



March 2015

SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

In this issue:

When A Spouse is Spiritually Single

Single, Saved and Satisfied

Upcoming Events

Recommended Reading

Useful Links

When a Spouse is Spiritually Single

Pr Les Ackie

The term “spiritually single” refers to Christians who are married to spouses who do not share their faith. This situation may arise from, conversion after marriage, unequally yoked unions or apostasy. Regardless of how they come about, these marriage can be a source of great heartache for the one who desires more than anything that their spouse experience salvation in Jesus. However, as much as a believer desires the unbeliever to embrace their faith, it is vital for them to appreciate that while they are responsible *to* their spouse, they are not responsible *for* them. In other words, husbands and wives are responsible to love each other, but conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, a believer does have a vital role to play in the potential conversion of his/her spouse.

Paul states, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband” (1 Corinthians 7:14). Peter expresses a similar point when he states, “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the

word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ²when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear” (1 Peter 3:1-2). Nazi concentration camp survivor, Victor Frankl said, ‘When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves’. The best way to influence others is to be what we want them to be.

Spiritually single spouses have the challenging task of balancing their commitment to two covenant commitments. The vows made to their husband/wife and the vow they made to God. One of the most argued-over passages in the Bible states, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. ²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” Some argue that this obligates the believing spouse to acquiesce to the authority of the unbeliever, but the passage clearly indicates that submission is due to a husband who strives to love his wife, “just as Christ also loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25). Believing spouses are bound by their vows to their unbelieving spouse unless adultery has taken place (Matthew 19:9), or they have been abandoned by the unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15). In situations where it is physically, emotionally or spiritually unsafe for them or any children they may have to remain, they must do whatever is necessary to preserve life and health.

That having been said, it is not God’s will that the believing spouse neglect their marriage obligations to their unbelieving partner. Clearly, the believer should never compromise their Christian values in favour of marital harmony, but they should also not alienate their spouse by prioritising church duties over marital union. Any efforts to win the non-believer will be frustrated by the resentment that often accompanies the sense that the church has ‘stolen’ their spouse.

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

SEC FAMILY

Conflict is inevitable even in the healthiest marriages. Unequally yoked marriages throw up a number of practical challenges that need to be negotiated. Struggles can be numerous, and include disagreements concerning how to raise the children, how to spend money, if/where to give money to spiritual causes, friendships, what television programs to watch, music to buy and on and on. Conflicts are accentuated because both partners embrace fundamentally different core values in regard to faith issues. If both are fully committed to their values, emotive conflicts are inevitable because our core values lay at the heart of who we are. In such unions it is all the more important that the believer engages disagreements without adopting an adversarial attitude. In most conflicts, it is the way people communicate rather than the content of their disagreements which leads to

alienation and relational breakdown. The believer is often at a disadvantage in conflict situations because they do not have the moral recourse to the more negative forms of communication with which unbelievers may be comfortable. Believers are always obligated to take the moral high ground.



When it comes to spiritual matters, “no man [or woman] is an island”. The Bible counsels believers to “encourage one another”. The inability to rely on a spouse for spiritual solace necessitates that the believing spouse find alternative sources for support. As a general rule, it is advisable that such support be obtained within same-gender friendships. Spiritual and emotional intimacy often go hand in hand and most affairs begin with innocent friendship. Ellen White counselled, “If a woman comes to a Christian brother with a tale of her woes, her

disappointments and trials, he should ever advise her, if she must confide her troubles to someone, to select sisters for her confidants, and then there will be no appearance of evil whereby the cause of God may suffer reproach (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 306). The lack of spiritual intimacy between married partners does not preclude them from experiencing emotional intimacy. Spiritually single people can still enjoy happy marriages because healthy unions are built on good relational principles which can flourish even in the absence of an overt recognition of God. The believer’s challenge is to cultivate the characteristics of the fruit of the spirit (see Galatians 5:22, 1 Corinthians 13) which will make their faith more appealing.

Churches should be sensitive to the challenges of the spiritually single who are often caught in a “no-man’s land” between couple’s and single’s events. It is also important for such individuals to cultivate healthy social networks as the couple’s respective friends often don’t mix. The power of social events and activities should not be underestimated as a means of introducing unbelieving spouses to safe Christian people in a non-threatening environment. As a matter of course, churches should be intentional about being safe places for unchurched people. The saying goes that, “You don’t get a second chance to make a good first impression. It doesn’t take much to put non-believers off church. They generally come with inbuilt fears and reservations that don’t require much to confirm. A lack of a welcoming spirit; lack of courtesy and downright rudeness; poor timekeeping; Christian jargon; boring sermons; a basic lack of relevance to real life issues and dirty toilets are the main culprits for causing unbelievers to reject church. Our churches should be places to which spiritually single believers can feel proud to bring their spouses.

