravel road and there I saw a little white church with bluebonnets covering a little graveyard behind it. And I told Harold that's where I wanted to be buried. A few days later he came home and told me he bought two lots in that graveyard. And now Harold's sleeping under them bluebonnets. It won't be long until I'm sleeping there with him."

I took advantage of her pause. "Lida, I love romance stories. I'd like to hear how you met Harold, how you fell in love, and what it was like to be married to a good man." Then I leaned back in my chair and listened to her story for nearly an hour.

When she finished, she slowly rose from her chair. I rose from mine. She held out her 80-year-old arms. We embraced. Then she stepped back slightly, held my arms, looked me in the eyes and said, "Preacher, what you and I done here today was a prayer."

I knew that my listening love was just as powerful as any Scripture reading or formal prayer could have been.

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# A New Front Tooth

*by Karen Flowers*

Richard looked at himself in the mirror with disgust. One thing was clear. He just couldn't smile any more. If he kept his lips together, maybe no one would ever find out. But I'm ahead of my story. . . .

Richard was eleven years old. He was a happy boy with a big smile. That was until today.

Only a few minutes ago he had been smiling and horsing around with his brothers at home while they were getting ready for school. When Mom called that the bus had arrived, Dick grabbed his clarinet and his backpack off the foot of his bed and ran for the stairs. Just as he rounded the curve at the landing half way down, he slipped, and the next thing you knew he found himself in a heap with his stuff at the bottom of the stairs. At first he thought nothing too bad had happened. He had consciously protected his clarinet, and what could happen to a bag of books. He hurt in a few places, but nothing was broken or anything.

Just then his brother Brendon came back in looking for him, hollering that he'd better hurry up or he'd be left behind. When Richard flashed a sheepish smile, a look of horror came over Brendon's face. Your tooth! What happened to your tooth!

Forgetting all about the waiting bus, Richard ran for the bathroom. A quick smile reflected in the mirror explained his brother's reaction. A big corner of his front tooth was gone and he looked like a jack-o'-lantern. Would he have to look like this for the rest of his life, Richard wondered.

Everybody has things that happen to them in their lives that they didn't expect. Sometimes they are happy things, sometimes they are frightening things, sometimes they are things that make you worry a lot. Jesus is glad when happy things happen to us. He also understands when we are frightened or worried. When He was here, He

talked to His disciples about things that make people frightened or worried. He said we don't need to worry, because He knows all our needs and He will take care of us. He wants us to leave the worrying to Him. To help us know how much He cares for us, He told His followers that He even knew how many hairs they had in their heads and every time even a sparrow falls. There are no experiences in our lives that Jesus doesn't know about and that He won't help us get through.

When Mom saw what had happened to Richard, she was reassuring and made an appointment to see the dentist as soon as his office opened. For Richard, the wait seemed like forever, but eventually Dr. Scribner was looking down at him with his kind eyes. Dr. Scribner told Richard there was lots of good news and a little bad news. The good news was that probably there was enough left of Richard's tooth that the tooth would not die inside. The good news was that Dr. Scribner could make a cap to go over Richard's tooth that would protect his broken one and look just like a real tooth. The good news was that fixing it wasn't going to hurt a bit. The bad news was that this cap would have to be changed several more times until it could be permanently replaced when he was older. Richard thought he could live with that.

Remember, you may not know what will happen to you today, tomorrow, next week, or next month. But you can always know that Jesus is with you and will help you no matter what.

Isn't that good news!

# Playing Dress Up

by Karen Flowers

In the back of Mother's closet was a big box. You never could tell what you would find in there. Some days it was full to overflowing, other days there wasn't so much. But Kathy and her sister Julie watched and waited with anticipation for the day Mom cleaned out her clothes closet, like when the season changed and she put away her winter clothes and got out her summer ones. Those were the best days of all. The box was always full, full, full!

You see, Kathy and Julie loved to play dress up! And the box was the place where Mother put the clothes she was going to give to the Good Will or take to the church Community Service Center. And before she got them washed and ironed up to give away, she would let the girls get in there and play.

Some days they played like they were high society ladies. They wore the highest heels they could find and the biggest hats. They pretended they were going to concerts and fancy restaurants, and out for a drive in a big limousine. Some days they were career women, dressing and re-dressing as teachers, surgeons, pastors, executives, lawyers, whatever. Some days they even got their brother Jason and his friend David to play so they could pretend they were married and had a family. [*The storyteller may want to bring a large box of hats, clothes, and other accouterments and dress several children quickly—for example with a Bible for a pastor, a hat and a briefcase for an executive, a cellular phone and a legal pad for a lawyer, etc.—to heighten interest.*]

It's fun to think about what you will be when you grow up. It's fun to pretend you are grown up

now and to think of all the things grownups do. Sometimes you may even get to wishing you could grow up faster because it seems like grownups can do whatever they want and don't have anyone telling them what to do all the time.

But there's an interesting text over in the book of Ecclesiastes that I would like to have \_\_\_\_\_ read for us. [*Let one of the children read Ecclesiastes 11:9a from a modern version. "Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth."*]

This passage was written by the wise man Solomon. First of all, he wants you to know that while it's lots of fun to think ahead to what you will be and do in the future, there are lots of good things about being a child. And your job right now is to enjoy all those good things. It's your job right now to be part of your family, to play and talk and work together with your family. It's your job right now to go to school and learn all you can about the world and the people in it and what makes them tick. It's your job right now to make friends and to learn to get along with other people. It's your job right now to learn about God and develop your talents for His service. God wants you to feel good about being a boy or a girl. He wants you to be happy as a part of your family and as a member of His family. He wants you to enjoy this time in your life to the full. And He wants you to know, that whatever you decide to be when you grow up, He will have a special work for you to do for Him in sharing the good news about Jesus with whomever you meet.

# Missing Grandpa

*by Karen Flowers*

Rebecca loved her grandpa! How many of you have to travel quite a ways to see your grandma and grandpa? And some of you can only go to visit them for a vacation or for Christmas? Well, Rebecca was lucky because her grandma and grandpa lived in the same town she did. In fact, the school bus dropped her off at their house after school every day to wait until her Mom got off work and picked her up.

The best thing about Grandpa was he had time. Grandma was often busy preparing dinner, doing church work, tidying up the house. But Grandpa would always put down whatever he was doing when she arrived, pour her a big glass of lemonade, and just look her in the eye and listen to whatever she had to tell him about her day. Then some days they worked on the big puzzle they were putting together, some days they washed the car, some days they went to the library and then curled up to read, some days they ran errands, whatever, Grandpa was always there.

One morning Mother told Rebecca that she would not be going to Grandpa and Grandma's after school. Grandpa wasn't feeling well, she said. He was going to see the doctor. Rebecca was sorry Grandpa was sick, but she wasn't too worried. She got sick sometimes, but with a day or two in bed or perhaps a quick trip to the doctor, she was all right. She never even thought about how she would feel if Grandpa didn't get better. Well, Grandpa did get better, for a while, but soon there were many days when Rebecca couldn't go to Grandma and Grandpa's after school, because Grandpa just needed to rest. So she had to go to a friend's house instead.

One afternoon, just before school let out for the day, the teacher called Rebecca to the door of the

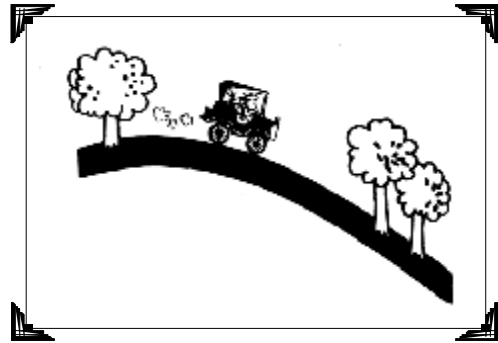
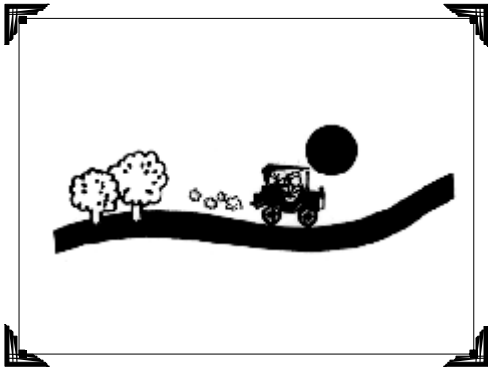
classroom. Standing just outside, she saw her pastor waiting. Teacher said that Mother had called and told her that the pastor was going to pick Rebecca up after school and take her home. Rebecca thought this was strange, but since her mother had called the teacher, she thought everything was okay. Rebecca liked the pastor, and they talked all the way home. But when they arrived, Rebecca saw several cars parked in the driveway. There was Grandma's car, and Aunt Suzie's car, and Daddy's car. What were all these people doing over in the middle of the afternoon, Rebecca wondered. When she went into the house, she met Mother in the hall. Her eyes were red like she had been crying. She put her arm around Rebecca and pulled her close. "You know that Grandpa has been very sick," she said. "Well, today his heart just couldn't pump any more blood so it stopped. Grandpa died this afternoon. He will sleep now until Jesus comes to wake him up. Then we will all go to heaven together."

Then Rebecca began to cry too. She knew Grandpa loved Jesus, and she knew that she loved Jesus, so she was sure they would be together in heaven. But she still felt sad about not having Grandpa with her right now. Who would take her to the library? And how would they finish the puzzle? And who would have time for her every day after school? Mother said it was all right to cry. It was all right to miss Grandpa now. Someone in everybody's family dies sooner or later, because death is a very sad part of living in a sinful world. But Rebecca was sure glad for Jesus. Now she was beginning to understand more about why He came to die on the cross. The pastor said at Grandpa's funeral that Jesus died so that everyone who dies but who loves Him will only sleep for a short time until Jesus wakes them up.



Some of you may know how Rebecca was feeling. Maybe someone close to you has died. Aren't you glad for Jesus, too? Jesus is always with us when we feel sad. When we cry, the Bible says Jesus cries too. That's because He loves us so much. He came here to be with us because He

wanted to share in our troubles. And now He is making preparation to come again so that everything that makes us sad will be wiped away, and everything will be made new. I'm looking forward to that day, aren't you?



# Journey into Intimacy

Helping Couples across the Marriage Map



# Journey into Intimacy

## Helping Couples across the Marriage Map

by Karen and Ron Flowers

### Introduction

Life in marriage is not unlike a journey across a countryside. There are high and low points in the terrain; roads that are rough in spots and smoother in others, and occasionally detours. Too frequently couples embark upon the trip, often with an inadequate map, perhaps without any awareness of road or weather conditions likely to influence their travel. Too few stop for fuel and provisions and some run out. Others fail to care for the vehicle and experience breakdown. A clear destination, better preparation, information about the landscape, and careful refueling and maintenance offer the best hope of a successful journey.

Marriage is a journey into intimacy. Each encourages the other toward divine ideals, while seeking to incorporate God's provisions for human brokenness and personal failings. Together they reach for deep levels of love, affection, companionship, and commitment. Together they face life's challenges and work to develop their relational skills so that they may be better able to effectively handle their family routine, cope with varying circumstances, and resolve issues of conflict or controversy. Side by side they form a partnership, each contributing talents and spiritual gifts so that they may do something great for God.

The resources in this section offer a fresh approach to marital growth. They provide a marital growth menu that includes information, reflection, skill-building, and ideas for enhancing romance, deepening friendship, and expanding marital commitment. They provide an opportunity for enrichment of a couple's life as they traverse that part of the marital terrain in which they find themselves.

### How to Use This Resource

The pieces within this resource are intended to provide some daily focused activities for a week of marital growth in the setting of the couple's home. Pastors or family ministries leaders may wish to adapt the materials to better suit their local situation or simply reproduce and distribute them as found here. An introductory letter (see "Pastoral Letter") to each couple will provide instruction, encouragement and the awareness that the church leadership is joining them in this period of marital growth.

Alternatively, the resources may be incorporated into a weekend seminar or a series of programs on marital growth.

### Contents of This Resource

Pastoral Letter

Seasons of Marriage

The Marriage Miracle

A Time for Dialogue

Marriage as Children of the Light

Learning to "One Another"

A Day to Remember

Re-digging the Well

A Journey Called Marriage

### Pastoral Letter

*[A personal letter (sample below) should introduce couples to the marital growth experiences.]*

Dear \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_:

We just want you to know how much we value you as members of our church! We want you to know, too, how much we care about the quality of your relationship as a married couple. Your church places such importance on strong families that the week of February 17-24 has been set aside as a special week for strengthening marriages worldwide.

We know your lives are full, but we also know that you place a high estimate on the love that binds you together—for your own sakes, for the sake of the children, for the sake of the community of believers and for the good of society. So we want to encourage you to take time to celebrate the good things in your marriage this week and also to challenge you to become intentional about marital growth. Enclosed you will find some ideas for a couple time each day this week. We hope they will provide a catalyst for sharing that will bring you encouragement as a couple and call you, in Christ, to stretch toward God's wildest dreams for your relationship.

We will be spending some quality time together this week too, just for ourselves. But we will also be praying for you. If there are issues right now that make communication difficult, know that all couples pass through seasons when they could benefit from talking to a professional, just as we need the services of our dentist or family doctor from time to time. You will find enclosed a list of several Christian counselors in our area. If we can be of further help, please speak to us.

*[You may wish to add a paragraph here about a special program planned for Christian Home Day, Sabbath, February 24.]*

May God bless us together as we celebrate His good gift of marriage.

Warm regards,

(Pastor and spouse)

Enclosures:

Marital growth activities *[These may be duplicated/adapted from pp. 24-31 in the Planbook.]*

List of Christian family counselors *[Pastors will need to provide this list from their area. If you do not have a list of counselors to whom you refer, one place to begin is to visit with several pastors of other denominations in your town/city and ask them for names of the counselors they are using. A personal visit to these counselors to get acquainted with them as the pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be very helpful. Your Conference Family Ministries Director may be able to provide additional names of reputable Christian counselors in your area.]*

## Seasons of Marriage

Before starting out on a long journey, a wise traveler will make every effort to determine what will most likely be encountered along the way—the road conditions, the weather, the availability of services, the possibilities in case of emergency. Marriage is a journey through stages or seasons, some of which are predictable and similar for many couples, others of which are more or less distinctive in the life of a particular couple and often times unexpected. Learning to view changes as potential seasons for growth will also help couples to redefine roles, beliefs and behaviors and negotiate differences as the seasons pass.

In his book *Seasons of a Marriage*, H. Norman Wright identifies six typical seasons in marriage across the developmental life span of a couple. *As you review these seasons together, talk about your marriage journey. Is your marriage following a similar path? Where have you taken a different fork in the road, for what reasons? What have been the hills and the valleys in your journey together? What storms have you survived? Who has supported you, helped you over the rough spots? What have you learned that makes you hopeful about the future?*

**The season of expectation.** Most couples begin their journey together with each partner making assumptions about what their life together will be like, often without checking with the other. Thus a primary task of this marital season is to identify both partners' expectations, evaluate whether or not they are realistic and reasonable, and work toward those that are healthy.

**The twenties and thirties.** Couples in this season are beginning to settle down. Five primary tasks occupy their relational energies: defining roles, creating new relationships with parents, transforming their romantic attraction into a love based on steady commitment, beginning a family if they so choose, and learning to be separate as individuals and yet connected as a couple. All the while, they are pouring enormous energy into career, friendships and other priorities.

**Mid-life.** Mid-life men, weary of the stress of the workplace, often turn toward home and intimacy while their wives, released from the care of small children, turn outward and become more autonomous. Flexibility is essential in this stage of accepting what is possible and what is not. It is a time for learning patience, endurance and contentment.

**Empty nest.** With children grown and gone, healthy adjustment involves developing a new sense of intimacy, new roles with children, and a new range of friendships and interests.

**Role reversal.** In this season we become parents to our aging parents, coping with their decline and passing, and recognizing the inevitability of our own aging and mortality.

**Bereavement.** The primary challenge of widowhood, the final season, is to complete the process of grieving. This means emotionally separating ourselves from the deceased spouse, adjusting to life without him or her, and taking up a new life with new relationships and possibilities.

## The Marriage Miracle

Read and reflect together on the story from John 2:1-12.

