



December 2014

SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

In this issue:

Loneliness: The Silent Killer?

The Observance of Christmas

Upcoming Events

Recommended Reading

Useful Links

Loneliness: The Silent Killer?

Pr Les Ackie

The approach of Christmas is a cause of much excitement for countless numbers of children and adults alike. Yet for many, Christmas brings with it a great sense of foreboding and dread. The voluntary organisation *Lifeshare*, which caters for the needs of homeless people, states that, “Whilst Christmas brings joy to many, for others it is a time of loneliness, hardship and depression - when the suicide rate traditionally peaks”¹ The sad reality is that for many, Christmas only brings an increased sense of detachment and isolation. However, loneliness is not limited to a season, it is an ever-present reality that affects all of us in varying degrees.

Loneliness is the feeling of sadness that results from isolation or a lack of companionship. The sense of detachment from significant others can give rise to emotions of anger, sadness, depression, worthlessness, resentment, emptiness, vulnerability and pessimism. Loneliness is no respecter of persons. Contrary to popular opinion, it is not the sole domain of single people and the elderly. It affects those in marriages, families, those with

successful careers, introverts, extroverts, and every age group. The fact that loneliness is the result of a lack of emotional connection means that mere proximity to others is not the solution. We may be in the presence of thousands and still feel isolated.

The Lonely Society, a 2010 report commissioned by The Mental Health Foundation, suggests that lonely people often share certain characteristics: these include more of a history of loss or trauma and a childhood spent with negative, critical and harsh parenting.² However, loneliness is not merely a psychological/emotional problem. In addition to the more obvious emotional effects, research is now demonstrating that loneliness is also detrimental to physical health. Neuroscientist John Cacioppo, has researched social seclusion for decades. He has found that while obesity increases the likelihood of early death by 20%, excessive loneliness pushes up the odds to 45%.³ Feeling isolated from others can disrupt sleep, raise blood pressure, lower immunity, increase depression, lower overall subjective wellbeing and increase the stress hormone cortisol . . . Lonely people are nearly twice as likely to die prematurely as those who do not suffer feelings of isolation.⁴ The idea of dying from a broken heart is a lot closer to the truth than many realise.

The solution to loneliness requires individuals to take personal responsibility for their emotional wellbeing. The Bible states, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly” (Proverbs 18:24). While some may claim that they do not need anybody apart from God, such protests ring hollow because God Himself said, “It is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). It is significant that God made this declaration while Adam stood in perfect manhood untainted by sin. The sense of being ‘alone’ is not a sign of our sinfulness, it is a sign of our humanity. We are hardwired for intimate human relationships. Where healthy human connection is absent, deterioration in emotional wellbeing is the inevitable result.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

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There is a marked difference between being alone and being lonely. While John the Baptist spent long periods by himself in the wilderness, Ellen White comments that his life, “was not spent in idleness, in ascetic gloom, or in selfish isolation . . . In solitude, by meditation and prayer, he sought to gird up his soul for the lifework before him” (*The Desire of Ages*, 64). Even though introvert personalities may cherish time alone to recharge their energy levels, they still have a basic need for social interaction in order to preserve good emotional, spiritual and physical health.



Loneliness can often be the product of the fear of relationships, an unhealthy introspection due to low self-esteem and the result of emotional pain or trauma. In some instances, this may require professional intervention to provide support and facilitate healing.

However, the individual who struggles with loneliness must exercise the courage to step beyond their fears and pain in order to cultivate healthy connections with others. Fulfilling relationships necessitate a commitment to authenticity on our part. Loneliness is a fact of life and it is unrealistic to expect that we can go through life without experiencing this sense of isolation. The key is in how we choose to respond to our loneliness. The only way out of loneliness is through it. We must engage with our discomfort in order to understand the message it is giving us. The only solution to loneliness is relationship. Cacioppo, describes loneliness as social pain - a psychological signal designed to alert an individual of their isolation and motivate him/her to seek social connections.⁵ Those who are lonely need to be intentional about engaging with others in a meaningful way.

Healthy friendships are a key factor in helping individuals to develop resilience in the face of adversity. There is much truth in the old axiom that “A trouble shared is a trouble halved”. Solomon states in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.” Often the best way to address our own problems is to reach out to others. The Wise Man also states that, the generous soul shall be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself (Proverbs 11:25). Nazi concentration camp survivor Corrie Ten Boom testified that one of the ways she was able to endure her ordeal was to take her mind off her own problems by focussing on helping others. The path away from loneliness is others focussed. The primary characteristic, which should be exhibited by a follower of Jesus is love (see John 13:35). Love by its very nature is about giving. Agape love is one of the most effective remedies for warding off the self-absorption to which the lonely may be drawn. According to the Dalai Lama, “If we want to be happy, we must practice compassion.”

