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# SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

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## I Am Not Charlie

Pr Les Ackie

Since the tragic events surrounding the massacre at the Charlie Hebdo offices unfolded, heated debates have filled news reports, radio programmes and social media regarding an appropriate response to the terrorist attacks and where to draw the line on freedom of speech. I felt moved to address these issues partly to reconcile my own internal tensions. On the one hand there is the natural sympathy for the bereaved and a desire to rage against the perpetrators of this heinous crime. On the other hand, there is the aversion to support the cause of an organisation who have historically poured scorn and ridicule on every section of society, including Christianity. I struggle with the view attributed to Voltaire that, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Freedom of speech is a great privilege which should be protected, but it was never designed to be a license to abuse. Human dignity should influence how we balance conflicting rights and values.

The publication of the special edition of Charlie Hebdo depicting a weeping Prophet Mohammed has upped the ante and further polarised opinions in the debate over freedom of speech. The decision to publish is an understandably emotional reaction of defiance, especially by those who have been directly affected by the Charlie Hebdo atrocities. For people who suffer loss in such tragic circumstances, it is natural for grief to turn to anger and to seek an avenue through which to vent feelings. It is also understandable that people might wish to direct their ire toward a religion that is perceived to spawn the kind of followers who felt justified to snatch the life from the defenceless. However, in any attempt to assert our rights and deliver a defiant response in the face of heartless injustice, we must be careful that innocents are not caught in the cross fire. It is highly unlikely that the position of those who embrace the ideologies of the Paris assassins will be softened by the swathe of public response to the killings and the assault on freedom of speech. It is more likely that they will become even more emboldened and self-justified in their jihad against secularism. However, countless numbers of Muslims who abhor the Paris slaughter will bear the insult inherent in this public disregard for religious sensibilities.

It is easy to take the position that one little cartoon is no big deal, but the issue is about what the cartoon represents. A country's flag is just a piece of cloth, but burning a country's flag will predictably cause deep offence because of what the flag represents. To publish an image fully knowing that it will offend is reckless and irresponsible if there is no moral benefit to be derived. Obviously there will be times when we must express views which we know will not be well received. When Jesus told Peter, "Get behind me Satan" (Matthew 16:23), He knew that His words would sting. However, even when we legitimately oppose the views of others, we have a biblical mandate to, "speak the truth in love." We are also counselled that, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves" (Romans 12:17-19).

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

# SEC FAMILY

If the motive is simply to hurt the ones who have hurt us, then we would do well to heed the counsel, “Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves - one for yourself.” If we are serious about the need to foster community, then we should avoid causing unnecessary offence. I have seen



some of the Charlie Hebdo cartoons lampooning not only Islam, but Christianity and religion in general. I found them crude and highly offensive. Freedom of speech is not such a sacred cow that it gives us the right to say anything we want with no regard to the affront it will cause. It is argued that the magazine’s targets are ‘fair game’ and that the publishers should not be criticised because everybody gets the same treatment. However it is a strange argument that justifies wrongdoing because everybody suffers.

There are higher values to which we ought to aspire. Values articulated in the true definition of love in Galatians 5 and 1

Corinthians 13. The ‘love chapter’ begins by stressing that we may speak great words, but if they are devoid of love they are just noise. We may hold up freedom of speech as a sign of a healthy society, but according to the Bible, if our words do not enhance our capacity to love others, they are worthless. In fact they may be worse than worthless because Solomon informs us that death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). It is not the freedom to speak that is important, it is what we choose to say and our motive for saying it that determines value. The first chapter of Corinthians also informs us that love is not rude, is not self-seeking and does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Corinthians 13:5-6). It appears to me that the Charlie Hebdo’s publications fall way short of this ideal. I mention this simply to point out that before we align ourselves with any cause, we need to know the values for which it stands.