**Permission to Celebrate.** Jesus presence at the wedding feast at Cana showed Him to be One who had a social nature. Parties and social events were not off-limits to Him. People invited Him and He enjoyed the experience. The serious business of the work of the Kingdom did not stop Him from entering into fellowship and the light-hearted spirit of a wedding reception, a family and community get-together. *What are the implications of Jesus' action for your marriage relationship?*

**A Wedding Inaugural for the Messianic Age.** A wedding ceremony marked the climax of the Creator's activity when He made the *first* man and woman. But sin has radically altered the relationship between the sexes and the institution of marriage. Now, as Creator becomes Re-creator, His first work in the restoration of all that had been lost is at a wedding. *How might the following passages about Christ's redemptive work be directly applied to your marriage?*

1. The kingdom of God *has come* to us in Christ (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:21).
2. Believers are rescued from the powers of this evil age (Gal. 1:4) and enabled to taste of the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:5).
3. In Christ there is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17).
4. As Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, we may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19).
5. My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:19).

**Water to Wine.** Jesus' first miracle of changing water into wine was about much more than saving an ill-prepared family embarrassment. The water pots at the wedding feast were filled with the best water, the purification water of the Jews. This water represented the best that human beings had been able to do to care for sin, in this case the effects of sin on marriage. But all these rituals become meaningless in the presence of Jesus who wants to radically transform marriage to represent His creation ideals — equality, mutuality, a loving co-regency of husband and wife over all that God has placed in their hands. Christian marriages, in Christ, will be as radically different from the marriages around them as water was perceived to be inferior to the best wine. "Like every 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" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 64).

*How have you as a couple experienced the brokenness that sin has brought to marriage? If Jesus were to begin a new work of re-creation in your relationship today, where would you first like to feel His healing touch? Ask Him together for the first miracle you would like Him to work in the way you relate to one another. Talk about how you can prepare yourselves to receive His grace.*

## A Time For Dialogue . . . My Gift to You

*Read the following passage together and talk about your hopes and expectations for this week of marital growth together.*

I come to dialogue with you in search of mutual understanding, not in pursuit of victory. I want to share my most precious possession, myself, with you. Emotional warning flags are fluttering all over the place, telling me that this is risky business, and I know this. But I want to take this risk for you because I love you and want to make this an act of love. I know that there is no gift of love without this gift of myself through self-disclosure.

I know also that I am *asking* through this self-revelation. I am asking first for your understanding and acceptance. I am also inviting you to reciprocate, to share yourself with me. You, too, will know instinctively a sense of risk. It may be that my taking this risk for you will empower you to take a risk for me. Whenever you are ready for that risk, I will be here for you. Do not feel that you must respond to me on my terms or at my time. Love is freeing, and so my love for you must always leave you free to respond in your own way and at your own time.

So I come to you in dialogue, wanting you to know me and willing to take the risk of transparency and the revelation of my deepest feelings. More than that, I want to know you and share your feelings. And when I have put aside all my games and facades and left myself naked before you, please stay with me and clothe me with the gentle garments of your understanding. For this is the essence of the love I need, the love I am stretching to be able to give.

Adapted from *The Secret of Staying in Love* by John Powell, S.J. © 1974 Tabor Publishing. Used by permission.

## Marriage as Children of the Light

*The following passages establish God's high ideals for marriage. No marriage on earth perfectly embodies these ideals. But the good news of the gospel is that Christian husbands and wives are declared to be perfect marriage partners in God's sight because Jesus' perfection as Bridegroom and Husband is ours when we are in Him. What a gift! Contemplate it together.*

*Because the Kingdom of God has come to us in Christ, a new season is born in our marriages. We are no longer in darkness. We now live in His marvelous light! Talk together about how you will respond to the gospel's call to stretch toward God's ideals, to as Paul puts it, "live as children of the light" (Ephesians 5:8). What steps will you take personally to respond to the counsel given below in your relationship with your spouse? How can you encourage one another as you move step by step together out of darkness into light in your everyday relationship as husband and wife?*

There are many who regard the expression of love as a weakness, and they maintain a reserve that repels others. . . . We should beware of this error. Love cannot long exist without expression. Let not the heart of one connected with you starve for the want of kindness and sympathy.

Let each give love rather than exact it. Cultivate that which is noblest in yourselves, and be quick to recognize the good qualities in each other. The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims. (Ellen White, *Happiness Homemade*, p. 25)

Though difficulties, perplexities, and discouragements may arise, let neither husband nor wife harbor the thought that their union is a mistake or a disappointment. Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. (Ellen White, *Happiness Homemade*, p. 24)

*Respond to each other by finishing the following:*

*I want to give love rather than exact it by . . .*

*I want to show my appreciation and respect for you by . . .*

*I want to continue my early attentions by . . .*

*I want to encourage you by . . .*

*I want to offer you the warmth of true friendship by . . .*



### Learning to “One Another”

One of the recurring themes of the New Testament is the call to “one another” fellow believers in Christ. Read the following passages in several modern versions, making a note of the gist of each passage as you read:

Romans 14:13; 15:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Galatians 5:13, 15, 26 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:29, 31-32; 5:19, 21 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 3:9, 13, 16-17 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 11:33 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 13:12 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 10:25 \_\_\_\_\_

James 4:11; 5:9, 16 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_

1 John 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_

*Reflect together on how each of these passages might be applied to your marriage relationship. What changes would you personally have to make to grow toward these evidences of the presence of Christ in your life?*

While marriage is intended by God to add a bright thread of joy to our personal lives, marriage is also ministry. Reflect on the following passage:

Our sympathies are to overflow the boundaries of self and the enclosure of family walls. There are precious opportunities for those who will make their homes a blessing to others. Social influence is a wonderful power. . . . The work to which we are called does not require wealth or social position or great ability. It requires a kindly, self-sacrificing spirit and a steadfast purpose. A lamp, however small, if kept steadily burning, may be the means of lighting many other lamps. Our sphere of influence may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquirements limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes. If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life and beauty and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth. (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 354-355)

*Talk together about how God might use your marriage to bless others and to bring the Good News into their lives.*

### A Day to Remember

Pick a day this week to give your spouse a special gift. Need ideas?

- *Make a collection of wild flowers together.*
- *Browse through the library, sharing books you'd like to read or have read.*
- *Spend half a day accomplishing a task together that you have been avoiding, then relax.*
- *Go stargazing.*
- *Start a sustainable exercise program together.*
- *Get your picture taken together and frame for your home, workplace, family members.*
- *Volunteer together to help in a community service project.*
- *Prepare and enjoy a new recipe together.*
- *Exchange back rubs with a good smelling body lotion.*
- *Find a quiet place to talk, only this time write out your conversation back and forth in silence.*
- *Make lists of 25 things your spouse does for you and say "thanks."*
- *Share stories from your lives as children.*
- *Memorize a passage of Scripture together.*
- *Go exploring.*
- *Create a family tree that goes back at least 3 generations for each of you.*
- *Practice the instruments you used to play.*
- *Take one step toward making your bedroom a more attractive place.*
- *Make a long-range plan to accomplish 3 important couple goals in the next year.*
- *Go bird-watching.*
- *Create a "couple time capsule"--a collection of things that symbolize and describe your life together right now and seal it in a container for opening five years from now.*
- *Go fly a kite.*
- *Make "as needed" love coupons to exchange with each other.*
- *Answer "wild questions" like "If you had a thousand dollars and had to spend it all tomorrow, what would you spend it on?" "What have you done recently that you are proud of?" "What famous living person would you like to spend a day with?" "What do you know now that you wish you didn't?" "What is your favorite spot to be alone?"*
- *Listen to your spouse's favorite music.*
- *Learn about your spouse's hobbies or help one another get involved in an interest they have always wanted to pursue.*
- *Plant a flower garden.*
- *Go on a picnic.*
- *"Kidnap" your spouse by secretly arranging for their responsibilities and taking them on an unexpected outing.*
- *Read the Song of Solomon aloud together.*
- *Admire a sunset.*
- *Write a letter to your in-laws thanking them for your spouse and let your spouse read it before mailing.*

## Redigging the Well

Reflect on the following passages:

**An Old Testament Story.** Isaac and Rebekah were living in enemy territory because of a famine in their homeland. God had affirmed their decision to live there and repeated to Isaac His promise of abundant blessing first made to Abraham. But like his father, Isaac feared for his life because he was married to a beautiful, much desired woman. So he lied to the men who asked about her, saying she was his sister. But when Abimelech, the king, looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife, he confronted Isaac with his lie. While the king gave strict orders to his men to protect Isaac and Rebekah from molestation, soon their wealth became the envy of the Philistines. And so it was that “all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth” (Genesis 26:15). Ordered to move on by Abimelech, Isaac settled again in another valley where his father had also lived. There “Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died” (vs. 18). And “Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there . . . and told him [Isaac], . . . “We’ve found water!” (vs. 19, 32).

**Advice from the wise man.** Drink water from your own cistern,  
running water from your own well.  
Let them be yours alone,  
never to be shared with strangers.  
May your fountain be blessed,  
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.  
A loving doe, a graceful deer—  
may her breasts satisfy you always,  
may you ever be captivated by her love.  
(Proverbs 5:17-19)

**Jesus’ conversation at a well with a woman with five failed marriages.** Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” “Sir, give me this water!” is her immediate response. (See John 4:1-30)

For reflection:

Some ways in which our relationship is like a well in the desert . . .  
Our acknowledgment of our need for “Living Water” in our relationship . . .  
Some things in our marriage that are like dirt and debris which stop up our well . . .  
Some things we can do to keep our marriage well clean and fresh . . .  
If we could start digging a new well in our relationship right now, I would like it to be . . .  
My commitment to you to drink water only from our own well . . .

## A Journey Called Marriage

**The Inevitability of Change.** D. H. Lawrence, in his book *We Need One Another*, writes: “I should say the relation between any two decently married people changes profoundly every few years, often without their knowing anything about 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. . . . It is like rivers flowing on, through new country, always unknown.” *In what sense is this true of your marriage? In what ways were you prepared or not prepared for the changes you have experienced in your circumstances, in each of you as persons, in your relational life as a couple?*

**Predictable Journey.** David Augsburger in his book *Sustaining Love*,<sup>1</sup> suggests that persons who stay married to one partner may experience as many as four marriages within a marriage:

1. **Dream Marriage.** During this early period, couples have very high expectations for their relationship. They express feelings cautiously or not at all and they tolerate, accommodate or overlook differences—all to avoid conflict. Romantic feelings are perceived as intimacy. The dream is largely an illusion which must be recognized for what it is for love to deepen.

2. **Disillusionment Marriage.** When disillusionment strikes, the dream vaporizes. Couples, weary of accommodation and avoidance, often turn to manipulation to get what they want. They try to eliminate differences by attempting to change their partner, and deal with conflict by fighting, bargaining and threatening. Intimacy is intense when things are going well, absent when there is tension. Relationships are often competitive and adversarial. Hope fades, and life together becomes empty and alienated. Many go looking for dream again during this period, and many marriages die. But disillusionment will inevitably follow dream with the new partner just as it did with the original spouse.

3. **Discovery Marriage.** During this phase, couples discover each other. They learn to communicate and to own and express feelings with freedom, candor and caring. They discover that differences both make us unique individuals and offer creative possibilities within the marriage. They learn to fight more fairly and seek mutually satisfactory solutions to conflicts more quickly. There is balance in their relationship between separateness as individuals and connectedness as a couple. They become intentional about stretching toward equality in their relationship. True intimacy is now possible and hope rises.

4. **Depth Marriage.** This stage can only dawn in a marriage as deeper levels of maturity dawn in the personal lives of husband and wife. Now couples genuinely share and listen, with a free flow of both feelings and thoughts. Both delight in, even cultivate, the differentness of the other. Conflict is accepted as a healthy process and the couple utilizes it to work for mutual growth. Intimacy becomes more wholistic:—emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual as well as physical. Both partners feel secure, whether near or far. The future is full of promise.

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<sup>1</sup>1988, Regal Books, Ventura, CA 93003, pp. 24-25. Used by permission.

*In which of these “marriages” do you find yourselves right now? What is hopeful about understanding these stages? What would facilitate your growth into the next “marriage”? How can you work to put your ideas in place in your church to benefit both yourselves and others?*

# Bridging the Generations

*A Resource for a Small Group of Parents and Grandparents  
by Karen and Ron Flowers*

## Introduction

The gospel of Christ, as it is received in the mind and heart of a parent or grandparent, ushers in a healthy respect for oneself and one's child and one's grandchild. Christ is honored as parents and grandparents approach their relationships with one another and with the children in their families with attitudes which reflect the impact of the gospel upon their hearts. The following resource is designed to provide information and a process for growth in relationships between the generations.

## Theme

Grandparents and parents can improve their relationships by showing respect for each other, focusing on each other's strengths and working to resolve issues surrounding the role of the older generation in the life of the younger family.

## How to Use These Resources

These resources may be duplicated and distributed for use by individuals and families at home, classes and seminars, or support groups. In some cases it may be appropriate to gather parents only, in others, grandparents only. In still others, both parents and grandparents may benefit from meeting together. A special multigenerational program could bring three generations together. In situations where grandparents and parents are not available to attend together, "superfamilies" of parents and grandparents may be formed at random. Though not naturally related, the results of the learning experience derived in the mixed groups will carry over to the natural relationships. Families could also be encouraged to share with members across the miles by letter or by phone.

## Getting Acquainted Icebreaker

Invite parents to introduce their parents to the group (or have a member of the younger generation introduce the elder member). Invite grandparents to show photographs or tell an interesting anecdote about their grandchildren.

## Parent/Grandparent Concerns

Poll the group to discover major areas of interest and concern about intergenerational relationships. Parents and grandparents will have items to add to the list. You may wish to use the following list as a starter and have the group add to it.

## Parent/Grandparent Concerns List

- Communication and listening between the generations.
- How the different generations can show respect for each other.
- Visitation with grandchildren—frequency, duration, ground rules.
- How to handle differences of opinion about childrearing—discipline, etc.

Dealing with favoritism.

Appropriate/inappropriate involvement of grandparents in the lives of children/grandchildren and vice versa.

What it means to “leave father and mother” and yet “honor father and mother.”

Alleviating the stress felt by the “sandwich generation” (those who feel responsible for the care both of their children and their parents).

Making decisions about care of the elderly.

### **Small Group Guidelines**

When there is the intention to have small group discussion, invite the group to commit themselves to the following guidelines:

**Speak for yourself.** Share your own feelings. Do not assume you know how another person feels.

**Share voluntarily.** No one should feel pressured to share. Silence is respected.

**Respect the sacred circle around the family.** Avoid sharing in the presence of the group aspects of family relationships which would make any family member uncomfortable.

**Maintain confidences.** Anything that is said in the meeting is not to be shared with others who were not a part of the support setting.

### **Part 1: A Bible Reflection on a Three-Generation Household**

Read 2 Timothy 1:15. Unfolding the intergenerational family dynamics implied in this verse could form the nucleus for several meetings, each with a different focus.

**Life under one roof.** Discuss what you think it was like for the three generations—grandmother Lois, mother Eunice, and child Timothy—to be a household together. What strengths are to be found in such an arrangement? What might some of the difficulties be? How do you resolve the challenges of different schedules, different habits, the needs for individual personal space?

**Conveying values across generations.** Paul pays a high compliment to Grandmother Lois when he speaks of her sincere faith, a faith which was espoused by three generations. How does the transmission of faith take place in families? What emotional and spiritual qualities in Lois would increase the likelihood that her faith would be adopted by her daughter and grandson? What attitude should a grandparent take toward children/grandchildren who have not espoused the grandparent’s values?

**Living with unbelievers; living with loss.** References to Timothy’s grandfather and father are absent in Paul’s comment about Timothy’s family. This may be because they were not Christian, or they may not have been alive. The fact that Timothy was not circumcised (Acts 16:1-3) may imply that his father was a non-Jewish man antagonistic to the things of the Lord. What challenges to the passing of one’s faith are present when a spouse is not a Christian believer? How might Lois support her adult daughter Eunice whose spouse is not a Christian? What kind of support might a parent provide to an adult child and his/her children whose spouse has passed away?

## Part 2: Building Intergenerational Strengths

As grandparents age and their tangible contributions to community and family diminish, there may be a tendency for them to feel less valuable or even unwanted. To the extent that a society is youth-oriented, older people may be labeled as unproductive, or the physical changes associated with normal aging may be exaggerated. The younger should look for the positive in their elders, to reassure and reinforce their sense of competence. An important part of respecting our elders is focusing on their strengths and abilities and the contributions they can make from the vantage point of their wisdom and experience.