The ultimate solution to our loneliness is our forever friendship with God. In our loneliness we can express the Psalmist’s cry, “My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare. ¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted” (Psalm 25:15-16). In turn the Lord promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you, I will come to you, I will be with you even to the end of the world.” Not only does He promise His eternal presence, but He also creates opportunities for human companionship. The Bible states, “God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing” (Psalm 68:6).



¹www.lifeshare.co.uk.

²The Lonely Society, The Mental Health Foundation (2010), 15.

³Issue: Social Neuroscience: Gene, Environment, Brain, Body. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1231 (2011) 17-22 c2011 New York Academy of Sciences.

⁴Aditya Chakraborty The Guardian Online, Monday 21 October 2013.

⁵Issue: Social Neuroscience, 17-22

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35



The Observance of Christmas

Selected statements by Ellen G White

I. What Is Christmas?

CHRISTMAS is coming,” But what is Christmas, that it should demand so much attention? When the world at large celebrate the day, they show no honour to Christ. They refuse to acknowledge him as their Saviour, to honour him by willing obedience to his service. They show preference to the day, but none to the one for whom the day is celebrated, Jesus Christ.

II. Christ’s Birthday Not Known

There is no divine sanctity resting upon the twenty-fifth of December; and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of man through the infinite sacrifice made for them, should be so sadly perverted from its professed design. Christ should be the supreme object; but as Christmas has been observed, the glory is turned from him to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for him to come to our world.

III. The Wonderful Theme of the Incarnation

Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, the royal King of heaven, laid aside his royalty, left his throne of glory, his high command, and came into our world to bring to fallen men, weakened in moral power, and corrupted by sin, aid divine. He clothed his divinity with humanity, that he might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery, to lift up fallen man. By taking upon himself man’s nature, he raised humanity in the scale of moral value with God. These great themes are almost too high, too deep, too infinite, for the comprehension of finite minds.

IV. The Gift Season for God’s Cause

Parents should keep these things before their children, and instruct them, line upon line, precept upon precept, in their obligation to God,—not their obligation to each other, to honour and glorify one another by gifts and offerings . . . they should bring to Him their gifts and offerings. Thus did the wise men and the shepherds.

V. A Day of Gladness and Rejoicing

. . . you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose.

The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure-seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and his cause and the salvation of souls.

VI. Not to Be Ignored With Children

The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels, and made to result in good to our fellow-men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world.

VII. The Emblem of the Evergreen On Christmas

So soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralise.

Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to him gifts and offerings. Let everyone remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. . .

In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem, "evergreen," suggest the holy work of God and his beneficence to us; and the loving heart-work will be to save other souls who are in darkness.

VIII. Interchange of Holiday Gifts

The holiday season is fast approaching with its interchange of gifts, and old and young are intently studying what they can bestow upon their friends as a token of affectionate remembrance. It is pleasant to receive a gift, however small, from those we love. It is an assurance that we are not forgotten, and seems to bind us to them a little closer.

IX. Making Melody and Praising God

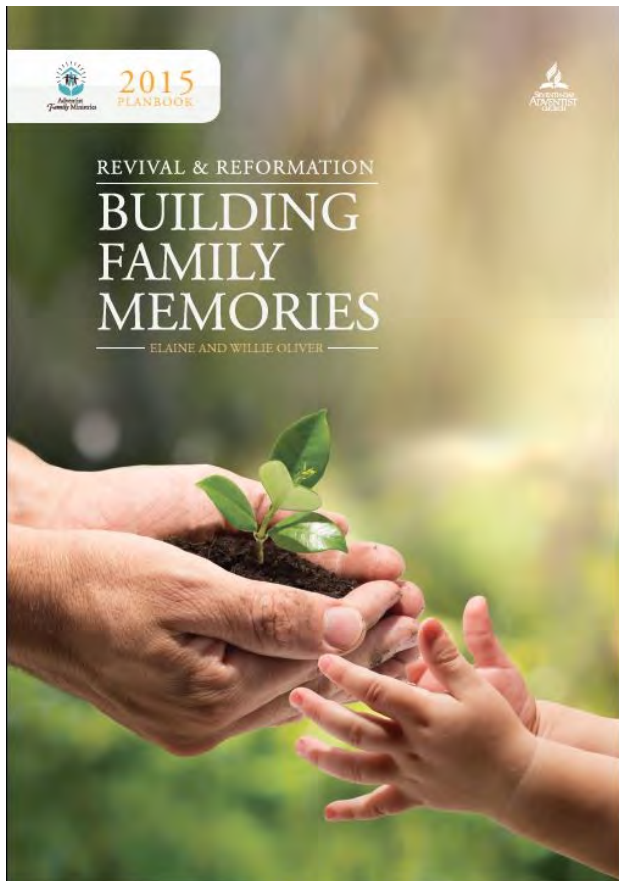
Brethren and sisters, while you are devising gifts for one another, I would remind you of our heavenly Friend, lest you should be unmindful of his claims. Will he not be pleased if we show that we have not forgotten him? Jesus, the Prince of Life, gave all to bring salvation within our reach. . . .

