



June 2015

SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

In this issue:

When Does Discipline Become Abuse?

General Conference Official Statement on Abuse and Family Violence

Upcoming Events

Recommended Reading

When Does Discipline Become Abuse?

Pr Les Ackie

The tragic circumstances surrounding the death of seven-year old Shanay Walker at the hands of her abusive aunt and grandmother are heart-breaking to contemplate. The systematic physical and emotional cruelty visited on this innocent child prompted The Telegraph headline, “Wicked’ Seventh-day Adventist jailed for inflicting two-year reign of terror on her niece.” The headline clearly intended to drag the name of the church through the dirt and represents the kind of lazy, sensationalist journalism more usually associated with the tabloid “red-tops”. The paper was quick to insinuate a culture of abuse in the church without seeking to find out what the church actually believes and teaches in regard to parental discipline and child abuse. The behaviour of Shanay’s aunt and grandmother was as far removed from biblical discipline as chalk and cheese. However, it does raise the age-old question about what separates discipline from abuse.

The Bible clearly counsels us, “Withhold not correction from the child . . .” (Proverbs 23:13). God Himself sets the pattern for the disciplining of children by setting limits on us and imposing consequences for disobedience. The key factor in God’s discipline is His motivation. Jesus says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten (Revelation 3:19).” Ellen White counselled, “Parents, let your children see that you love them and will do all in your power to make them happy. If you do so, your necessary restrictions will have far greater weight in their young minds” (*The Adventist Home*, 193).

Contrary to popular misunderstanding, the traditional “spare the rod, spoil the child” interpretation of Proverbs 13:24 does not give parents the right to physically abuse their children. Rightly understood, the use of the rod should be like that of the Heavenly Shepherd who guides and comforts His flock (Psalm 23:4). Those who feel that God is requiring them to exact harsh punishments on their children need to re-examine their concept of who God is. What kind of God would He be that required us to assault our children in the name of discipline? We serve God according to the image we have of Him. If we see Him as hard and exacting, we will treat our children in the way we believe He treats us. The Lord does not shy away from the need to administer chastisement. Hebrews 12:6-7 states that, “the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” His discipline is motivated by His love. However, when the motivation of God’s love is absent from the heart, abuse is the inevitable result, whether through harshness or neglect. It is important to recognise that even if we believe that our motivation is pure, abuse and its long-term effects are just as devastating whether we realise it or not. The effect of abuse has much more to do with how our behaviour is perceived by the child than what we intended to achieve. Bear in mind that the leaders of the church of Jesus’ day believed that they were doing God’s will when they condemned Jesus. Wilful ignorance is no excuse. We will be held accountable even for the opportunities we spurned to learn better ways to accomplish His purpose, including the way we raise our children.

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



The methods we use in disciplining our children should be guided by our primary purpose. Discipline can be defined as training, which is expected to produce a specific character, or pattern of behaviour, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement. Parental education has traditionally emphasised controlling a child's behaviour as opposed to influencing character. It is possible to spend too much time forcing our children to be 'good' without helping them to develop internal values from which right behaviour stems. Compelling right behaviour through harsh punishments without addressing the

weightier matter of character transformation will either produce cowering compliance or rebellion.

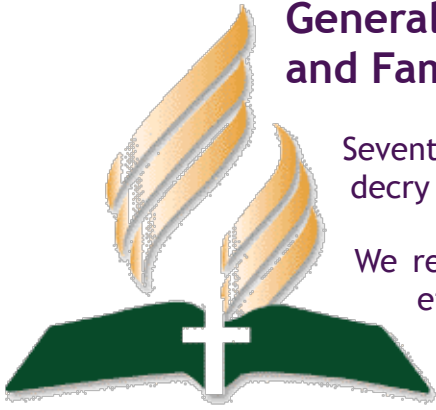
We need to be honest with ourselves as to whether our disciplining is truly an outgrowth of a desire to mould the characters of our children into the likeness of Jesus or simply an outlet for our emotional frustrations. Our children should not have to pay the price for our adult feelings of embarrassment, irritation or stress. We need to exercise emotional control while disciplining our children. We must be careful to avoid overstepping the line between legitimate correction and physical abuse. Solomon states, "Like a city whose walls are broken through is a man who lacks self-control (Proverbs, 25:28). We are counselled, "Whipping may be necessary when other resorts fail, yet she [mother] should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so . . . Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control" (*Child Guidance*, 250). Harsh discipline may achieve external compliance but, as in my personal experience, breed internal hostility. In my household growing up, my father knew only one form of discipline and that was administered with a leather belt. Somebody once said that, "If all you have in your toolbox is a hammer, you will treat everything like a nail." We are further counselled that, "Many times you will find that if you will reason with them kindly, they will not need to be whipped. And such method of dealing will lead them to have confidence in you. They will make you their confidant" (*Child Guidance*, 250). A tendency to take recourse in hitting rather than talking may indicate a failure on our part to nurture an emotional connection with our children which will allow us to understand their hearts rather than reacting to their behaviour. Discipline requires that we creatively use every option available to us to guide our children in the right direction.

It is not my position that parents who utilise corporal punishment are automatically failing in their parental responsibilities. Physical chastisement remains a biblical option utilised by many loving parents. Problems arise when it is the only option employed out of emotional reactivity rather than a proportionate, measured response from a loving heart. Our discipline should recognise the dignity of the child in our charge. We are told, "A child is not a horse or a dog to be ordered about according to your imperious will, or to be controlled under all circumstances by a stick or whip, or by blows with the hand (*Child Guidance*, 251). The reality is that whatever the form of discipline, be it loss of privileges; verbal correction; time outs; natural & logical consequences; chores etc, any form of discipline can become abusive if carried to extremes and administered outside of the context of a loving, grace-filled relationship.