Lifelong experiences can increase humor, insight and an understanding of the grand scheme of things. It can enable older people to be expert counselors, mediators, keepers of the lineage, writers, storytellers and managers. Many are reservoirs of historical facts and stories, especially about the family. (United Nations Occasional Papers Series, No. 4, p. 5)

The ideas which follow offer an opportunity to affirm grandparents and also to strengthen family bonds through understanding the family's life and story.

**Family genealogy.** A great deal of understanding can come to a family through the setting out of its genealogical history over several generations. Grandparents are often an invaluable resource in finding such information. Parents and grandparents can begin to explore their family "roots" or "tree" using a chart such as Handout # 1. This or a similar format can be enlarged to provide space for interesting facts and comments about various family members. *Caution:* Families can be a source of great delight and healthy pride or they can be a source of pain and discouragement. Thus it should be explained that the construction of a family genealogy may be painful in part. It may be too painful for some. However, families should be encouraged that each individual ultimately bears responsibility for his own actions and emotions. Troubles in families in past generations can help us understand our own struggles, but choices made in the past need not determine or continue to influence current generations.

**Story listening.** An important dimension of the relationship with grandparents is the stories that they have to tell. The telling of these stories can be informative about family history and about the development and maintenance of faith across time. They will also offer insights into the life and personality of the teller that will encourage deeper bonding across the generations. You may wish to use a tape recorder or take handwritten notes of a conversation with one or both of your grandparents or a grandparent in your "superfamily" group.

## Part 3: Leaving Father and Mother

Read Genesis 2:24; Exodus 20:12. These two verses taken together describe the balance between "leave" and "honor" which is to characterize the relationship of an adult child with his or her parents. "Leave" implies separation, a differentiation on the part of the younger generation and a "letting go" on the part of the older generation. "Honor" implies a continuing relationship, a proper respect shown by the younger generation toward the older generation who have fulfilled their responsibility as godly parents.



The following quotations refer to the process of separation by an adult child from parents. Read the quotations, then discuss them.

There can be no marriage without leaving. . . . Leaving is the price of happiness. There must be a clean and clear cut. . . . Real leaving and real letting go—not only outwardly, but also inwardly—is difficult for everyone. (Trobisch, 1971, pp. 12, 13, 15)

These words [*leave his father and his mother*] do not recommend a forsaking of filial duty and respect toward father and mother, but refer primarily to the fact that a man's wife is to be first in his affections and that his first duty is toward her. His love for her is to exceed, though certainly not to supersede, a very proper love for his parents. (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 227)

The way in which the young adult leaves determines whether he or she takes a responsive (choosing) position or a reactive (obligated) position in relation to the family. With an effective launching, young adults can return home by choice rather than feeling obligated to be there out of a sense of guilt. (Brown and Christensen, 1986, p. 34)

**Discussion possibilities.** A possible lead-in question for a whole group discussion might be, “What was particularly meaningful or interesting to you in these quotations?” Other questions to prompt discussion: How does one “leave,” yet “honor” parents? How can this separation process take place adequately without sacrificing the honor due to parents? In what way must the honored parents respect their adult offspring? To what extent does the separation process continue to have an effect on relationships throughout life?

If extended families are in attendance together, an optional approach would be to give time for writing brief responses to the following statements and then invite pairs of grandparents and parents to talk together. When family members are not present, the writing could be done and the responses shared later with their family members.

*Grandparents to parents:*

Feelings I had as you became an adult and I let you go . . .

I feel honored when . . .

Things about our relationship which are very good . . .

Things about our relationship which are pretty good, but could be improved . . .

Things I can do to improve our relationship. . .

*Parents to grandparents:*

Feelings I had as I matured and shouldered adult responsibilities . . .

I feel respected by you when . . .

Things about our relationship which are very good . . .

Things about our relationship which are pretty good, but could be improved . . .

Things I can do to improve our relationship. . .

# Our Family Tree

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Who We Are and Who We Came From

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Father's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Mother's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Father's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Mother's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Paternal Grandmother's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Maternal Grandfather's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Maternal Grandmother's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Paternal Grandfather's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Paternal Grandmother's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Maternal Grandfather's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Maternal Grandmother's full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Paternal Grandfather's full name

## Let's Make a Memory

Busy parents often let opportunities to make memories pass because of time and energy pressures. Grandparents can be memory makers for the whole family. Memories may be the most valuable legacy one can leave to a family. And they need not take a great expenditure of money. Just a little time and a watchful eye. Here are a few ideas.

### *Making News*

Many small communities have a newspaper and will publish a short news story and photograph of a young person doing something noteworthy, like collecting food for the poor at Halloween, distributing lunches to the homeless, winning a prize at the church talent show, growing oversize garden vegetables, etc. The event need not be spectacular, but an article and photograph about your grandchild in the paper is a sure esteem builder. To submit a story, write a paragraph or two beginning with the who, when, what, where basics and expanding with more details. Contact the editor's office for directions on how to submit your article.

### *Creative Fingers*

Create eye-catching stationery in your own family print shop. Using blank file cards, a stamp pad, and one or more colored pens, imprint fingerprints one at a time on the cards and then use the pens and your imagination to turn the fingerprint into animals, cartoons, designs. Family and friends won't soon forget receiving one of your unusual cards, and best of all, you can use them to keep the mailboxes full between you and your grandchildren.

### *Pop, Pop, and More Pop*

Spread a clean sheet on the floor and put an electric popcorn popper in the middle. With everyone sitting on the sheet, start the popper with the lid *off*. Let everyone try to catch their own bowl full.

### *An Umbrella Treasure Hunt*

Walk through a field of tall grass dragging an opened umbrella behind you through the grass. Stop every few feet and put what you have collected in a jar or plastic bag. When you get home, examine the interesting treasures your umbrella has gathered. Better be prepared for lots of stimulating questions.

### *A Boarding School Survival Kit*

If you have grandchildren away at boarding school, take note of their examination schedule and send a package of goodies timed to arrive at the beginning of that week. Wrap items in individual packages, each with a note of encouragement to let them know you are cheering them on.

### *Once-a-month Film Service*

Send your children a roll of film once a month for recording their everyday moments—talking and playing with their friends, eating, working, hugging, doing homework, etc. Collect the exposed film every few months and have it developed. Keep a picture album in your home to enjoy with your grandchildren when they visit. Make a slide show for viewing when the extended family is together.

### *A Monogram Garden*

Place a piece of cloth that will hold water in a shallow pan. Help your grandchild “write” his or her initials on the damp cloth in seeds that will sprout quickly (mustard greens and water cress seeds are perfect). To create the perfect environment for quick germination, stretch plastic wrap across the pan, cover it with newspaper to keep it dark, and put the pan in a warm place. Remove the plastic wrap and newspaper as soon as the seeds begin to sprout. Place the pan in a warm sunny place and watch your grandchild’s monogram grow.

### *Bean Toss Game*

Place different sized bowls inside each other. Beans tossed into the smallest bowl count for five points, the next largest bowl, 3 points, and the largest bowl, 1 point. Each person gets 20 beans. Grandparents are handicapped by greater throwing distance. The winner chooses the dinner menu.

### *Whodunit?*

Place the name of each of your grandchildren and yourselves in a hat and allow each person to draw a name but not their own. Then enter into a pact to do a secret something nice for the person whose name you have drawn in the next month. At the end of the month, try to guess who did what for whom. To make it more fun, do lots of things nice for everyone so it will be harder to guess.

### *A Birthday Interview*

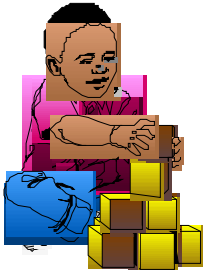
Interview your grandchildren on their birthdays. Tape record their ideas, feelings, fun things that have happened during the year, their accomplishments, etc. Record updated growth statistics on the label as well as the date, time and place. After making the new recording, listen together to the recording you made last year. You may also want to save the daily newspaper from each birthday. They will make a fascinating gift on your grandchild’s 21st birthday!

### *A Memory Verse Vacation*

Challenge your grandchildren to memorize an agreed upon passage of Scripture with you each week. Get maps for each grandchild and yourself for the place you decide you would like to travel to. For every person who memorizes the passage, move yourselves along the map 10 miles. You may want to make one another appropriate “souvenirs” that constitute reminders or applications of the texts you are learning. Plan a celebration upon arrival at your destination.



## When a Grandchild Visits



\* Discuss family rules with the parents so that you're cognizant of what the child is, and is not, allowed to do.

\* Follow the child's typical routine. He or she will feel more secure if the schedule is close to normal. This is especially true of bedtime routines. Be prepared for some disruption of your home and your routine.

\* Find out about any food likes and dislikes the child may have. Be prepared to make reasonable adjustments to your menu to accommodate grandchildren. Loss of appetite on the part of the child is not unusual due to change in environment and separation from parents. Keep portions small and do not force children to eat. Do not punish by forcing or withholding food. Natural hunger by the time of the next meal will generally take care of the failure to eat.

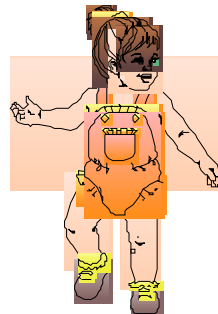
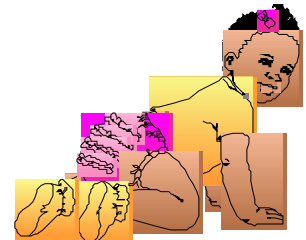
\* Resist offering sweets or snacks between meals.

\* If possible, use unbreakable dishes at mealtime. Put fragile decorations out of reach.

\* When bathing the child, have everything you need close at hand. Do not leave the child in a tub unattended.

\* Keep pills and medicines out of reach of children.

\* Children take more time and energy than you may remember. Plan to adjust your schedule to provide adequate time for play with them, for reading to them, and for caring for their various needs.



## Other Helps and Ideas for Bridging the Generations Seminar

### Student/senior citizen supper forums

Food to eat, although important, is not as important as the food for thought shared, understanding gained, and bridges between generations built as younger and older come together several times a year in what has become a very popular Youth-in-Action program—the Student/Senior Citizen Supper Forums. Youth-in-Action is a community program in Hanover, New Hampshire, that facilitates high school age students making a difference by volunteering their time in service to others. The Supper Forums is a simple idea. Teenagers and senior citizens are invited to share a light supper, and to share ideas on a predetermined topic chosen because of its interest to both groups. . . . Always there are relationships improved and frequently lasting friendships blossom, even between people “scared stiff” of each other prior to these interchanges. (*Parenting for Peace & Justice* Network Newsletter, No. 51, p. 6)

### Discussion questions for parenting our parents support groups

How do you honor a parent’s individuality as their dependence on others is increasing?

How do you and your family handle the increasing mutual responsibility, given the fact that your parent(s) are now dependent on you?

### Grandparents speak to children and grandchildren

- We want—and need—emotional more than financial support.
- We want involvement, participation, communication.
- We want to continue sharing our lives with you, and we would like you to share your lives with us.
- We want—so long as it is financially and physically possible—to maintain our independence.

Source: American Association of Retired Persons.

### Tapping into the long-distance grandparent resource

- Exchange cassette tapes between grandparents and grandchildren to keep each other up-to-date on life events.
- Younger children will enjoy a short bedtime story by phone with the grandparents.
- Clip articles/pictures from magazines and send short notes back and forth telling what you think about the articles/pictures.
- Children often need adults other than their parents to talk to. Give grandparents permission to counsel with your children and then provide times for the children to visit alone with them so they will have opportunity to talk.

Source: Adapted from *Dads and Moms*, September, 1984.

### Reconciliation

Young man, you renegade, you rebel brash,  
Flaunting all your “with it” trash,  
Hot rodder, upstart, novice, hood,  
Disrupter of what’s decent, good;  
Contain your nonsense, keep your scorn;  
I knew what’s true ere you were born.

Antiquated one, I beg you, please,  
Keep your views, your Parkinson’s disease.  
That varicose philosophy you won’t renege  
Is quite uncool; I cannot dig.  
Your rancid knowledge—I don’t need it;  
Your stale advice—I’ll never heed it.

Aged sir, you once were daring, brash—remember?  
You too passed March and June before December.  
Turn up your hearing aid, or you may never learn:  
Sans youth the globe would someday cease to turn.

And you, young fellow, will grow older every day;  
Eventually you’ll turn thirty—what dismay!  
That ancient one is you, come 19,000 days,  
And kindness, remember, often ricochets.

You, snow-on-the-roof type (please don’t be offended),  
And you, green sap-filled stick (no inference intended),  
Come both, be reconciled, to all men be a brother;  
As bow to arrow, “useless each without the other.”\*

## Concerns in Intergenerational Relationships

**Preserving independence.** Older adults typically cherish their independence. Likewise, most adult children desire independence for their parents, partially because parental independence may also to some degree free the adult child.

**Communication.** While lifelong patterns of communication tend to endure into aging, families that successfully adapt to aging have typically succeeded in sharing individual and mutual concerns. Communication failures that do occur may stem from the fact that adult children often have the best understanding of their parent's physical needs and the least understanding of their social concerns, particularly loneliness. Differences in generational values and lifestyle also complicate communication.

**Adapting to constant change.** With aging family relationships, problems and resources are in almost constant flux. A change in one aspect of life such as housing, will very likely start a "chain reaction" of changes in social, psychological, or physical wellbeing. Once the fact of constant change is accepted, families are freer to choose appropriate solutions to existing difficulties, acknowledging that the future will bring more change and, hopefully, more appropriate solutions.

**Changing roles.** The older parent must come to see the adult child as an adult with his or her own life and responsibilities. Moving from the rebellion and emancipation of adolescence and young adulthood, the adult child must face the parent as a mature adult with a new and different role.

**Balancing loyalties and responsibilities.** Daughters and sons in middle age as well as newly retired people with aging parents face the dilemmas of conflicting desires, needs, and responsibilities. While advocates call for more family support of the aged, an "old person centered" view of the aging family may not be realistic or beneficial to the total family. The needs and desires of each generation must be considered and balanced.

**Knowledge of resources.** Families must know their own internal strengths, both material and not, with which they face aging. Knowledge of and access to community resources, including services, are also essential parts of the family's resource storehouse.

Source: Excerpted and adapted from Clara Collette Pratt speech before Adult Education Association Annual Meeting, October 25, 1978, Portland, Oregon.

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# Life after Loss

*A Seminar on How to Adjust to Loss*

*by Larry Yeagley, Pastor, North American Division*

## Theme

Some families experience grief for a season of their lives. This seminar takes a look at the variety of losses experienced by people, typical reactions to those losses, ways we can regain equilibrium after loss, how and why loss will have lifelong effects on those who lose, and how marriage relationships change during acute grief.

## Setting

Best results are experienced when this material is shared in an informal setting with chairs in an open circle, allowing for a writing board or flip chart. You may want to use an overhead projector, but sometimes the fan noise distracts the attention of participants. The presenter is seated except for when he or she is writing on the board or chart.

## Format

Some of the material needs to be presented in teaching fashion, but whenever the presenter can engage the group in discussion it should be done. The material should not be presented in long segments, but in short segments followed by group reaction to the concepts presented. This allows the presenter to give important information without using lecture style.

## Introduction

Loss began in a place that God designed for our eternal happiness. When the first human family decided to please themselves, loss of innocence occurred. Freedom to openly walk with God was gone. Loss of trust and harmonious family relationships led to blaming and finally murder. Now loss of life itself was experienced. Death and sorrow clouded the once-perfect environment. We have been experiencing loss ever since.

We now lose from conception to the grave. We can lose *in utero* when parents smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, and indulge in other drugs. When parents fight and use loud angry voices the unborn reacts negatively. Newborns lose that warm spot under mother's heart where they are rocked amniotically and fed umbilically. Small children lose position when a sibling is born. They also experience separation anxiety when they are taken to daycare and nursery school. Teens lose identity, dependence, and the security of childhood. Young adults lose their parental home when they go to college or marry. Middle-aged people lose dreams and children who leave the nest. Older people lose health, independence, mobility, friends, and future. Loss is an integral part of life. Some losses are necessary. Some losses are sudden and devastating. All loss makes its impact on the individual and on the family system.

During our time together we will look at loss, typical reactions to loss, how we can make adjusting to loss easier, how and why loss changes us permanently, and changes in the marriage relationship during acute grief.

## **PART I: The Broad Spectrum of Loss**

All of you in this group have experienced loss of some type. In order to show that loss encompasses much more than death and divorce, let's make a list of the losses we are apt to encounter.