X. Not Forgetting God

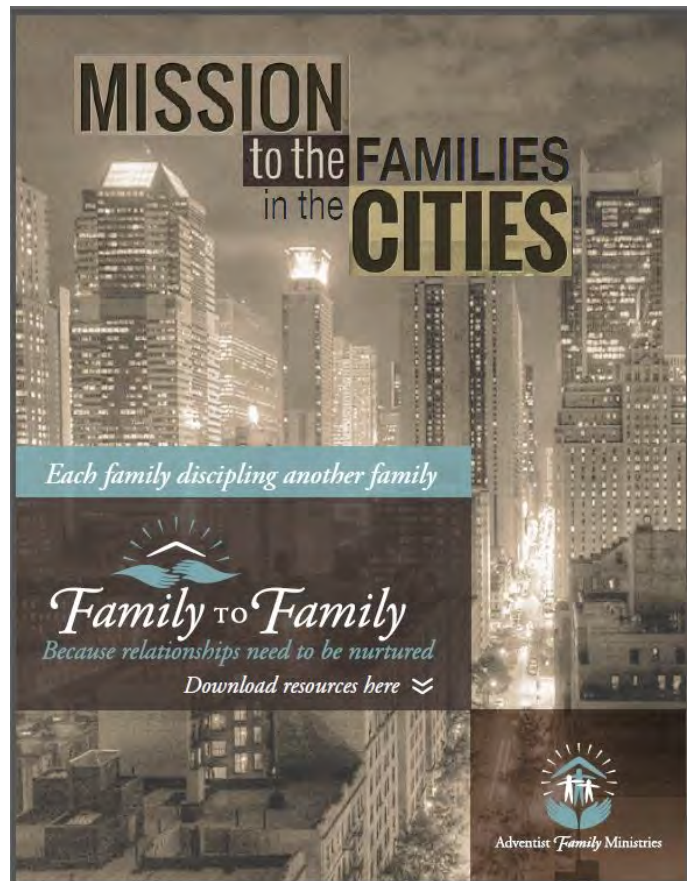
While urging upon all the duty of first bringing their offerings to God, I would not wholly condemn the practice of making Christmas and New Years gifts to our friends. It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance if we do not in this forget God, our best friend. We should make our gifts such as will prove a real benefit to the receiver.

For the full document compiled by the SDA Biblical Research Institute see <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/Christmas.html>





Click on the link to download the Family Ministry Planbook at http://adventist.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/48793/FM_Planbook-2015.pdf



Click on the link to download the Family to Family Resource at <http://sec.adventist.org.uk/who-we-are/departments/family-ministries/>

Marriage Enrichment Fellowship Dinner

The Marriage Enrichment Fellowship invites you to their quarterly dinner for couples. Enjoy a special evening with your spouse and great fellowship.

Topic: "Being A Better Helpmate"
Presenter: Pastor Sam Neves
Invest the time in your marriage, because it's worth it!

Venue: The Park Inn Hotel, Bath Rd Heathrow, Middlesex, UB7 0DU
Date: Saturday 6 December 2014
Time: 7PM—11PM

Advance Payment of £50 per couple:
 Please reference payment with your name.

Natwest Account Name:
 The Marriage Enrichment Fellowship
 Sort code: 60-17-21
 Account No: 89169174

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The SEC Family Ministry Marriage Retreat

Intimate Allies
 Guarding the Foundations of Marital Love

An exploration of practical biblical principles to enhance spiritual, emotional and physical intimacy

20th - 22nd March 2015
 Venue: Denham Grove, Tilehouse Lane, Denham, Buckinghamshire, UB9 5DG

Cost: £240 per couple (subsidies and split payments available for early booking)

Presenters:
 Les & Irma Ackie

Register at sec.adventist.org.uk/events

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

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9:30 - 5:00 PM • 11th January 2015 • Newbold College

All South England Conference Pastors and Members are invited to this special **ONE DAY** only training event.