In addition to our moral responsibility, it is also important to bear in mind that in the UK it is unlawful for a parent or carer to smack their child, except where this amounts to 'reasonable punishment'. However, physical punishment will be considered "unreasonable" if it leaves a mark on the child or if the child is hit with an implement such as a cane or a belt. Such legal restrictions are often viewed as the "Nanny State" trying to tell us how to raise our children and many feel justified in ignoring these stipulations with the rationalisation that, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). However, we need to be certain that we are, in fact, obeying God. Ellen White said it well when she commented, "In order to maintain . . . authority, it is not necessary to resort to harsh measures; a firm, steady hand and a kindness which convinces the child of your love will accomplish the purpose" (*Child Guidance*, 283).

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

General Conference Official Statement on Abuse and Family Violence



Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognise the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international

assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behaviour.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defence of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behaviour open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.



For Single and Shared-Parenting Mums and Dads



- The Loop Young Families Club
- @theloopyfc
- theloopyfc@gmail.com
- Email to gain access the WhatsApp Group

Like us on Facebook, Follow us on Twitter!





The SEC Family Ministry
Marriage Retreat



Blended Hearts

An exploration of biblical
principles to nurture
love, trust and
emotional intimacy



Presenters:
Irma & Les
Ackie

23rd - 25th October 2015

Venue: Denham Grove, Tilehouse Lane, Denham,
Buckinghamshire, UB9 5DG

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

Register at sec.adventist.org.uk/events



Adventist
Family Ministries

SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES
LEADERSHIP TRAINING



CONNECTING LIVES FOR ETERNAL LIVING

Venues: THE STANBOROUGH CENTRE,
609 St Albans Road WD25 9JL.
BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE,
St Albans Road, Garston, Watford Hertfordshire WD25 9JZ

CERTIFICATE IN FAMILY LIFE LEADERSHIP

Modules covered:

- Leading Family Ministry
- Biblical Foundations
- Human Development
- Spiritual Parenting
- Families as Systems
- Communication
- Anger & Conflict
- Strengthening Marriage
- Family Evangelism

SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES
DEPARTMENT

25 St John's Road, Watford
Hertfordshire, WD17 1PZ
Phone: 01923 23 27 28
Email: fm@secadventist.org.uk

Attendees receive all seminar materials and more to
facilitate effective ministry

Modules are presented on a cyclical basis to allow
access at any point in the programme

Register with Anna at AMcLarty@secadventist.org.uk or call 01923 232 728

Cornerstone
Counselling Service



ARE YOU A TRAINED CHRISTIAN COUNSELLOR?

Have you been looking for a way to
serve God using your talent and
skills?

Can you volunteer your services to
Cornerstone?

CONTACT THEMBIE MAPINGIRE,
FOR MORE INFORMATION
tmapingire@secadventist.org.uk



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

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

GC Family Ministry - family.adventist.org

Hope Channel - www.hopetv.org

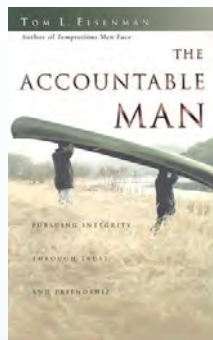
Kids in Discipleship - www.kidsindiscipleship.org/

North American Division Family Ministry - family.nadadventist.org

SEC Family Ministries secadventist.org.uk/who-we-are/departments/family-ministries

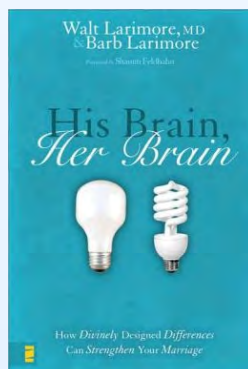
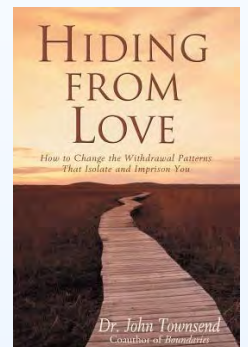
South Pacific Division Family Ministry - www.adventist.org.au/family-ministries

Recommended Reading



The Accountable Man. Good men - husbands, fathers, church leaders, pastors sometimes make bad choices. And for far too many men, bad choices have led to the crumbling of marriages and ministries. Tom Eisenman gives men sound biblical & practical advice on how to stay true to their families, and their values. He asserts that authenticity, vulnerability, honesty and trust do not come naturally. These qualities must be cultivated.

When we experience emotional injury, fear, shame, or pride our first impulse is to hide the hurting parts of ourselves from God, others, even ourselves. In **Hiding from Love**, Dr. John Townsend helps us to explore thoroughly the hiding patterns we've developed and guides us toward the healing grace and truth that God has built into safe, connected relationships with Himself and others.



His Brain, Her Brain. Men and women really are different. Even their brains are different, and they were divinely designed that way. Using the latest research, Dr. Walt and Barb Larimore show how the God-designed differences between the male brain and the female brain complement each other to help couples build a delightful, lasting marriage.

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

Contact Us

SEC Family Ministries
25 St John's Road
Watford WD17 1PZ
fm@secadventist.org.uk

Pr Les Ackie, Director:
01923 656 510

lackie@secadventist.org.uk

Anna McLarty, Secretary:
01923 656 530

amclarty@secadventist.org.uk

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