***Exercise:** Go to the board and invite the group to help you make a list of losses. The following list may be helpful if the group doesn't come up with many losses: death, divorce, health, money, property, friendships, home, job, faith, ideals, reputation, youth, independence, family, hope, dreams, career, virginity, body parts, body functions, eyesight, hearing, childhood, role, security, authority, respect.*

Sometimes it helps to categorize losses. This helps us to understand why our losses have such a powerful effect on us.

**Situational loss.** An example is losing a job and community because your spouse has been transferred to another branch of the company.

**Maturation loss.** This can be loss of hair or endurance because of aging, or loss of dependency because you have become too old to live with parents.

**Accidental loss.** A machine at work malfunctions and severs two of your fingers, or you lose your pet when a car strikes it.

**Chronic loss.** This includes things like systemic and incurable diseases, birth defects, and loss of mobility or speech due to stroke.

***Group sharing:** You can close this part of the seminar by asking the group to share briefly the types of loss they experienced or are experiencing.*

As we come to the end of this part of our discussion, we need to make one point very clear. No matter what loss you have experienced, the pain is real. We must not minimize the loss we have had because we think others have suffered more severe loss. All loss should be taken seriously. All loss calls for appropriate measures leading to assimilation and accommodation.

## **PART II: Reactions to Loss**

Early authors on the topic of grief maintained that grief is a series of steps or stages. This angered many grieving persons because they felt that they were being squeezed into the same mold. The stage theory disregarded their uniqueness as persons. One author insisted that if a person missed one of the stages, he or she would have to begin all over again. It is little wonder that support group leaders met with resistance.

How we grieve after loss is determined by many factors such as age, sex, ethnic background, cultural conditioning, personality type, relationship with the person who is lost, nature of the loss, and nature of one's support system. No two people grieve exactly alike, therefore any discussion of grief reactions must be *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*.

Many people who grieve don't know what to expect. They sometimes think they are losing their sanity. Grief seems like so much craziness, but a grieving person is not crazy. Grief reactions are normal, an indication that the entire person is attempting to regain balance after a major blow to a life-script.

***Exercise:** Let's make a list of some of the reactions with which you are familiar. At this point, go to the board and invite the group to share 3 types of reactions. Listed under each type are some reactions that will help to fill out the list made by the group.*

**Emotional reactions.** Sadness, anger, guilt, disbelief, emptiness, helplessness, hopelessness, shock, fear, loneliness, confusion, lethargy, despair.

**Physical reactions.** Fatigue, insomnia, loss of memory, poor concentration, reduced salivary flow, sighing, pressure in the chest, tightness in the throat, trembling inside, nausea.

**Behavioral reactions.** Withdrawal, clinging, super philanthropy, displaced anger, agitation, avoidance of reminders, obsessiveness with reminders, engaged in many distracting activities.

Acute grief brings many of these reactions, but fortunately we do not experience all of them. It is important to allow for individual differences. Don't compare yourself with others.

Grief reactions come because we are reeling from a devastating blow. We are desperately trying to regain some type of balance. Slowly we are assimilating the reality of what has happened. This produces reactions that are uncharacteristic of us, reactions that we do not fully understand.

Try to change your perspective on emotional pain. Tell yourself that your pain is an indication that you are facing the reality of your loss. Make a decision that you will not avoid the pain and that you will experience it fully. Remember, experiencing the pain is the gateway to adjusting to your loss.

### **PART III: Learning to Live with Loss**

Some years ago I attended a brief intensive course on grief taught by Dr. William Worden at the University of Chicago. He described the 4 tasks of grieving:

**The First Task: Believe that the loss happened.** Active grief does not begin until a person acknowledges the reality of loss. When a person is unable to accomplish this task, he is stuck and may be open to unnecessary pain and elongation of the adjustment period.

Moving in and out of belief is very typical in early grief, but a grieving person needs to believe it happened as soon as possible. Friends in her support system do her a favor when they talk about the loss. This helps her to admit reality sooner and active grief begins.

**The Second Task: Allow yourself to experience the pain.** Believing the loss happens sets pain in motion. The pain should be felt deeply. Don't try to take it away with medication, diversionary activities, or by trying to put it out of your mind. Pain is produced by loss, not by talking about the person or thing you lost. Pain, once it is felt and expressed, begins to mellow. Gradually you are able to think or talk about the loss with less pain.

**The Third Task: Expose yourself to environments that prompt memories.** In very early grief many people avoid reminders. That's nothing to worry about, but as the pain begins to subside you should go places and do things that flood your mind with memories. This is a good way to discover secondary losses for which you need to grieve.

**The Fourth Task: Withdraw most of the emotional energy you have invested in the relationship and reinvest that energy in new relationships that meet some of your personal needs.** I like to put this in simple terms. Say goodbye to *things you used to do with that person* or in that situation that you will never do again. Say goodbye to *the hopes and dreams that will never come to pass*.

You do not say goodbye *to the person* or situation because these are a permanent part of your memory bank. You do not say goodbye *to memories* because that is impossible. Memories are yours to hold the rest of your life. You simply say farewell to what can no longer be. This process brings pain to a peak and you find the pain easing so that you don't have to keep memories hidden.

Once you accomplish this task, you'll find yourself beginning to reorganize your life. You are now ready to make new plans and goals.

### **A Notable Exception to the Four Tasks: Parental Loss of a Child**

Therese Rando (*Treatment for Complicated Mourning*, 1993) believes that these four tasks apply to spousal loss and perhaps some other losses, but do not apply to parental loss of a child. She believes that pressing this model on parents who have lost a child only adds to their agony.

Having conducted grief support programs for 19 years, I would agree with Rando. Grieving parents told me that accomplishing these four tasks was an impossibility. They can be accomplished to a degree, but a different model needs to be developed for parents who have lost a child.

*Exercise:* At this point it will be helpful to ask the group to discuss the 4 tasks. Invite them to discuss ways that parents could move toward adjustment. *Grieving people are the best textbooks.*

*Handout: "Recovering from Loss."* At this point in the seminar you may distribute the Handout "Recovering from Loss" and give opportunity for discussion.

### **Grief and the Family System**

Losing causes the whole family to wobble. Every family system contains many sub-systems, little alliances or tightly knit circles. Changes take place in both of these. The empty place left by the person who is gone necessitates a shuffling and a long process of reorganization. When the family adjusts to the loss, the configurations in the family system are not the same.

*Group discussion.* Ask the group to share how their family system and sub-systems have changed.

In the process of family adjustment there is always role reorganization. Some roles are assumed and others are assigned. Periodic family conferences guard against placing family members in roles that are not appropriate.

The family should agree that communication will be kept open, that talking about the loss for years is welcome. This solves the problems of asynchrony (being out of step with each other). Family members grieve at a different pace. This openness provides an environment of support and understanding for all.

*Group discussion.* Ask the group to analyze their family style of handling loss. Help them list ways to make their family environment more open and friendly.

Family grief is exactly that. It is grief of people of every age. None should be overlooked. Write down the names of all your family members. After each name indicate how each person is grieving.

Make a note about how you can make their adjustment a little easier. When you get to your own name, write down how you think family members can help you. Plan to communicate this to the family.

#### **PART IV: Mourning is Lifelong**

Bereavement is the loss itself. Grief is the period of acute upheaval. Mourning is the lifelong effect of losing.

The mind is a massive memory bank that surpasses any man-made computer. Everything you ever see, hear, do, taste, or experience is lodged in that memory bank. The tiniest parts of a relationship are recorded. The big moments are there as well. This vast store of information is carefully catalogued, but the bits of memory don't come tumbling out with the push of a key. Some memories may come forward at the most unexpected and inconvenient times. A song, a picture, a place, an event, or an anniversary can trigger the release of a memory never reviewed. This can happen months and even years after the loss occurs.

The release of these memories causes temporary upsurges of grief pain. At first you may fear that you have not grieved well, but upon closer examination you realize you have never reviewed the secondary loss brought to the surface by the sudden memory.

This explains why a person has short times of acute sadness decades after a major loss.

*Exercise. Stop and think about your own losses. Have you had this experience? Share it with this group or with a friend. Rest assured that this is very normal and in keeping with the nature of your memory bank.*

#### **You'll Never Be the Same**

Everything you experience in life molds who you are. Many of life's experiences happen gradually and change your life in subtle ways. A major loss, on the other hand, comes to you with hurricane force. Changes are profound. You become different in a short time.

People who have had major losses may take life more seriously. They may be more mellow. Less materialism, more spirituality, more sensitivity—these are examples of some of the changes.

*Exercise. How have losses made you different? Discuss this in your group. Don't hesitate to mention some of the negative changes and how you plan to rectify these.*

#### **Marriage and Home Will Be Different**

Some of the past literature on grief stated that a high percentage of marriages ended in separation or divorce a year after loss, but this idea was based on poor research. If a marriage is already weak, it may be in trouble if a couple doesn't have a good support system. Healthy marriages feel the effects of loss, but they do not come apart when loss occurs. Many couples report that living through a loss brought them closer.

There are 7 levels to a marriage relationship: spiritual, friendship, emotional, communication, social, physical, sexual. We will look at them one at a time.

**Spiritual level.** Two people have a relationship with God. They do not force their relationship on each other because each person is unique in his or her friendship with God. On this relationship rests a

healthy marriage. After a loss there is a temporary loss of faith. Concepts of God come into question and must be reexamined. It takes time to reconcile loss and the God-concept.

**Friendship level.** Friendship develops and stays alive by doing enjoyable activities together, but during grief there is an aversion to pleasure. This is due in part to the reactive depression that comes with loss. This is not permanent. A couple needs to be patient and lean on the friendship that already exists.

**Emotional level.** Being friends helps to understand your own emotional needs and tones, as well as understanding those of your spouse. Grief throws a couple into an emotional tailspin. Until a reasonable balance is achieved, a couple cannot expect the usual emotional support from his or her spouse. That's why many couples benefit from support groups and individual counseling.

**Communication level.** When two people understand each other emotionally, communication is a rewarding experience. After a loss communication is difficult. Some people withdraw and grieve privately. Talking about feelings may be difficult. Often a person doesn't talk because it is extremely painful, or he or she is afraid that talking will cause the spouse to have too much pain. It is important to recognize that the cause of the pain is the loss, not talking about feelings. It is also wise to agree that you will ask your spouse if he or she is agreeable to talking before you launch into an intense conversation. Both parties should know that the communication barrier will not stay up forever.

**Social level.** In a healthy relationship there is time to reach out to others, but in grief there is a strong desire to move away from people. It is good to keep socializing limited to a very few occasions. Build fire escapes into every engagement. In other words, let the host of the social event know that you may not be able to stay very long. When you feel emotions rising and tears begging to be shed, simply excuse yourself. Getting back into more social life must be a gradual process. You may never be as socially active as you once were.

**Physical level.** Owning and caring for house, yard, car, and clothes is a rewarding experience, but grief leaves people exhausted and lethargic. Mowing the lawn and cleaning house will not be top priority. There isn't enough energy because reactive depression is a natural energy conservation measure. Respect your energy levels. Put some things on hold. Accept offers of help from friends.

**Sexual level.** Sexuality includes much more than intercourse, so don't be upset when your spouse's sex drive has diminished. This is very common during grief. Practice the many other forms of intimacy until this temporary decrease in libido ends. Respect for your spouse's feelings is essential at this time.

**Group discussion.** *Lead the group in a discussion of things they have done to keep marriage strong. Also discuss how the family can maintain openness during acute grief. Make a list of these ideas on the board and send each group member a copy of the ideas.*

**Closing.** *End your group by taking any questions the group has. It is helpful to ask the group to talk about how the seminar has helped them. Expression of appreciation is important for their well-being. As a group leader, you should freely affirm the members of the group and express gratitude for their willingness to be vulnerable.*

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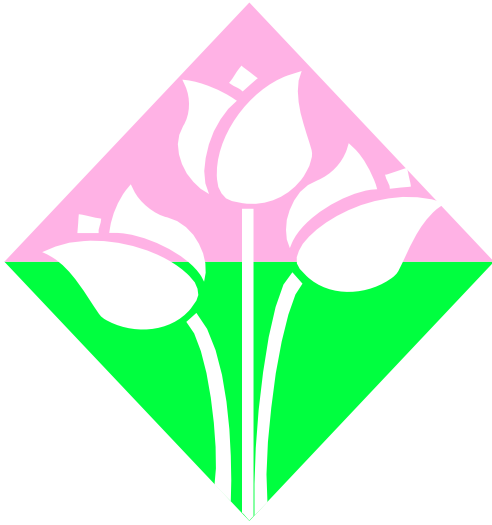
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## Recovering From Loss: Suggestions That Have Helped in a Variety of Losses

- 1. Set aside a time each day to grieve privately.** Use photographs, letters, mementos, or any definite reminder as aids in prompting memories.
- 2. Review the relationship chronologically from the earliest details to the most recent.** Think about one part of the relationship until you have drawn every possible detail from your memory bank.
- 3. Allow yourself to experience any feelings and tears that come as you review.**
- 4. Write your feelings in a journal.** Record memories, then read your entry aloud to yourself.
- 5. Record in your journal whether the experiences you reviewed were rewarding or unpleasant.** Write a short farewell to doing or experiencing what you were reviewing. Read this aloud to yourself. If this activity is too painful for you, tell yourself that you will do it in the near future. It's alright to pace yourself when it comes to farewells. You'll know when you are ready for this.
- 6. Have a few friends and perhaps a professional listener whom you regularly visit.** Share very openly with them. Let them know that you don't expect them to solve your problem. You simply ask them to listen non-judgmentally. Always express gratitude to your listening friends. Plan a few occasions to socialize with them when you will not talk about your loss.
- 7. After you review the entire relationship, take time to think about the secondary losses you suffered.** Some experts call these emotional losses or psychological losses. Counselors who see many people who are suffering from complicated mourning are finding that most of them have not considered their secondary losses, let alone grieve for them. Doing this early in acute grief is wise. Start by saying, "I lost more than a very loving person. I lost. . . ." Secondary losses might include: confidante, encourager, friend, financial security, being a wife (husband), lover, sense of belonging, traveling buddy, status, intellectual stimulator, gourmet cook.

Confronting all of your losses and pushing yourself to look at all the emotions in a very short time may not be wise. It is better to stretch this out over months. Listen to your heart. You will know when it is time to take a little vacation from the intensity of grieving. It is alright to give yourself time out.
- 8. Gradually develop new friends to replace those who slipped away after your loss.** This is not unusual, so don't waste your energy blaming them. You need a support system. It is the elixir of life for the grieving person. Be open to meeting new people. Initiate the introductions. Invite a new friend to your house for a simple occasion that doesn't require lots of fanfare. Maybe you'd rather do it in a quiet restaurant, or just take a walk together.





## **Resources for Ministry During Family Seasons**

### A Service of Child Dedication

*Jim Huzzey, Family Ministries Director, Trans-European Division*

- Pastor** (to the Church): Babies are presented before God and dedicated to Him on the understanding that they will be brought up as Christians within the family of the church. As they grow up they need the help and encouragement of that family, so that they learn to be faithful in public worship as well as in private prayer, to live by trust in God and commit their lives to Him.
- Pastor** (to the Parents): Parents, this child whom you have brought for dedication depends chiefly on you for the help and encouragement he/she needs. Are you willing to give this help and encouragement by your prayers, by your example, and by your teaching?
- Parent(s):** We are willing.
- Pastor** (leads and congregation repeats) The Lord is loving to everyone and His mercy is over all His works. His promise is to you and your children and to all that are afar off, Everyone whom the Lord calls to Him.
- Pastor:** In obedience to His call we ourselves were baptized and now bring this child to dedicate his/her life to His care. We thank God, therefore, for our baptism to life in Christ, and we pray for this child and we say together:
- Pastor:** (takes child from parents and offers dedicatory prayer, followed by this responsive prayer with parents) Heavenly Father, in your love  
You have called us to know You,  
Led us to trust You,  
And bound our life with Yours.  
Surround this child with Your love;  
Protect him/her from evil;  
Fill him/her with Your Holy Spirit;  
And receive him/her into the family of Your Church;  
That he/she may walk with us in the way of Christ  
And grow in the knowledge of Your love. Amen.
- Congregation:** God has received you by dedication into His Church.  
We welcome you into the Lord's Family.  
We are members together of the body of Christ;  
We are children of the same heavenly Father;  
We are inheritors together of the kingdom of God.  
We welcome you.