It is very easy for us to stand in judgement over those who do not share our values, but before we do so we should bear in mind the Native American adage, “Do not judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins”. No self-respecting faith or value system should teach us to lie down and roll over in the face of intimidation, but neither should it give us permission to render evil for evil. While we should weep with those who weep and stand against oppression in all its forms, violating human decency should never be a part of our armoury to combat evil. Freedom of speech is a vital tenet of a free society, but just because we can, it does not mean that we should. I cannot help but suspect that in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack, while some are legitimately seeking to defend their freedom in the best way they know how, others are using this tragedy as an opportunity to launch an assault on Islam in particular and religion in general. Thousands have marched in protest under the banner “Je suis Charlie”. I wonder how many would march to defend the freedom of faith groups to share their beliefs. If freedom of speech is sacrosanct then it must apply to all or none at all. Ironically, one of the most powerful comments to come out of the Hebdo affair is one that echoes Voltaire’s assertion. It relates to Ahmed Merabet, the Muslim policeman who was slain in the street. Banners read, “I am not Charlie . . . I am Ahmed the dead cop. Charlie disrespected me and ridiculed my faith and culture and I died defending his right to do so.”



Our hearts must go out to all those who grieve. It is right that we should be angry about such a callous waste of life by those who are motivated by warped ideologies and fear-driven hatred. However, how we choose to respond says more about us than it does about them. Regardless of how we feel about other people and their views, when we fail to respect the dignity of others we diminish ourselves. We are counselled to resist, “returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9).

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## A Call to Worship

Pr Les Ackie



Isaiah stands out as the major OT prophet. His 60-year prophetic ministry covered the reign of four different kings through one of the most turbulent periods of the history of God's people. As Elijah's ministry was a foundational attack on the pagan worship of Baal, it symbolically represents the work to be accomplished within our homes to resist the prevailing influences of a secular world. Elijah's message is one that unequivocally calls for commitment. He cried out, "'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him'" (1 Kings 18:21).

Key to the prophet's strategy was the re-establishment of the worship of God. 1 Kings 18:30 reveals that he, "repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down", because he knew that the nation could not prosper unless God was at the helm. Ellen White states that, "If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Infidelity and skepticism prevail. Iniquity abounds. Corruption flows in the vital currents of the soul, and rebellion against God breaks out in the life" (*Child Guidance*, 517).

The importance of family worship cannot be stressed too highly in terms of building spiritual and emotional intimacy among family members. Malachi 4:6 informs us the effect of the spirit-filled, end-time Elijah message will be to nurture strong relationships. This idea is repeated in Luke 1:17. Referring to the ministry of John the Baptist, the Bible says that, "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Effective Christianity is about building relationships first with God and then with one another.

Among the Patriarchs of the Old Testament building altars was symbolic of making the worship of God of primary importance. While it is no longer necessary for us to erect physical monuments, the necessity of giving God first place in our lives remains. It has long been said that, "The family that prays together, stays together." This is by no means a guarantee of family unity, but the basic principle holds true that families who take time for regular authentic worship tend to enjoy healthier stable relationships. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that Christian families who worship together regularly are in the minority.

Family worship is a subject guaranteed to generate pangs of guilt from frazzled and overcommitted parents. Reading inspired counsel that recommends morning and evening devotions can compound feelings of inadequacy when we are confronted with what appears to be unrealistic standards. One of the greatest hindrances to family worship is a perceived lack of time. We tend to live at such hectic pace that occasions, which find all family members together at the same time are few and far between. This is all the more reason why we must be intentional about making the most of the opportunities we have. The incessant spiritual assaults upon our family are much too great for us to rush into the day without calling on God for strength and protection. Bear in mind that the Enemy does not mind what we do for God, as long as we don't do it today. We are admonished, "Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations" (*Child Guidance*, 520). If ever there is a time when we need to bring our family together under the umbrella of God's love, it is now.

Family worship should never be allowed to become a tick-box exercise in which we convince ourselves that we have done our duty to God. The purpose of worship is to make contact with God and to experience His presence through our songs of praise, the testimony of His word and the

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opening of our hearts to him in prayer. Family spirituality is not simply the product of engaging in religious exercises. It is the product of drawing closer to each other as we draw closer to God.

I believe that the Elijah message emphasises heart relationships because one of the greatest challenges to family spirituality is the quality of our emotional connection with one another. Worship is designed to engage us on every level of our humanity. For example, Ellen White describes prayer as the, “opening of the heart to God as to a friend” (Steps to Christ, 93). In other words, prayer is a very intimate experience. Healthy emotional connection requires us to be open, honest and vulnerable with one another. If we are not cultivating authenticity in our general interactions with each other, we will be reluctant to do so in the context of family worship. We only open our hearts to those with whom we feel safe. We therefore facilitate family spirituality by making our homes safe places for the expression of heart issues. This having been said, family worship must transcend our human connections so that we experience God on an interpersonal level.