Great choice of materials from departments to **explore** and **purchase!**

More info: **01923 656502** or Visit: **sec.adventist.org.uk**



**KNOWING
GOD'S
HEART**

Our Keynote Speaker is
Pastor Dave Neal
President of the Irish Mission.

South England Conference

expo

EVANGELISM

Join us in

10 days of PRAYER

January 7-17, 2015

www.TenDaysofPrayer.org

The logo for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, featuring a stylized flame or leaf symbol above the text "SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH".A large, glowing orange and yellow heart shape composed of swirling, flame-like patterns, set against a dark background.

Click on the link to download resources <http://www.tendaysofprayer.org/#boxes>

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Stanborough Christmas Fair

Artwork by Muskah Year 7

- Secret Gifts Room
- Hook the Duck
- Jazzy jars
- And more

Entry: £1 Date: 11/12/2014 Time: 3:30pm - 5:30pm

Venue: Stanborough School, Stanborough Park, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 9JT

VISIT US

STANBOROUGH SCHOOL
Stanborough Park
Watford WD25 9JT
01923 673 268
WWW.SPSCH.ORG

Stanborough Secondary School Scholarships & Bursaries

Stanborough School's Scholarship scheme aims to make Adventist Education more accessible to outstanding students. Candidates must apply for entry for the following academic year and demonstrate academic potential.

Stanborough School's Bursary scheme aims to support families that are currently opting out of the Adventist education system due to financial considerations. Candidates will be required to demonstrate both academic potential and financial need.

Both types of award are multiannual and will provide up to 8 places for prospective students applying for entry in Year 7 or Year 8. The scholarships awarded range from 25% - 50% of tuition fees. While students awarded bursaries receive £1000 - £2500 per year.

Candidates must register and pay an administrative fee of £10. The examination will be held on the 29th of January 2015 from 10.00 to 13.00. Registration closes 22nd of January 2015. To find out about the eligibility criteria visit us on www.spsch.org/scholarships/.

Useful Links

AdventSource -
www.adventsource.org/

Adventist Parenting -
www.adventistparenting.com

Adventist Special Needs
Association - www.asna.info/

BUC Family Ministry-
[adventist.org.uk/who-we-are/
departments/family-ministries](http://adventist.org.uk/who-we-are/departments/family-ministries)

The Ellen G. White Estate -
www.whiteestate.org/

GC Family Ministry -
family.adventist.org

Hope Channel - www.hopetv.org

Kids in Discipleship -
www.kidsindiscipleship.org/

North American Division Family
Ministry - family.nadadventist.org

SEC Family Ministries
[secadventist.org.uk/who-we-are/
departments/family-ministries](http://secadventist.org.uk/who-we-are/departments/family-ministries)

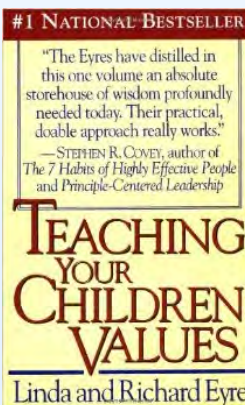
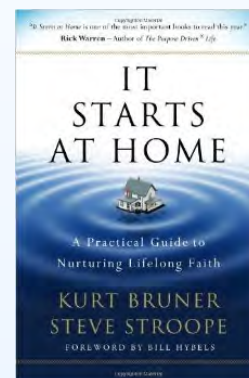
South Pacific Division Family
Ministry - [www.adventist.org.au/
family-ministries](http://www.adventist.org.au/family-ministries)

Recommended Reading



The Fig Leaf Conspiracy. Jimmy Evans discusses sex as the covenant sign and seal for marriage. This unique feature of marriage, created by God, is a major cornerstone of intimacy between a married man and woman. Based on Genesis chapter three, Evans discloses the Enemy's lies and attacks on human sexuality and his intention to distort God's perfect design for marriage.

It Starts At Home is a wakeup call for us to recognise a dramatic generational shift and respond with workable, realistic, and biblical strategies for spiritual formation at home. Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope provide a clear purpose, an effective strategy, and a simple plan for couples, parents, grandparents, and church leaders in this movement toward intentionality in the home where faith must be nourished.



Teaching Your Children Values. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is a strong sense of personal values. Helping them to develop values such as honesty, self-reliance, and dependability is vital. In this book, Linda and Richard Eyre present a practical, proven, month-by-month program of games, family activities, and value-building exercises for kids of all ages.

Cornerstone
Counselling Service

0207 723 8050
or ccs@secadventist.org.uk

Contact us to speak with a counsellor about issues that trouble you, or to make an appointment.



REAL Family Talk 
with Willie & Elaine Oliver

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