### **Making Your Child's Baptism a Celebration**

*Karen M. Flowers*

- Review the Bible teachings together as a whole family in preparation for your child's baptism.
- Redecorate your home a bit for the occasion.
- Invite the whole extended family and special friends of your child.
- Prepare a slide show of highlights from birth to today for sharing with family and friends.
- Have a special "family" dinner on Friday night including extended family and special friends.
- Provide relatives and friends with a scrapbook page to create for your son/daughter, sharing special memories and messages for the occasion.
- Affirm your child's spiritual gifts by arranging for him or her to have an appropriate part in the service.
- Make and keep a recording of the baptismal sermon or sermonette.
- Invite your child to choose spiritual guardians from the congregation who will take special responsibility to nurture them spiritually.
- Feature your child in an article in the church newsletter.
- Arrange for someone to photograph or video the baptismal event.
- Give each person in attendance a small piece of paper and invite them to write a note of affirmation and spiritual encouragement to your child.
- Provide the dessert for the fellowship dinner, allowing your child to speak to each individual as he/she serves them dessert.
- Make a memory scrapbook of the various family and church-related events surrounding the baptism.

## Involving the Church Family in the Wedding Service

*Brenda and Mike Aufderhar*

At our own wedding we really wanted to involve the congregation in as many ways as possible. The church family was important to us. One way we accomplished this was by adapting the words of some congregational hymns. It gave us a sense that there was a larger church family caring for us, praying for us and supporting us in our new lives together. Adaptations to the familiar hymns “We Gather Together” and “Father Lead Me Day by Day” were as follows:



### *We Gather Together*

We gather together  
To ask the Lord's blessing,  
To thank Him and praise Him  
For lives He has led;  
He's brought them together,  
He'll keep them forever,  
Sing praises to His name;  
He forgets not His own.

Beside them please guide them,  
Our God with them joining,  
Ordaining, maintaining,  
Your love in their home.  
Bring patience and caring,  
Forgiving and sharing;  
We dedicate their lives  
Oh Lord, make them one.

### *Father Lead Them Day by Day*

Father, lead them day by day.  
Ever in Thine own sweet way;  
Teach them to be pure and true;  
Show them what they ought to do.

When their work seems hard and pressed,  
May they have Thy peace and rest;  
Help them patiently to bear  
Pain and hardship, toil and care.

When in danger make them brave;  
Make them know that Thou canst save;  
Keep them safe by Thy dear side;  
Let them in Thy love abide.

--- Amen

**Note:** Brenda and Mike have served as Family Ministries Directors for the Washington Conference (NAD). They have developed and presented seminars on communication and family dynamics.

## Suggestions for Comforting the Bereaved

*Eleanor Grotenhuis*

*Grievers often make nongrievers uncomfortable. They feel fearful and inadequate to the task of consoling. Based on her family's experience following the death of their son, Eleanor Grotenhuis offers the following suggestions to those who would console the bereaved:*

1. Don't say "I know how you feel" if you haven't lost a child.
2. Don't expect more of us than we are able to give. Allow us time to grieve. Give us the option of saying, "No, I am not up to this," without your feeling guilty.
3. Don't say, "Call me if you need me."
4. Don't preach to us about self-pity, letting go, or getting over it. We will never be "over it."
5. Don't ask us how we are doing and go on talking about something else before we can answer.
6. Don't avoid meeting us face to face, even though doing so may be uncomfortable for you. We cannot bear being shunned.
7. Do squeeze our hands or put your arms around our shoulders. We need your touch.
8. Do let us cry when we have the need.
9. Do remember that talking is not essential. Your presence shows that you care. We can read sympathy in your eyes.
10. Do continue praying for us. We need the prayers of God's people and sense when they diminish.
11. Do follow that impulse to bring over a pot of soup, or a plate of muffins, or a hot dish. Cooking is a formidable task during those first weeks.
12. Do call us and assure us of your thoughts and prayers.
13. Do send short notes in the mail. They have made many a day for us.
14. Do forgive us when we extol or even exaggerate the virtues of our loved one.
15. Do talk to us about our beloved. Recall memories; make us smile with humorous anecdotes. Please let us know that you have not forgotten him.

## The Aging Wife

*David R. Mace*

At some indeterminate point following her fortieth birthday the average wife experiences a feeling of emotional disturbance. It varies between one woman and another in intensity. For others it seems like a catastrophic presentiment of impending doom.

Anyone who has talked much with women passing throughout this period of their lives becomes aware that there may be three causes of this disturbed feeling. Any one of these is enough to produce it. Sometimes two of them and sometimes all three, will coincide.

The first is the awareness of the woman that she has completed, or almost completed, her reproductive task. Nature has provided the birds and animals with a convenient mechanism which causes them to lose interest in their young, and even chase them away, when dependence upon the mother is no longer necessary. . . . It is only a feckless and irresponsible woman who can relinquish her children, when the time comes, without a pang.

So the experience of the “empty nest” is always something of a crisis. It leaves a devastating sense of emptiness and purposelessness. The silent house is full of memories. There was once so much to do, and now there is so little. The crowded, busy years seemed arduous at the time. But now, looking back, it is clear that this was far outweighed by the deep, solid satisfaction of being needed.

And so, as she turns her eyes to the future, the mother realizes that—barring emergencies—her children will never really need her again. As she becomes aware of this, she recognizes that at least half of the meaning has gone out of life for her. Where can she find a new sense of purpose to take the place of the one that is now fulfilled?

The insecure wife has no answer. Her response is to cling to her children, to refuse to let them go. She showers them with indulgences in a pathetic attempt to earn their gratitude,

champions them needlessly against imaginary threats, and resents bitterly anyone else to whom they may transfer their dependence or allegiance. These are the ingredients that produce the interfering mother-in-law. Invariably she is an insecure woman who has failed to accept herself or to make her marriage a deeply satisfying relationship. Without realizing it she is trying to exploit her grown-up children in the desperate attempt to fortify her own failing self-esteem.

The second cause of disturbance in the aging wife is the painful awareness of what is happening to her. Of course it is true that all of us are growing old all the time. But the process is generally gradual enough not to shock us, except occasionally when we turn over a bundle of old photographs and see vividly what the hand of time has wrought.

There is, however, for the woman a particular point of crisis within this natural process. It is the point at which she looks in the mirror and knows that her feminine charm is slipping away forever. This may not be strictly true—but that is how she interprets it. Consciously or unconsciously, most women derive a good deal of their self-confidence from the fact that as women they seem desirable in men’s eyes. Even the girl who affects to scorn the eager curiosity of the casual male is secretly comforted by the awareness that she is worth a second glance. This is not vanity or superficiality. It is a basic element in the psychology of a normal, natural woman.

For the wife this feeling about herself is linked with the security of her marriage. She knows that a major element in holding her man is keeping herself desirable in his eyes. The world as she knows it is full of predatory females ready to catch unwary husbands off their guard.

This means that the decline in her attractiveness may mean the shattering of her

security. The graying hair, the spreading wrinkles, the flattening curbs of her body—these are the manifestations of her devaluation as currency in the social market. With a start she realizes that the man who is looking in her direction isn't looking at her. He is looking past her to the bright young thing at the other end of the room. With a sinking heart she wonders when her husband will be doing the same.

I have expressed this a little crudely. Not all wives are thus troubled. Some have enough assets in other directions to know that feminine charm does not depend on firm flesh and a fine figure. Others are so deeply sure of the integrity of their husbands that no real fears assail them. Yet these women differ from the others not in kind, but only, though widely, in degree. Consciously or unconsciously, every wife suffers some deflations of her ego when the tangible tokens of her feminine attractiveness pass from her. However gracefully she makes the adjustment, an adjustment is involved. And it is an adjustment necessitated by a retreat, a straightening of the line of battle after territory has been yielded to the enemy.

For many women, indeed, the whole idea of making a strategic withdrawal is intolerable. We live in an era when youth is extolled as unreasonably as age is despised. The honor and respect once paid naturally to advancing years is now grudgingly accorded. Indeed, the older person who is most honored is often the one who contrives to cheat nature. "Isn't she marvelous for her age? She looks at least ten years younger than she is!" "He is a grand old man. He can still keep up with chaps half his age!"

So the desperate aging wife struggles to keep young. She calls to her aid all the resources she can command—cosmetics and calisthenics, dress and diet. The great deception is sustained as long as possible. But inevitably the moment of full realization, which she has fought off with desperate gallantry, must come. Its postponement doesn't help, for adjustments are only harder to make after they have been fiercely resented and fought off. The mood of

acceptance makes growing older easier than does the desperation of defeat.

The third strand in the pattern of the middle-aged wife's anxiety is the onset of the menopause—the "change of life." I have deliberately put this last, because it is often blamed for much more than it is responsible for. Husbands confide knowingly to their close friends that their wives are proving awkward to live with because they are going throughout a "difficult period in a woman's life." They say it with a confident air which implies that they can't and needn't do anything about it. By attributing it all to the wife's bodily chemistry they conveniently unload the responsibility for dealing with it onto the doctor.

Without doubt the glandular readjustments involved in the termination of the woman's reproductive function have their emotional repercussions. These are sometimes mild, sometimes violent, sometimes brief, sometimes extended. But I am convinced that many of the symptoms of panic, of depression, of irrational and impulsive behavior, which are observed in middle-aged wives are due more to the traumatic effects of the empty nest and of the awareness of growing old than to the reproductive glands signing off duty. And I believe that if husbands understood this clearly and entered more sympathetically into the woman's experience, they could help their wives immensely in the adjustments with which they are faced.

In fact, the crisis through which the aging wife passes is really in the end a crisis in her marriage. At each point in her task of adjustment her relationship with her husband can be, and should be, the stabilizing factor.

Parting with your children is inevitably hard. But for the contented couple it brings solid compensations. The wife who is no longer preoccupied with her children's needs has more time to give to her husband. As a rule he is in the full tide of his powers, working hard and carrying responsibility. Now his wife is freer than she has been for years—free to give him comfort, comradeship, and all kinds of

practical help.

Meals *à deux* provide the opportunity for those deep, intimate talks that were always being crowded out in the more tumultuous years. The couple have new freedom to undertake new enterprises—to travel together, to take up old hobbies or to develop new ones. The later years of marriage need not imply stagnation. They may become in their own way the best years of all. The empty nest can be made a very cozy corner where the erstwhile parents rest contentedly after their labors.

Likewise, growing old need not be viewed as a disaster. There are encouraging signs that the distorted doctrine of golden youth being the only coinage which can buy happiness is giving place to a more balanced view. The great extension of life expectancy and of leisure time which science is bestowing upon us all—and especially upon the married woman—is making us aware that the late afternoon can be one of the most pleasant and satisfying periods in the life span. If middle age means coming in out of the open sea and resting in the shallows, we may remind ourselves that the lagoon offers warmth and calm which are welcome indeed to those who have wrestled long enough with the breakers.

The menopause, too, brings its blessings. Why maintain a function whose purpose has been fulfilled? The passing of the reproductive powers brings a simplification of

living. It is the inward equivalent of moving out of the big house which was needed to accommodate the children and settling in a more compact and workable bungalow. Nothing essential is lost. It is a fallacious error that the end of a woman's reproductive life implies the end of her sexual life. Often, indeed, this part of her marriage comes to be more satisfying than ever, when every lurking fear of the unwanted pregnancy can be completely eliminated. I recall the story of the curious girl who ventured to ask a sweet old lady in her seventies at what age a wife lost interest in the sex relationship. With a gracious smile she replied, "My dear, you'll have to ask someone much older than I am. I just don't know!"

Middle age is in fact one of life's major transition periods. Like adolescence it is the passage of the personality from one major phase to another. This involves losses. It also involves gains. To shrink from the change, to try to continue to live in the former phase, is a futile waste of effort. To defy the tempest and march bravely on is to pass swiftly through to the tranquility beyond.

To the wife who faces middle age and its implications, the best advice that can be given is—"Keep your marriage in good repair." For if she has held her husband's love and won his wholehearted devotion, the threefold change of the middle years need hold no terrors.



## The Female in Midlife

*Karen R. McMillan*

People have heard so much about the male midlife crisis and how the wife can help her husband survive that they tend to forget that women also go through a similar stage.

Actually, women go through two special adjustment periods that could be equated to the male midlife. The first crisis usually occurs in the early thirties and is often referred to as the “quiet nest syndrome.” It is the time when the children are all in school and the mother/wife has time alone for reflection. She may actually begin to feel worthless and that the world is indeed passing her by. She may even feel that she has not kept up with her husband, and certainly she has not lived up to her potential.

At this time some women actually have an “accidental” child in order to continue that feeling of usefulness she felt when the children were younger and needed her more. She may begin to feel a sense of aging. She may slip quietly into a deep depression, and no matter what others tell her, cannot seem to come out of her pit of self-pity.

All of this is occurring at a time when her husband is deeply involved in establishing his career by putting in longer than normal hours to assure his success. Some feel that the woman who begins her career in the early years of marriage (or before) does not experience this transitional stage because she too is busy establishing a career. She has no “quiet nest syndrome” because she has never been home during the day to experience the feeling. But those who have chosen to make homemaking their career are far more likely to experience this crisis.

In her twenties a woman is usually at the peak of her physical beauty. As she slips into her thirties, she may begin to question her attractiveness to others. For a woman, the over-thirty hurdle can be as traumatic as the over-forty hurdle for a man.

One researcher observes that men are permitted two standards of physical

attractiveness—the youth and the man. A man’s desirability is enhanced by signs of aging and by his power, wealth, and achievement, which have increased with age. Women are permitted only one standard of attractiveness—beauty associated with youthfulness. So, you can see why it is easy for an aging woman to begin to hate herself.<sup>1</sup> Insofar as women are generally valued for beauty, and female beauty seems to be equated with youth, aging robs a woman of her main value and at the same time her self-esteem.

At this time in her life, needing to have her beauty reaffirmed, and possibly not getting that affirmation from her tired, overworked, ladder-climbing husband—some women seek an affair. She hopes, by having an affair, to eliminate two causes of her depression—boredom and the need of affirmation.

She may also develop a “new look;” go on a strict diet-and-exercise program, purchase a new wardrobe, and have her hair done in a different style and color. In many respects she goes through the same trauma her husband will experience in another decade. Unfortunately, her husband may not realize what is happening and be no support for her during her crisis. However, having faced this experience at this stage of her life often equips her to better handle her husband’s midlife crisis.

But it is the second crisis that occurs some fifteen years later that is especially devastating to some women—menopause. Throughout her adult life, a large part of her identity has been anchored in her relationship with other people—her husband, her children, her parents, and so on. Is it any wonder that she has an identity crisis? Who is she—apart from her relationships? In both of her midlife crises, the battle is a battle of the mind. What she thinks of herself. Her evaluation of her strengths and weaknesses. Her ability to contribute in a meaningful way to her family and her community or church.

At midlife your physical health and emotional well-being are greatly affected by your diet. What you eat not only affects your weight and figure, but also your energy, emotional resilience, and all other aspects of your physical and mental health. Your need for supplemental vitamins and minerals (such as calcium) increases greatly because of the stress your body undergoes during this time.

Avoid crash diets that do more harm than good. Learn a new lifestyle so you can maintain your proper body weight.

You will also find that exercise is beneficial to your emotional and physical well-being during this crucial time in your life. One of the best ways to work out the frustration of dealing with your midlife (or your husband's) crisis is to take a brisk walk. I happen to be a fast walker, and my husband has to jog to keep up with me. As a result he has begun jumping rope (without a rope! He says the rope slows him down) and leaves the walking to me. Being faithful about exercise and diet will not only improve your physical and emotional state, but will go a long way toward improving your self-image as well.

In her book *You and Your Husband's Mid-life Crisis*, Sally Conway makes the following observation: "An important consideration, especially at mid-life, is how your appearance affects your husband. Since he is going through a giant upheaval as he rethinks his values and commitments, he is probably looking at you with an evaluative eye. How does he think you look? Do you dress to suit him? Are you sexually appealing? What does he like and dislike about your figure?"<sup>2</sup> Even if your

husband has already gone through his midlife crisis, these are good questions to ask yourself from time to time.

Now let's examine some of the more noticeable physical symptoms associated with the female menopause. Because of the numerous changes going throughout her body, a woman can expect everything from headaches to hot flashes, to insomnia, that "dragged-out" feeling, to loss of vaginal lubrication, to dry skin and wrinkles around her eyes. In addition she may find herself submerged in deep, dark periods of depression that make her (and everyone around her) miserable. Studies clearly indicate that women who are normally emotionally stable can suffer very real emotional problems due to the lack of estrogen associated with menopause.