In facilitating family worship, it is very easy to get bogged down in formats, which can become staid and boring. A great hindrance to this invaluable family time is the negative associations many have of their own family worship when they were children. Dragging children out of bed at 6:00 am for long, lifeless, formulaic family worship is not the best way to enthuse them about the practice. We are counselled, “Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time” (Education, 186). Again, we read, “Children need to have religion made attractive, not repulsive. The hour of family worship should be made the happiest hour of the day. Let the reading of the Scriptures be well chosen and simple; let the children join in singing; and let the prayers be short, and right to the point” (Christian Service, 210). Family worship should bring together two concepts, which are not usually associated - worship and fun! For children who are accustomed to multi sensory input, reading long passages from the Bible and Ellen White's writings just won't 'cut it'. Our worship should not only inform, but it should also inspire. The quality of our worship should be measured by the difference it makes to how we live our lives and how we relate to others.

God promises great things to those who make Him first place in their hearts. He instructs us regarding his statutes, “You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth” (Deuteronomy 11:19-21). As we place The Lord on the throne of our hearts, by His grace, our children will too.



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- ✦ God to use our families as agents of hope and salvation
- ✦ Our relatives, neighbors, and friends' openness to accept Jesus
- ✦ Other families' prayer requests

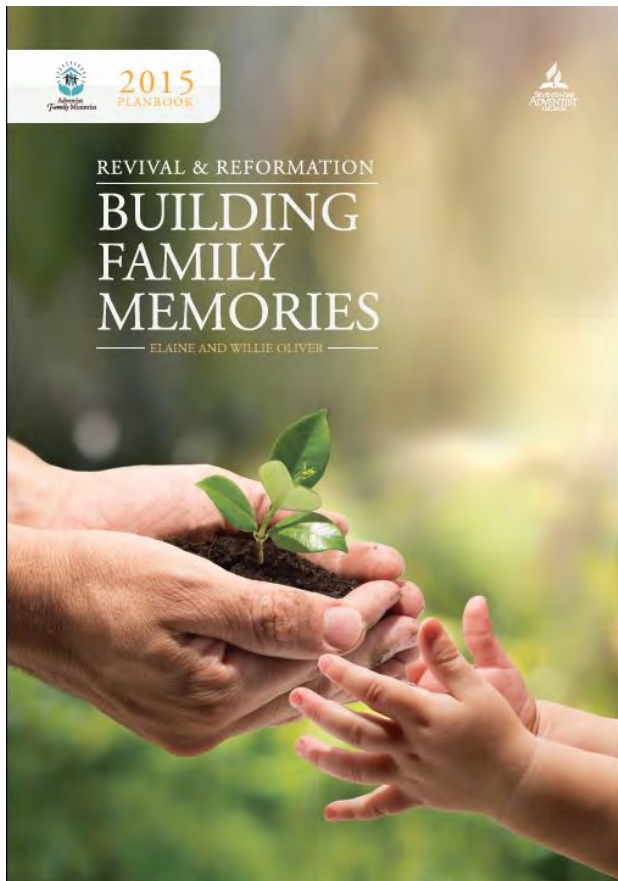


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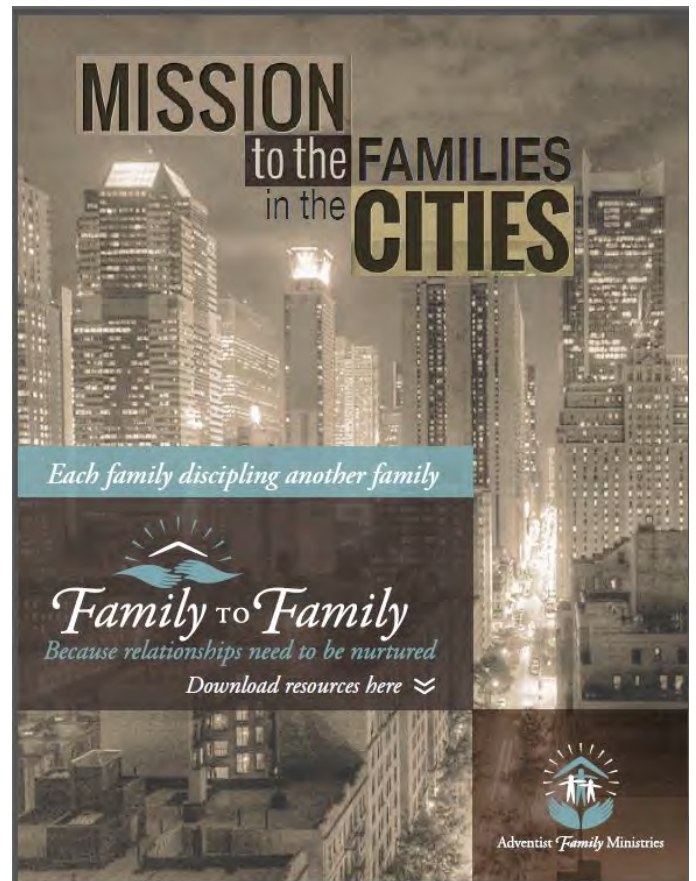
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Click on the link to download the Family Ministry Planbook at [http://adventist.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/48793/FM\\_Planbook-2015.pdf](http://adventist.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/48793/FM_Planbook-2015.pdf)