It is important to note that menopause does not diminish a woman's sex drive. Some women seem to phase out at this "convenient" time, if their previous sex life has been unsatisfactory. But the wife who rates her sex life as emotionally and physically enjoyable will take menopause in stride. As a matter of fact, with the danger of an unwanted pregnancy out of the way, she may find herself able to respond more fully than ever before.

Sally Conway reminds us, "Your identity needs to be drawn from the quality of person you are, wherever you are. True, you are known by what you do, but you should be known by your *being* while you are *doing*. You need to be flexible and realize that your roles may change, whether you are wife, mother, or employee, but you are still the same person and you have a mission in life."<sup>3</sup>

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Adapted from McMillan, Len D. (1986). *Midstream Without a Paddle: An Owner's Guide to Male Midlife Crisis*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association. Used by permission.

## Stages of Midlife

Len D. McMillan

It is a curious fact that the basic stages of a midlife crisis closely parallel those of the brief process following the death of a loved one. The first stage is *denial*—this can't really be happening to me. Surely it is only a dream or, at worst, a nightmare! It cannot be so! I'm not getting old. There hasn't been that much of a change in my physical appearance—since yesterday.

Denial seems to calm the troubled waters of the midlife mind for a short time. The midlife male may even be able to continue on as though nothing is happening for a few weeks, months, or sometimes years. Inevitably, however, the bathroom mirror (and every other reflective surface) confirms the fact that he *is* getting older. It no longer helps to replace all the hundred-watt bulbs with forty watters because he can still see the lines in his time-etched face even with limited lighting.

This leads to the second stage of the midlife crisis—*anger*. When the truth finally begins to dawn on him, he becomes angry. He may delay the outburst for a time by standing some distance from the mirror, and musing that, like a fine painting, he looks much better from a distance—the farther the better.

He begins to feel an inner anger, perhaps even rage. “Why me? It's not really fair. Why me? Why must I be born into a youth-oriented society? Why me? Why am I prematurely turning gray and losing my hair? Why me?”

At this stage it is almost impossible for him to react rationally due to the anger churning inside him. He finds it increasingly difficult to talk about his feelings with friends or even his spouse. How does he explain to someone that he is angry because the natural process of aging is taking place in his body?

Even though he doesn't really want to talk about it, friends need to be attentive to what is happening inside of him. If they tell him not to feel angry, he immediately feels they don't

understand. This only reinforces his anger and drives it deeper inside. What he really needs is a listening ear, not a vocalized conscience.

The third stage of midlife is *bargaining*. He begins to bargain with himself, his mate—even God. Maybe, he reasons, he can replay his youth once more before it is too late. Maybe by going on a diet and exercising regularly he can reclaim his body. Maybe, given a little more time, he can become a success in his chosen career. He may even rationalize that by having a brief affair he can restore the sexual vitality that seems to be ebbing away.

For the bargaining midlife male, the message still comes through loud and clear: “Your life is now half over. In fact, you are on the downward side.” The midlife male has a lot to look back on and ideally, a lot to look forward to. He begins to realize that life is a very brief voyage at best. He may even begin to wonder if life has any meaning beyond the endless need to survive.

Also, at some point in midlife, he comes to the realization that he knows more dead people than living ones. The truth becomes all too apparent. What is happening to him is real because it is also happening to his friends. His bargaining has not delayed at all the aging process.

At this point the midlife male slips silently and steadily into the fourth stage—*depression*. Alas, all is lost! He realizes he cannot regain his lost youth. There is no way to stop the aging process. He may succeed in covering it up for a season, but it is a delaying game at best. When that realization finally sinks in, he begins to withdraw into his secret shell. He withdraws from friends, from social functions, from family—even from his wife.

He may even begin to see death as a kind of escape hatch from reality. A leap off a bridge would silence all the mouths of his creditors, mockers, competitors, family and even his own self-depreciation. One author

comments, “I have never been convinced that the act of suicide is anything else but the final expression of a subtle psychotic force that seduced the person’s mind.”<sup>1</sup>

I don’t know if you have ever walked through a long tunnel and stopped to assess your progress about half way through. I once walked through a mile-long railroad tunnel in Wisconsin. As long as I was walking and looking straight ahead it didn’t bother me. But, about half way through the tunnel I stopped and looked back. For a moment panic set in as I saw only pinpoints of light no matter which way I looked—forward or backward. I wondered if I would ever get out of this tunnel. From the vantage point of the middle, it seemed a hopeless task. The midlife male goes through a similar experience. No matter which way he looks, there seems to be no way out of the situation.

During this time of depression, a man may try to cope with the reality of his own death. Even though it may lie many years in the future, it seems close at hand. As he ponders the future, the midlife male chooses one of four options concerning death:<sup>2</sup>

1. He may *deny* that he is going to die because death is linked with old age, and, if he is still trying to deny the aging process, he will find it difficult to accept the reality of death for him.
2. He may accept *defeat* becoming so discouraged by the reality of his ultimate death that he gives up his desire to continue living.

3. He may find himself overcome with the *fear* of death. This oppressive fear may be the result of feeling unprepared to face the judgment of a righteous God and its consequences if he is condemned.

4. *Acceptance* of death is the final possibility. It takes many forms. Some accept it grudgingly—like W. C. Fields who had these words engraved on his tombstone: “I’d rather be in Philadelphia.”

The final stage in the midlife crisis is *acceptance* of the aging process. The wise midlife male finally comes to terms with the aging process and can say, “All right! I can handle this! It’s OK. In fact, I’m looking forward to this new adventure in my life.” Acceptance is usually a process that occurs over a period of time, as he accepts himself more and more just as he is.

If a midlife male does not pass through all five stages, he may get hung up on one stage and suffer their unpleasant symptoms for months or even years. Sometimes a man delays his acceptance of midlife until he gets into his late fifties. Some men never accept it at all. Such men become more and more noticeable in a crowd. Their dress and manner seem out of place for their age. They are still trying to maintain a youthful lifestyle when they should be accepting the fact that such attempts are futile and perhaps even more damaging to their self image than accepting the truth about themselves. Acceptance provides the final key to unlocking a frustrating experience in the life of most midlife males.

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Reprinted from McMillan, Len D. (1986). *Midstream Without a Paddle: An Owner’s Guide to Male Midlife Crisis*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association. Used by permission.

## Second Career: The Retirement Years

*Art & Virginia Moyer*

*The founders of Encore Ministries catalog the special needs of retirees and share ideas for making this phase of life more fulfilling.*

After thirty-five years in Christian service overseas and in the United States, Virginia and I have retired and are thoroughly enjoying this period of our lives. We have found that retirement can be somewhat of a second career. We want to share our joy with others and also help them discover the happiness of the retirement years.

Not everyone looks forward to retiring or enjoys life afterward. During one of our visits to a local hospital we happened to meet such a couple on the elevator. Introducing ourselves, we told them of our retirement and how much we were enjoying it. While the husbands talked, the wife whispered that her husband had just retired and that he hated it. We invited them to have lunch with us and they told us his story. Still a member of the executive board of his organization, he had occasion to visit his previous place of employment. Each time he saw his replacement at work, he felt that, were he still in his old job, he could do better than his replacement. His young replacement was, in his view, not handling things as wisely as he would have done.

Several weeks later we met another friend who was soon to retire and was looking forward to it with fear and trembling. It turns out that one of his friends, a CEO of a large concern, had retired and felt useless. So depressed did the former CEO become that he committed suicide just three weeks after retirement.

### Retiree Concerns

We had been thinking about creating a seminar for retirees. After these experiences we determined to do so. With the help of the General Conference Family Ministries staff and the North American Division, we surveyed 700 retirees. Two hundred and ninety-two persons responded. Our seminar *Retirement and How to Enjoy It* was developed from the concerns listed by this age group. Here is an abbreviated list of what they expressed:

- Staying healthy
- Being sensitive to others' feelings and needs.
- Spiritual growth
- Finances
- Worship - personal and corporate
- Selecting and nurturing personal friendships
- Preserving self-worth
- Communicating and listening
- Dealing with changes in society and our church
- Housing and personal security
- Coping with grief and stress
- Volunteer service
- Growing old together/alone
- Personal attractiveness
- Relationships with adult children/grandchildren
- Setting priorities
- TV and radio in the home
- Coping with terminal illness

Sexuality in retirement  
Continuing education

### Ministering to Retirees

**Stimulate positive thinking.** Some think that because they are aging their mind will not work as it used to. The following excerpt from the University of California *Berkeley Wellness Letter* has a different view:

Comparisons of the mental agility of younger people and older individuals, who exercise at about the same level, show that the elders react about as fast as their juniors—and significantly faster than their sedentary peers. Memory does change with age, though these changes don't necessarily constitute a decline. Regular aerobic exercise seems not only to help preserve neurological functioning in old age, but also potentially to enhance it in older people who have been sedentary.

We can keep our minds alert by reading. Retirement often affords more time to study the Bible and our Sabbath School lessons more deeply. Art spends considerable time on sermon preparation and preaches nearly every Sabbath. Virginia studies health principles which benefit us both and give us good things to share with our neighbors, especially when they are ill.

Older people may be more forgetful. However, a certain kind of forgetfulness can be a blessing. There are a lot of things that need to be forgotten. We can mellow with old age and some of the petty differences of the past can fade into the past and give one peace of mind beyond imagination.

A little boy prayed, "Dear Jesus, make me like you when you were six years old." Many of us are three score and more but we can pray with the apostle Paul, "Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

**Encourage them to pursue their God-given potential.** Recognize your talents and find new avenues for them. Discover hidden talents you never realized you had. At seventy, the French cellist, Paul Tortelier, still retained a youthful appearance and vigor. Said he, "Everyone should aim to die young but delay doing so for as long as possible."

**Center life's concerns within a renewal of Christian commitment.** As we deal with the various concerns of people living in retirement, we call for a renewal of Christian commitment.

*Health.* Retirees are interested in their health. We devote considerable time to this topic. It is an important Christian topic. The apostle John wrote in his third epistle, verse 2, "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."

And after all, a healthy body is a witness in itself.

*Place of retirement.* Retirees often have in mind a "promised land" where they would like to move in retirement. However, the promised land for the retiree who would witness for Christ is most likely right in the neighborhood where he or she has been living and working. Where do you have more friends with whom to share the soon coming of the Lord? The home churches, especially the smaller ones, need the support of the mature members spiritually, socially and financially. Also as one grows older it becomes more difficult to make new friends.

If retirees decide to move, here are some suggestions:

- Visit the proposed areas during various seasons of the year. The older person is more susceptible to temperature changes and humidity, etc.
- Research the cost of living in the proposed area.
- Locate medical facilities.
- Be careful about locating near your children. It may be nice to be near them but their residence may not be permanent and it may not be convenient for you to follow them again.

- Choose a place where you can serve the Lord with your special talents and gifts. We believe the greatest joy of a Christian is to witness for the Lord.

### **Using Retirees Talents and Gifts**

Paraphrasing John F. Kennedy's famous statement we would say, "Ask not what God can do for you, but what you can do for God." We believe the greatest days are ahead for God's people. Reports from around the world indicate the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28, 29 (KJV) concerning the events prior to the day of the Lord: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."

God's Spirit is not confined to gender or age. Young and old, women and men are included in being Spirit-filled with the last day message. C. Mervyn Maxwell asks, "What will happen in our day when thousands of faithful, obedient, repentant Christians worldwide open their hearts fully to receive God's Spirit?" (*God Cares*, vol. 2, p. 46).

When a person accepts Christ as his/her Savior it is "until death do us part." In the North American Division alone there are, according to December 1994 statistics, 12,053 retired workers. Just think of the retired laity. Around the world there must be hundreds of thousands. Who but retirees have more time and talent and experience to witness for the Lord? It is true there are many fulfilling their commitment to Christ by their living and sharing their faith. But there is an urgent need to enlist everyone, young and old, men and women and even the children. There is a temptation for older folk to try to excuse themselves by saying, "The young people will finish the work." The young can do great things with the help of God's Spirit, but they need the older experienced folk to join hands with them in this most important task.

### **Growing Old in God's Service**

We find this statement inspiring and encouraging: "It was after John had grown old in the service of his Lord that he received more communications from heaven than he had received during all the former years of his life" (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 572, 573).

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## When Mature Folk Feel Romantic

*R. Curtis Barger*

When more mature folk feel romantic  
And those tired old eyes of ours begin to shine,  
You may well expect some action frantic  
As each eager partner claims his valentine.

There's no doubt the glowing ardor  
That wells up in every palpitating heart,  
But somehow it seems a good deal harder  
To get each stiff arthritic joint to do its part.

Tender sentiments we would not question,  
And yet when he gets that wild look in his eyes,  
It could be just acid indigestion  
Or a case of hypertension on the rise.

Yes, when more mature folk feel romantic  
And once more they've fallen in old Cupid's trap,  
*He* may make an effort quite gigantic  
To ensconce his little darling on his lap.

That is when 'tis plain that the logistics  
Are not quite the same as in the days of yore;  
For one must consider *her* statistics  
And the knowledge that his lap just *isn't* any more.

Oh, emotions often make us quiver  
As we fondly gaze upon our faithful mate—  
Or it could be spasms in a touchy liver  
That these enervating shivers generate.

Yes, we older folk may have arthritis,  
Fallen arches or dyspepsia or gout,  
But romantic feelings still excite us,  
So we suggest that you don't ever count us out.

So, fair valentines, when we're romantic  
And with ardent love our eyes begin to glaze,  
We may not demonstrate by showy antic,  
But we'll let you know in slower, gentler ways.

**Note:** R. Curtis Barger, General Conference Sabbath School Associate Director, composed this poem in 1978 for a program for husbands and wives sponsored by the GC Women's Auxiliary. Elder Barger passed away in 1987. His poem is published here by permission of his wife Mary.



## Family Development: Implications for Family Ministry

*Karen and Ron Flowers*

### Introduction

Understanding family development is crucial to an effective family ministry. Whatever the sermon, whatever the seminar, whatever the event we are planning or newsletters we are distributing, whatever kind of lending library of books, tapes or videos we are developing to help families, the people in our pews will respond in direct proportion to their sense of need. And nothing contributes more to a sense of need than the life circumstances in which individuals find themselves. Therefore, careful planning and resourcing for family ministries takes family development into consideration.

Consider Carl and Maria. At 20, Carl is mid-way through his undergraduate college studies in a local community college. He lives at home with his mother and stepfather. His mother remarried last year after living as a widow for five years. Carl has been dating a young woman, Maria, for two years and they have just announced their marital engagement. Maria, several years older than Carl, has had her own apartment for more than a year, after moving away from her home in the midst of her parent's divorce. Carl and Maria are both coming quite regularly to church.

Of what importance are Carl's and Maria's circumstances to their local church's family ministries committee? How might their situations affect the planning by that group for its future activities? The understanding of family development which the church's family ministries committee has will determine in large part their response to these questions.

### Human Development

That there are predictable periods in the life span common to all people everywhere has long been a tenet held by specialists in human development. Work in the field of human development in the early 20th century focused primarily on children and was popularized by such scholars as Piaget (See Table 1). Others comprehended that humans develop and change rather predictably throughout the whole life span. Erikson (1968) proposed a sequence of life stages with distinct psychosocial tasks that typically accompany the various phases. Failure to accomplish these specific tasks resulted, he believed, in some maladjustment of the personality and impaired relationships (See Table 2). Researchers such as Daniel Levinson (*Seasons of a Man's Life*, 1978) and Gail Sheehy (*Passages*, 1984) compiled further evidence on the stages of adulthood. Chronological age tended to serve as a uniform criterion for normalizing the roles and responsibilities that individuals assumed over a lifetime.

Continuing her evaluation of the human life span, Sheehy (*New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time*, 1995) has concluded that in the space of one short generation the whole shape of the life cycle has been fundamentally altered. People are taking longer to grow up and much longer to die, thereby shifting all the stages of adulthood by up to ten years. According to Sheehy, individuals, particularly in the western world, now have three adult lives to be anticipated, prepared for, and mapped out: *provisional adulthood*, 18-30, (semidependency on parents), *first adulthood*, 30-45, and *second adulthood*, 45-85+. The Institute for American Church Growth reflects an awareness of this alteration in the adult life cycle and currently divides adulthood into five stages: *emerging adults*, 18-30, *young adults*, 30-50, *middle adults*, 50-70, *senior adults*, 70-80, and *elderly adults*, 80+ (*L.I.F.E...Line* Newsletter, No. 19).

### The Family Life Cycle

As individual developmental phases are traversed, the families in which these individuals reside inevitably find themselves “adapting and reacting to the complex interplay among the developmental issues of family members at different stages of the life cycle” (Garland and Pancoast, 1990). The family development patterns of persons living in nuclear families are well known. Carter and McGoldrick (1980) consider them to be *the unattached young adult, the newly married couple, the family with young children, the family with adolescents, the launching children and moving on phase, and the family in later life*. (See also Tables 3, 4) Just as individual development is marked by specific characteristics, so these seasons of family living have their own identifiable traits and developmental tasks to be accomplished if the family is to function in a healthy and adequate way. Many families routinely move through such stages.

The percentage of families in which this more or less straightforward life cycle takes place, however, is in a decline, in America at least, over the past 25 years. Fewer persons are marrying, families are having fewer children, more marriages are ending in divorce, and more remarriages are taking place (Blankenhorn, et al, 1990). Consequently, family forms other than the nuclear type are proliferating. For these the typical family life cycle must be modified. Brown and Christensen (1986) offer additional life cycle phases and tasks related to divorced and remarried families (See Table 5).

### Family Relational Development

Family process specialist Diana Garland (Garland and Pancoast, 1990) offers another perspective on development which, while it pertains to the nuclear family, also transcends the nuclear family’s somewhat specific roles and statuses (such as being newlyweds, parents, grandparents). This alternate perspective focuses on the process of relationship development, a process which is similar in all *ecological* families (a descriptive term which encompasses a wide variety of families that do not fit the nuclear family pattern). Families experience internal dynamics similar to the dynamics characteristic of small groups. A sequence of phases is discernable as groups stay together over time. According to Garland, the developmental phases of families are *courtship, formation, partnership, consolidation, and transformation*. Each phase is marked by certain relational processes.

**Courtship.** Individuals/families go through a period of selecting others with whom to form the family unit. A man and woman may court each other with the intention of marriage. A family may explore the implications of adopting a foster child. Step-parents work to create love between them and their step-children. Roommates may explore the options of sharing more of their resources in a long term lease or home purchase. The relational processes at work in this phase are *contractual*. The relationship tends to have a *conditional* quality. Will this arrangement be beneficial—for companionship, for security, for protection, for intimacy? What is beneficial for one may be less so for the other, yet each may decide that the gains are sufficient to warrant a pursuit of the relationship. If not, the relationship may break off or, as in the case of some step-families, the members may simply co-exist without any further commitment.

**Formation.** Entrance to this phase comes about with some sort of decision or evidence of explicit commitment—wedding vows, adoption papers, gift-giving, or some formal or semi-formal event. The relationship moves along the continuum from contract toward *covenant*, from conditional to

*unconditional*. There is a growing feeling of having a right to be in one another's lives. One gives advice more freely than in courtship, a step-parent takes on more of the responsibility for discipline of the step-child. Family members no longer treat one another as guests or hosts. An intimacy begins to develop from the sharing of lives, meals, resources. Attachment and care giving are key processes of this phase.

**Partnership.** This has been called the "working" phase of the family relationship. The process of defining the family purpose and its goals takes place in this stage. Shared tasks are undertaken. People living together get down to the tough business of accomplishing something together. A married couple or a family grouping made of several men living and working together or several women may decide to invest their lives in evangelism, in some special missionary ministry or service. In some families, rearing their natural children or making a home for children with special needs is chosen as the family task. A single adult may care for an older relative, a young woman may adopt an orphaned child. Important relational processes that must be undertaken if the partnership is to be successful are communication and problem-solving.

**Consolidation.** As families age, the membership tends to shrink, either voluntarily (adult children or roommates move out) or involuntarily (extended hospitalization, retirement home care, death). Both voluntary and involuntary shrinking of membership constitute critical periods of change. Processes of closure and completion of life tasks mark this period.

**Transformation.** As the life of the family goes on after the consolidation phase and the dissolution of the former core, usually family members are gradually absorbed into other intimate networks and families. As they merge their former family values and ways with the new family relationship of which they are a part, a transformation takes place. In a very real way, this is not the final phase of family development, but the beginning of the next cycle.

### Developmental Phases and Family Ministries

Carl and Maria, as individuals, are in the *emerging adulthood* stage. They are accomplishing the tasks of late adolescence and early adulthood, gaining personal identity, establishing themselves as separate individuals, achieving an appropriate differentiation from their parents. Their families are in *the launching stage* (Carl) or just beyond (Maria). The parents are in the process of letting them go, enabling them to have their individual lives and, with their coming marriage, to set up a new home of their own. Carl and Maria's new family is in its *courtship* phase of development. They are involved in the final stages of selecting a life partner and preparing to move ahead with their relationship formation.

There are additional characteristics of the parental homes that bear on the situation of Carl and Maria, for they still have membership in these extended families and what happens there affects their lives and their new family. Carl and his mother have just gone through a consolidation phase of family living with the death of his father and now, with the mother's remarriage, the family is being transformed into a new entity. Carl's mother and her new husband are starting the cycle over again. Maria and her parents are experiencing their own consolidation and transformation phases as they go through the crisis of divorce.

**Opportunities for ministry.** As families pass through their life cycles, important opportunities for family ministry arise. Ministry that is directed toward family seasons can provide information, support, and help through difficult periods of adjustment. Family ministries that are conducted from a Christian perspective can address these various phases as singular opportunities for new insights, for the

development of new skills, for healing, and for growth in grace and in family intimacy. Along with this effort to encourage a positive attitude, a building or strengthening of relational skills for communication, processing feelings, and problem-solving is often needed.

*Family life education.* Making information available about family development and the passage through family seasons is significant. To the extent that the characteristics of both the predictable and the intrusive or unexpected periods in family life can be understood and conveyed to families, families can be better prepared for the feelings they have and the changes that are likely to occur. While the dissemination of information about family passages and instruction in skills for managing these periods can be helpful in times of crisis, it is important to do as much as possible of this family life education *before* changes occur. “People adjust better to developmental changes when they know what to expect. And a church can minister more effectively to families if it understands the developmental crises and issues which families face” (Garland and Pancoast, 1990, p. 35). This has been called *anticipatory* family ministry. Families can be helped to learn about the seasons of family living through sermons, self-help literature, audio and video cassettes, and specially prepared programs such as those for marriage preparation, parent education, and preparation for retirement. Many family ministry programs that address the nuclear family life cycle can be creatively adapted to include family relationships of all types. Helpful applications of bible study material can be made by Sabbath School class leaders who are sensitive to the particular passages of life through which their class members are passing.

*Support groups and enrichment programs.* Support groups or enrichment programs that are tailored to address the relational issues of particular phases in the family life cycle enable participants to rest in the assurance that their experience is not completely unique. Such groups provide the opportunity to pray together, to work on common concerns with others facing the same challenges, and to benefit from one another’s experience. Programs for marriage enrichment, singles enrichment, family enrichment, divorce recovery, grief recovery, blended (step) family enrichment, and retirees enrichment are examples of structured or semi-structured programs that have been employed for the purpose of ministry to individuals and families in the various seasons of family living. Less formal support groups such as those for new parents, parents of adolescents, parents of developmentally disabled children, and families experiencing grief or loss are also helpful. When family events that are conducted in the church, such as baby dedications, baptisms for children, weddings, and funerals include reference to the family phases that are involved and their attendant characteristics and typical crises, a significant difference can be made in the way the family phases which ensue are understood and lived.

*Counseling.* Many individuals and families are in such critical need in their various phases of development or, what is more usual, in their transition between phases, as to require specialized assistance in resolving their personal or relational crises and difficulties. At such times, individuals and families should be directed toward professionally qualified counselors. The limitations of pastoral and lay counseling should be fully recognized and appropriate caution taken to place those in need in the care of those who are best prepared to help.

### **Development in the Family of Faith**

God’s family, the family of faith, experiences its seasons also. If, as Anderson and Guernsey (1985) hold, family ministries is the custodian of the Church’s relational theology, then family ministries leaders and committees can play an important part in assisting the family of faith as it passes through the

predictable and intrusive phases of its life. When new churches are formed, or when new members are added, developmental phases with processes similar to those of family *courtship* and *transformation* take place. Over time, church families routinely experience the *formation*, *partnership*, and *consolidation* phases as well.

Family ministries leadership teams are wise to consider the needs of the overall church body when planning events to strengthen families. This means that, not only are the developmental needs of all individuals and families given adequate attention, but the development of the congregation, the family of faith, is considered. Often, with slight modification, programs that might otherwise benefit only a certain group in the church can be made to benefit the whole body. Particularly is this true of presentations, seminars, and workshops that treat relational dynamics of communication, affirmation, managing feelings, learning to celebrate differences, conflict resolution, and problem solving. From time to time, programs solely dedicated to enhancing relationships within the family of God can be planned. Such efforts will be more effective when attention is given to the particular phase of development in which the church family is currently passing or can expect to pass as its members walk together in the days ahead.

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**Table 1 –Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development**

Swiss biologist-turned-psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) found that children have different levels of understanding at different ages. Their responses to a situation are determined not just by the situation alone but by how they understand the situation. Motivation comes from cognitive processes. In other words, a child may initiate actions without being motivated by hunger, thirst, sex, or pain and without being rewarded or punished. Children will act simply to understand.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Description</i>
Sensorimotor (0-18 mos.)	Knowledge is acquired and structured through sensory perception and motor activity. Schemes involve action rather than symbols.
Preoperational (2-6 yrs.)	Knowledge is acquired and structured through symbols, such as words, but schemes are intuitive rather than logical.
Concrete operational (7-12 yrs.)	Knowledge is acquired and structured symbolically and logically, but schemes are limited to concrete and present objects and events.
Formal operational (12 yrs. +)	Knowledge is acquired and structured symbolically and logically, and hypothetical/deductive (“if-then”) thinking can be used to generate all the possibilities in a particular situation.

Source: Schickedanz, J. A., Schickedanz, D. I., Hansen, K., and Forsyth, P. D. (1993). *Understanding Children*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, p. 63.

**Table 2 – Erikson’s Eight Stages of Development**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Psychosocial Development</i>	<i>Pivotal Events</i>	<i>Successful Development</i>
0-18 mos.	Trust vs. mistrust	Positive response to	I am all right. infant’s physical needs
1½-3 ½ yrs.	Autonomy vs. shame or doubt	Toilet-training, locomotion, exploration of environment	I can make choices.
3 ½ - 6 yrs.	Initiative vs. guilt	Curiosity related to language,	I can do/make things. motor, and cognitive skills
6 - 12 yrs.	Industry vs. inferiority	School tasks such as learning	I can join with others to read in making/doing things.
Adolescence	Identity vs. identity confusion	Learning one’s vocational/ professional orientation; establish self as a separate individual	I can be to others what I am to myself.
Young adult	Intimacy vs. isolation	Sharing one’s personal life with someone else	I can risk offering myself to another.
Mature adult	Generativity vs. stagnation	Parenting, nurturing others, being productive in some useful way.	I am concerned for others.
Older adult	Integrity vs. despair	Reflection on one’s life	I can accept my life.

Source: Adapted from Schickedanz, J. A., et al. (1993). *Understanding Children*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

**Table 3 – Some Developmental Stages and Tasks  
in the Family Life Cycle**

<i>Stages of the Family Life Cycle</i>	<i>Developmental Tasks</i>
1. Beginning family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Differentiating from family of origin</li> <li>b. Negotiating boundaries between friends and relatives</li> <li>c. Resolving conflict between individual and couple's needs</li> </ul>
2. Infant/preschool family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reorganizing family to deal with new tasks</li> <li>b. Encouraging the child's growth while maintaining safety and parental authority</li> <li>c. Deciding how to implement personal and family goals</li> </ul>
3. School-age family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Renegotiating work load</li> <li>b. Sharing feelings when child can't handle school</li> <li>c. Deciding who helps child with school work</li> </ul>
4. Adolescent family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Renegotiating autonomy and control between adolescents and parents</li> <li>b. Changing parental rules and roles</li> <li>c. Preparing to leave home</li> </ul>
5. Launching family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Separating from family</li> <li>b. Leaving home appropriately</li> <li>c. Entering college, military, or career with assistance</li> </ul>
6. Postparental family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Renegotiating marital relationships</li> <li>b. Renegotiating time and work</li> <li>c. Adjusting to retirement</li> </ul>



**Table 4 –Seasons of Life**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Family issues</i>	<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Personal issues</i>
Teens	Separation from parents Parents "letting go"	Becoming	Independence Identity Intimacy
20's	Mate selection Marriage Children's education – elementary	Choosing	Dream formation Re-evaluation of choices
30's	Establishing family traditions Children's education Junior High Senior High College	Establishing	Home Career Community Wife — mid-life evaluation
40's	Launching Learning to be peers Enlarged family	Evaluating	Husband — mid-life Wife — menopause
50's	In-laws Grandparenting Couple again	Mellowing	Generative - willing to pass on what you have learned Men – more tender, sensitive Women – more confident
60's	Retirement Relocation Finances Use of time	Retiring	Check life values Review identity
70's +	Great grandparenting Aging and health Death of one or both	Reflecting	"Have I lived my life wisely?" Facing death of spouse Renegotiation of life after spouse's death

Source: Jim & Sally Conway, "The Seasons of Life," Association of Adventist Family Life Professionals' Convention, July 8, 1995.

**Table 5 – Developmental Phases and Tasks of Remarried Families**

<i>Phase</i>		<i>Developmental Tasks</i>	
1.	Separation/divorce	a.	Dealing with loss of friends
		b.	Developing new self-esteem and independence
		c.	Allowing grief and mourning for the lost marriage
		d.	Adjusting to the extended family's reaction to the divorce
2.	Single parenthood	a.	Reorganizing family to take care of child
		b.	Resolving feelings of guilt and anger
		c.	Creating new social support systems
3.	Courtship	a.	Establishing a willingness to reaccept intimacy
		b.	Accepting conflict in the new relationship
		c.	Developing a role for potential new members of the family
4.	Remarriage	a.	Giving up myths of remarried families
		b.	Negotiating new traditions
		c.	Developing new alliances
		d.	Integrating boundaries between old and new families

Source: Brown, J. H. & Christen, D. N. (1986). *Family Therapy - Theory and Practice*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company. Used by permission.

# Recommended Resource Books for Family Seasons

Carter, E. A. & McGoldrick, M. (editors). (1980). *The Family Life Cycle*. New York: Gardner Press, Inc.

The book offers a conceptual overview of the life cycle of the middle class American family, followed by chapters defining the tasks required of family members at each stage of the life cycle. Clinical suggestions for working with families who are having problems negotiating these tasks are included in each chapter.

Coleman, L. & Scales, M. (editors). (1990). *Newly Married*. Littleton, CO: Serendipity House.

Biblically-based seminar materials with presentation text and participant exercises. The series covers a number of developmental phases and the relational issues that attend them.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Parenting Adolescents*. Littleton, CO: Serendipity House.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Blended Families*. Littleton, CO: Serendipity House.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Mid Life*. Littleton, CO: Serendipity House.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Dealing With Grief & Loss*. Littleton, CO: Serendipity House.

Conway, J. & S. (1987). *Your Marriage Can Survive Mid-Life Crisis*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

An introductory section “The Marriage Situation by Mid-Life” focuses on the marital relationship issues that accompany the mid-life development of men and women. The results of the Conway’s survey of 186 couples and the ten traits which they discovered to be key marital strengths: commitment, communication, vital spiritual life, effective conflict resolution, positive, healing support from other people, sexual intimacy, leisure, realistic expectations, serving each other, personal growth.

Conway, J. (1978). *Men in Mid Life Crisis*. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co.

A classical work on the subject from a Christian perspective, offering concrete, tested counsel from Scripture, psychology, and the author’s own ministry.

Conway, S. (1990). *Menopause: Help and Hope for This Passage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Based on the latest medical research and the results of a national survey of 436 menopausal women, the author discusses symptoms and dilemmas of menopause with helpful suggestions on estrogen replacement therapy, hysterectomy, heart disease, osteoporosis, and sex after menopause. The final chapter helps husbands and adult children cope with the roller-coaster feelings of their loved one.

Gaither, G. & Dobson, S. (1971). *Let’s Make a Memory*. Waco, TX: Word Books.

Here the authors show how their own family traditions have formed lasting values in their homes. They also share a wealth of how-to information that will help you plan not just depend on chance—for making meaningful memories in your own family.

Garland, D. S. R., Ph.D. & Pancoast, D.L., Ph.D. (1990). *The Church's Ministry With Families*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.