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

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](http://sec.adventist.org.uk/events)

hallelujah

# KidzPraise

DAY OF FELLOWSHIP

**SAT 23 MAY 2015**

**WATFORD COLOSSEUM**  
 Rickmansworth Road  
 Watford WD17 3JN  
**Starts 10am**

**ADMISSION: FREE!**

**WWW.KIDZPRAISE.CO.UK**

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## Useful Links

AdventSource -  
[www.adventsource.org/](http://www.adventsource.org/)

Adventist Parenting -  
[www.adventistparenting.com](http://www.adventistparenting.com)

Adventist Special Needs  
Association - [www.asna.info/](http://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/](http://www.whiteestate.org/)

GC Family Ministry -  
[family.adventist.org](http://family.adventist.org)

Hope Channel - [www.hopetv.org](http://www.hopetv.org)

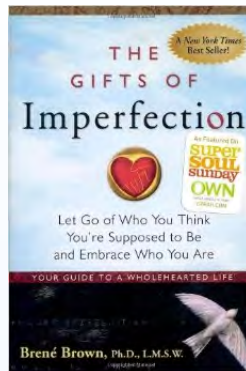
Kids in Discipleship -  
[www.kidsindiscipleship.org/](http://www.kidsindiscipleship.org/)

North American Division Family  
Ministry - [family.nadadventist.org](http://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)

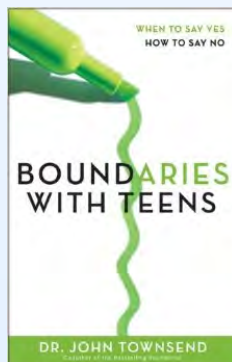
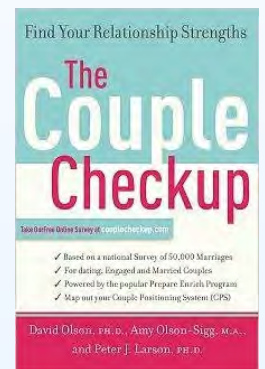
South Pacific Division Family  
Ministry - [www.adventist.org.au/  
family-ministries](http://www.adventist.org.au/family-ministries)

## Recommended Reading



In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brené Brown, a leading expert on shame, authenticity, and belonging, shares ten guideposts on the power of Wholehearted living—a way of engaging with the world from a place of worthiness. Brown courageously tackles the dark emotions that get in the way of leading a fuller life. Her unique ability to blend original research with honest storytelling makes reading this book a potentially life-changing exercise.

Based on an unprecedented national survey of 50,000 marriages, *The Couple Checkup* presents the principles for creating a successful couple relationship. Each chapter of the book matches a category in the free individual profile. While the book stands on its own, using the Couple Checkup with the book provides the maximum benefit. In addition, each chapter contains couple exercises to help build couple strengths in a variety of areas.



In *Boundaries with Teens*, Dr John Townsend, applies biblically based principles for the challenging task of guiding our children through the teen years. He shows how to deal with disrespectful attitudes and challenging behaviour; set healthy limits and realistic consequences; be loving and caring while establishing rules and determine specific strategies to deal with common issues.

**Cornerstone**  
Counselling Service

**0207 723 8050**  
or [ccs@secadventist.org.uk](mailto: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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