In *The Church's Ministry With Families*, sixteen professionals in church and social work, propose to do two things: develop an adequate conceptual framework for family ministry, and advocate dynamic strategies for specific, practical application. A comprehensive sourcebook for pastors, church educators, Christian social and family ministry workers, and volunteer helpers. Chapter 3, "Understanding How Families Develop" contains helpful material on family seasons including family developmental phases as a focus for family ministry.

Gibson, D & R. (1991). *The Sandwich Years*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

The Christian authors, a psychologist and a family counselor, offer insights and practical ideas for intergenerational reconciliation in that period of life when "our adult children need us less as parents and more as adult friends, [and] our own parents are no longer able to care for themselves as they used to and increasingly need our help."

Habenicht, D. J. (1994). *How to Help Your Child to Really Love Jesus*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Based on her insights from the fields of child development and religious education, Dr. Habenicht explains how children develop spiritually and offers practical suggestions on how you can help your child establish a lasting friendship with God.

Koons, C. A. & Anthony, M. J. (1991). *Single Adult Passages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

This is the first significant study specifically on singleness as a phenomenon among Christian adults, based on a survey of more than 1300 single adult Christians across the U.S. and Canada. The authors explore the previously "uncharted territories" of life as a Christian who is also widowed, never-married, or divorced . . . with or without children . . . aged 19, 45, 57, or 79. Single adults themselves will also find new awareness of their needs and exciting potential for fulfillment.

Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books.

This is the first full report from the team that discovered the patterns of adult development. 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.

McMillan, L. (1986). *Midstream Without a Paddle: An Owner's Guide to Male Midlife Crisis*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

With depth of insight, with humor, and common sense, the author helps men and their wives in identifying, avoiding, and surviving the pitfalls of mid-life. Two appendices "The Female in Midlife" and "A Beautiful Midlife" (maintaining physical attractiveness) are included by the author's wife, Karen.

McMillan, L., & Wray, M. (1994). *First Class Male: The Christian Man's Role in Today's World*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

A lighthearted, practical approach to rediscovering God's plan for becoming a "whole" man. Topics include: Balancing work, family, church, and self; relating to the opposite sex; burnout and stress; understanding male sexuality; getting in touch with your emotions; optimum aging; forming rewarding friendships with other men. The chapter "Men-who-pause" covers midlife issues with questions to ponder that will help searching men to find solutions.

Newman, B., Newman, D., Minirth, F., Minirth, M. A., Hemfelt, R., & Hemfelt, S. *Passages of Marriage*. (1991). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The doctors of the Minirth-Meier Clinic and their spouses talk about their personal journeys through each of the developmental stages through which they believe marriages pass.

*Young Love*. The first two years—overcoming the idealistic notions of marriage and molding two individuals into one unit, a family.

*Realistic Love*. The 3rd through 10th years—recognizing the subconscious reasons you married your spouse, the hidden agendas and secret contracts.

*Comfortable Love*. The 11th through 25th years—establishing and maintaining an individual identity along with your marriage identity.

*Renewing Love*. The 26th through the 35th years—grieving and accepting the inevitable losses of your marriage—financial stresses, lost youth, unrealized dreams, lack of sexual intimacy.

*Transcendent Love*. The 36th year and thereafter—unveiling new reasons for existing after the major life tasks of achieving financial security and nurturing the next generation have been completed.

Sheey, G. (1995). *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time*. New York: Random House.

Draws on national surveys of professionals and working-class people and fresh finds comparing five generations extracted from fifty years of U.S. Census reports. The author concludes that people are taking longer to grow up and much longer to die, thereby shifting all the stages of adulthood—by up to ten years. Special attention is given to "Second Adulthood" in middle life, a new approach to the middle years that now extend longer than before.

Smick, T. S. et al. (1990). *Elder Care for the Christian Family*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.

This book provides a realistic look at the challenges presented by the "greying of the American populace," from the perspective of families called upon to care for aging parents and relatives when circumstances such as illness, dementia, inability to care for personal needs, etc. occur. The authors provide balanced views which take into consideration both the needs of the elderly and the needs of the caregiver, suggesting the adoption of a marathon rather than a sprint mode. Practical assistance is also provided for selecting a nursing home, how to access various home health services, etc. In addition, considerable discussion of bioethical issues surrounding death and dying are included.

Wright, H. N. (1983). *Seasons of a Marriage*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

In *Seasons of a Marriage* couples of all ages will discover the different stages of marriage that they will encounter, and how to prepare for the challenges they never thought about during their courtship period.

Wyse, L. (1989). *Funny, You Don't Look Like a Grandmother*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc.

A nontraditional book about grandmothers who may not look like grandmothers—but who love as deeply as the generations of grannies who preceded them. Contemporary grandmothers and their children and grandchildren will see themselves in these reflections of family life that include everything from how it feels to become a grandmother to gentle advice on parenting and career grandmothers.

Yeagley, L. (1986). *Life after Loss*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Coping with grief isn't easy, but in this book Larry Yeagley, founder of Grief Recovery seminars, shares his time-tested insights into how to cope with grief.

Yeagley, L. (1995). *Heartache and Healing: Coming to Terms with Grief*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Dealing with such issues as divorce, loss of home, and the emotional pain of problems that simply will not go away, he shows how we can successfully cope with primary losses and secondary losses, or the loss of all those things in our lives entwined with the primary losses.

## Family Ministries in the Local Church

The over-arching objective of Family Ministries is to strengthen the family as a discipling center. The family was established by divine creation as the fundamental human institution. It is the primary setting in which values are learned and the capacity for close relationships with God and with other human beings is developed.

Family Ministries is a ministry of grace which acknowledges as normative the biblical teachings relating to the family and holds high God's ideals for family living. At the same time, it brings an understanding of the brokenness experienced by individuals and families in a fallen world. Thus Family Ministries seeks to enable families to stretch toward divine ideals, while at the same time ever extending the good news of God's saving grace and the promise of growth possible through the indwelling Spirit.

Family Ministries focuses on people in relationship. It is concerned with the needs of married couples, parents and children, the family needs of singles and all members of the wider family circle as they pass through life's predictable stages and contend with unexpected changes in their lives.

Family Ministries reinforces and encourages wholesome families. It helps individuals build and maintain strong family relationships because it recognizes that healthy Christian families make strong members for the kingdom of God and present a winsome witness to the community around them. Family Ministries promotes understanding, acceptance, and love within the family and in the larger family of God and fosters the reconciliation and healing between the generations promised in the Elijah message of Malachi 4:5, 6. It extends hope and support to those who have been injured and hurt by abuse, family dysfunction, and broken relationships. Family Ministries fosters competence in a variety of interpersonal skills needed in relationships. It provides growth opportunities through family life education and enrichment. It encourages individuals, married couples, and families to avail themselves of professional counseling when necessary.

An adequate ministry to families will include: premarital guidance available to all couples before marriage; marriage strengthening opportunities; parent education, with attention given to the special needs of single parents and step-families; instruction in family to family evangelism; and support ministries to help families with special needs.

***The Family Ministries Committee***—To more effectively meet the needs of families in the church, the church board may establish a Family Ministries Committee, chaired by the Family Ministries leader(s). Although this committee should not be too large in order to remain effective, appropriate church leaders should be included as well as persons who understand the varied needs of families within the church. Persons who have faced traumatic life and family experiences and have grown spiritually through them may make valuable contributions as members of the committee. The committee should include both men and women, and where possible, at least one single person, at least one married couple, one or more parents, and a representative cross-section of the various age groups in the church. The duties of the committee shall be the following:

1. To assist church leadership in compiling family demographic data both within the church and in the surrounding community to clarify target groups for a ministry to families.

2. To assist church leadership in assessing the needs of church members for family life education, enrichment, and counseling; and in developing a plan for utilizing community and church resources to address these needs.

3. To encourage sensitivity to the impact of church programs on family life in terms of the expenditure of time, energy, money, and other family resources required.

4. To participate with the conference/mission Family Ministries Department in implementing family emphasis programs promoted by the department.

5. To cooperate with church leadership to design, plan, and implement additional family life features and programs as needed, both for family nurture within the membership and evangelistic outreach to the community.

6. To foster a climate of warmth and fellowship, engendering a sense of “familiness” in the congregation and a redemptive spirit toward families in need of support and encouragement.

***Family Ministries Leader(s)***—An individual or married couple may be elected to serve as the Family Ministries leader(s). The individual(s) should have a positive attitude about God, self, others, and the church. The leader(s) should model strong and growing family relationships and exhibit a sincere interest in fostering the well-being of all families. In order to be effective, it is necessary for the Family Ministries leader(s) to have an understanding of God’s redemptive plan for dealing with the brokenness in relationships which sin has brought. It is also important that the leader(s) be able to maintain confidentiality and know when and how to encourage individuals in critical situations to seek professional counseling. The duties of the Family Ministries leader(s) are:

1. To chair the Family Ministries Committee.

2. To represent the needs and interests of families through membership on the church board, and to coordinate Family Ministries plans with the overall church program.

3. To inform the pastor and church board of Family Ministries concerns and achievements, and to encourage funding and support for ministry to families.

4. To identify church and community resources which foster relational growth and provide help to meet critical needs, and to heighten awareness of these resources among church leadership and families.

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***Note:*** This document is reproduced from the proceedings of the 56th General Conference Session at Utrecht, July, 1995, during which the General Conference Department of Family Ministries was created. It will appear in the 1995 revised edition of the Church Manual as part of the chapter entitled “Auxiliary Organizations of the Church and Their Officers.”



## Family Ministries—Departmental Policies

### Philosophy

Scripture affirms the importance of the family and outlines the divine principles which govern family relationships. At creation, God instituted marriage—and with it the family (Gen 2: 18-25)—as God’s primary setting for human development and nurturance. When Christ redeemed all human experience from the curse of sin, He redeemed marriage and family relationships. He calls family members to relate in ways that befit those who have responded to the gospel (Eph 5:21-6:4). Because the family is the primary place where the capacity for love and for intimacy with God and with other human beings is developed and where Christian values are passed from one generation to the next, the family is central to the discipling process (John 8:31, 13:35). As Scripture magnifies last day events, the spotlight again falls upon the family. The Bible predicts that before the great day of the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, God will give a final call to this generation, turning hearts to Himself and family members toward one another (Malachi 4:5,6).

Ellen G White held strong convictions regarding the importance of families and ministry to them. “There is no more important field of effort than that committed to the founders and guardians of the home” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p 351). “Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home. . . . By many this home field has been shamefully neglected and it is time that divine resources and remedies were presented, that this state of evil may be corrected” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol 6, pp 429, 430).

The Department of Family Ministries recognizes the significance of family in the lives of believers and nonbelievers alike. It endeavors to strengthen the home as a discipling center where family members through their interpersonal relationships are encouraged in their relationship with Jesus Christ and His church, and where the relational skills necessary for winsome witness are developed. The department endeavors to keep in perspective both God’s ideals for family living and an understanding of the brokenness experienced by individuals and families in a fallen world. Thus Family Ministries calls individuals, married couples and parents to stretch toward divine ideals, while at the same time extending the redemptive, healing ministry of Christ. Efforts on behalf of families are held to be urgent, vital, and integral to the message and mission of the Church.

### Objectives

Recognizing the mutual strength and support which the church must be to the home, and the home to the church, if the mission of the church is to become a reality, the Department of Family Ministries has adopted the following objectives:

1. To proclaim the reviving and restorative message of the everlasting gospel within the context of family living. Christ is and must be acknowledged as the Savior and Head of every home. In Him, family members are at peace with God and at peace with each other. As they are drawn near to Him they are drawn nearer to each other, in love, forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, and renewal.

2. To affirm and strengthen every Seventh-day Adventist family as a primary discipling unit. Family Ministries seeks to deepen understanding of the relational dimension of being and making disciples and to strengthen family members as disciplers within the family. A married couple is viewed as the primary unit of the family. The department seeks to provide couples and families with access to educational, enrichment, and counseling opportunities to enhance the development of the

relational skills necessary for the effective discipling of one another and growth toward optimal Christian marriage, parent-child and extended family relationships.

3. To enable parents and families to increase the likelihood of successful transference of Christian Seventh-day Adventist values to the next generation. Family Ministries develops materials and provides learning opportunities within church and family settings designed to enable parents to make biblical values winsome to their children and youth. The department encourages an atmosphere within homes and churches which promotes questions and on-going discussion regarding Christian values and tenets of faith among parents and children, young and old, leaders and members in an effort to foster the development of mature faith.

4. To create a “family of God” experience in every Seventh-day Adventist church. Family Ministries fosters an atmosphere which respects and celebrates diversity within congregations and within the World Church, recognizing that unity is not found in uniformity, but in Christ, the Head of the body. Through a shared commitment to a common message and mission and a reciprocal openness, honesty, and vulnerability in relationships with one another, the oneness we have found in Christ may become a reality in experience.

5. To empower families for winsome witness. Beyond the priority placed on the home as the most important mission field, Family Ministries helps families to discover and utilize their spiritual gifts in the community around them. The department encourages and enables families to relate in winsome ways with nonbelieving family members, to befriend their neighbors, to share the good news of life in Christ, and to support, through their prayers, offerings, and service, the mission outreach of the church.

### **Areas of Emphasis**

The focus of Family Ministries is upon relationships. It is a ministry to the “and,” such as in husband *and* wife, parent *and* child. Thus this ministry concerns itself primarily with relational dynamics rather than the needs of individuals per se. The basic target areas of emphasis for the Department of Family Ministries are premarital guidance, strengthening marriage and parent education, with attention also given to extended families, single parenting, step-family needs, and the family needs of singles. The development of relational skills fostered by Family Ministries empowers young people, singles, and families and enriches relationships both within the home and within the church, the household of faith.

The curriculum framework upon which leadership and resource development are based includes eleven major areas: theological foundations, family and mission, families in society, marriage and family dynamics, interpersonal relationships, parent education and guidance, human growth and development, human sexuality, family ethics, family resource management, and family ministries programs and implementation.

Methodologies—Three broad categories define the approaches to ministry to families facilitated by the department: education, enrichment, and counseling.

1. Education—Substantial revelation concerning the divine purpose for families has been given. Practical principles which govern family relationships are found in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. In the preparation of resources for family life education, the department centers its research and study on these primary sources and seeks to integrate biblical principles with helpful understanding and methodologies from other compatible mental health, behavioral, and social science sources.

2. Enrichment—The department prepares resources and develops leadership in enrichment activities—experiential programs for married couples, families and singles groups which enable participants to make relational gains together through sharing and interacting in various events and activities. Enrichment focuses directly on the family or group as a system in a process of enhancing relationships through better communication, deeper understanding, and an improved ability to resolve anger and conflict. In the absence of extended family, enrichment groups can function as a surrogate family. When enrichment activities are conducted among individuals who are part of the same local church, a spirit of community, support, and cooperation may be developed.

3. Counseling—The crucial role and importance of the counseling profession in the lives of troubled families is recognized and appreciated. Many individuals and families are in such critical need as to require specialized work that is particularly tailored to assist them in resolving short or long-term personal or relational crises and difficulties. The department encourages the referral of such individuals and families to professionally qualified counselors wherever possible. While the training of counselors is not within the purview of the department, it is recognized that the content and process of leadership development provided by the department may be useful to pastors and others who may be called upon to counsel. However, the limitations of pastoral and lay counseling must be fully recognized and appropriate caution taken.

### **Departmental Staff and Governance**

Staffing—The Department of Family Ministries is administered by a director (or co-directors), with associate director(s) who are appointed on the basis of their expertise and experience in caring for the responsibilities encompassed by the work of the department. In their leadership, the director(s) and associates will provide the perspectives of men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and will model growing, healthy family relationships. Because of the nature of the dynamic within families and the content and methodologies of Family Ministries, it is recommended that the staff of the department include at least one husband and wife team. It may be appropriate to name such a team as co-directors of the department.

Governance—The department director(s) and associate director(s) work in harmony with the General Conference administration under the authority of the General Conference Executive Committee. Division directors of Family Ministries constitute a valued World Advisory Council for the department responsible for long-range planning. In addition, an Advisory Committee comprised of the Family Ministries departmental director(s), associates, General Conference administrative representation, representatives from related General Conference departments, and selected non-General Conference family professionals affords a support group for counsel and intermediate-range planning. Regular staff meetings with representation from General Conference administration care for routine decision-making and operation of the department.

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**Note:** *The General Conference Department of Family Ministries was created at the General Conference Session in Utrecht, July, 1995. This document constitutes the working policy statement for the department and is reprinted here from the minutes of the 1995 General Conference Annual Council.*