Trust God with your marriage and your life. I know this isn’t easy, and we learn how to trust God in steps as they pertain to certain areas of our lives, but God loves you, sees you, and knows you better than anyone. No matter how difficult certain times or situations may become, remember that God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him (Isaiah 30:18).

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

Single, Saved and Satisfied

Pr Buford Griffith Jr - Secretary & Family Ministry Director for Southwestern Union Conference



While browsing the Internet one evening, I saw something regarding singleness that caught my eye. The statement was, “I’m Single Because God is Busy Writing the Best Love Story for Me. “Isn’t that a great phrase? Too many people, married or single, have the impression that being single is God’s way of depriving or punishing a person.

The Bible is such a practical book given to us by a wise, relational God. The apostle Paul states that we should “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, ESV). In another text of scripture the apostle counsels us by saying, “Not that I speak of want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11, 13, emphasis supplied). There it is! Learning to be content with life. One of the biggest challenges in life is to be content in our various stages of life. It has been said that happiness is not having what you want. It is wanting what you have! God’s desire for each person is to be content in Christ, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

When it comes to issues pertaining to singleness, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the question is not, “What will make me happiest?” but “What will make God happiest?” Singleness, like marriage, is a gift. The apostle Paul states, “each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner [singleness], and another in that [marriage]” (1 Corinthians 7:7, NASB). In society today, we discover a problem. Singles want to be married and some married people want to be single. The core of the problem is a lack of contentment—failing to value God’s gifts and timing. Married people must understand and be committed to their marriages, while singles must understand that they cannot operate and behave like married people.

Singleness is a gift and with the gift of singleness is the gift of abstinence. A single person is faced with the subtle and not-so-subtle pressures of those around them and the church arena tends to exert the most pressure as many Christians ascribe singleness as “unfinished business.” You may have heard the comments: “Aren’t you married yet?” “What’s a nice girl or guy like you doing unmarried?” “What you need is a good wife or husband.” “I’m praying that God will lead you to a good man or woman.” The big one: “If you would commit your life to Christ, God will give you a marriage partner.” Christ never said that! Christ’s message is that He will lead you to a life of meaning and purpose and fulfillment. God is a relational God, and He has created us to be relational beings. The question often asked in response to the statement just made is: “Doesn’t that suggest that God intends for every person to be coupled in a marriage relationship?” Not necessarily so. We relate to others in many ways and not necessarily in an intimate, marital relationship.

God is interested in our happiness and securing the best in our interaction with others. Satan is not interested in our happiness but in our destruction. He broadcasts certain lies about being single in an effort to thwart a person’s faith and confidence in God:

Lie No. 1: God is not powerful enough to find you a husband or wife. Remember that God is more powerful than our social situations, our looks, our personalities, and our insecurities.

Lie No. 2: You’re single because God does not love you. If you can’t see God’s love on the cross, why do you think you will see it in a man/woman—especially sinful mankind?

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

Lie No. 3: Because no one has married you, you have no value. You were created in the image of God. Your value is not determined by mankind, but by God!

Lie No. 4: Getting married will fix all your problems. Marriage is not the best solution for every person.

Lie No. 5: It's better to marry a non-Christian than stay single for life. Follow the counsel of scripture, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14, NKJV)." Sounds old fashioned and out of touch? It is safe to trust God and follow His counsel for your life.

Cultivate contentment in singleness. Contentment is all about a shift in perspective—a daily decision to trust God in all circumstances and to see Him at work in every chapter of your life. Instead of focusing on what you lack, remember and acknowledge all that you have.

- Cultivate a heart of gratitude (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- Invest in your family and friend relationships.
- Pursue your God-given dreams. Don't put your ambitions and passions on hold until you find someone. Rather, dedicate your time and energy to fulfilling God's call on your life. He will bless you with someone along the way, if that is what is going to be best for your life. Place your dependence on God for fulfilment.
- Maintain high standards. There's no perfect person who will meet every one of your expectations, but you shouldn't compromise your core standards.
- Keep up spiritual practices. Regardless of your relationship status, things like prayer, time in the Word, will keep your spiritual life healthy.
- Encourage and serve others.

God has given you tasks and responsibilities to serve and provide lasting hope to those in need. You have a unique purpose and contribution to make to the world.

A final word is to surrender control of your life to God. Practice patience—God is shaping you and maturing you into the man or woman He has called you to be. He understands you better than anyone else. Enjoy being single, satisfied, and determined to be saved by the grace of God. Give God the pen, and let Him write your life story. It is going to be amazing!


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“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content”
Philippians 4:11






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

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Les & Irma Ackie

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Leading Family Ministry
Biblical Foundations
Human Development
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Anger & Conflict
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Family Evangelism

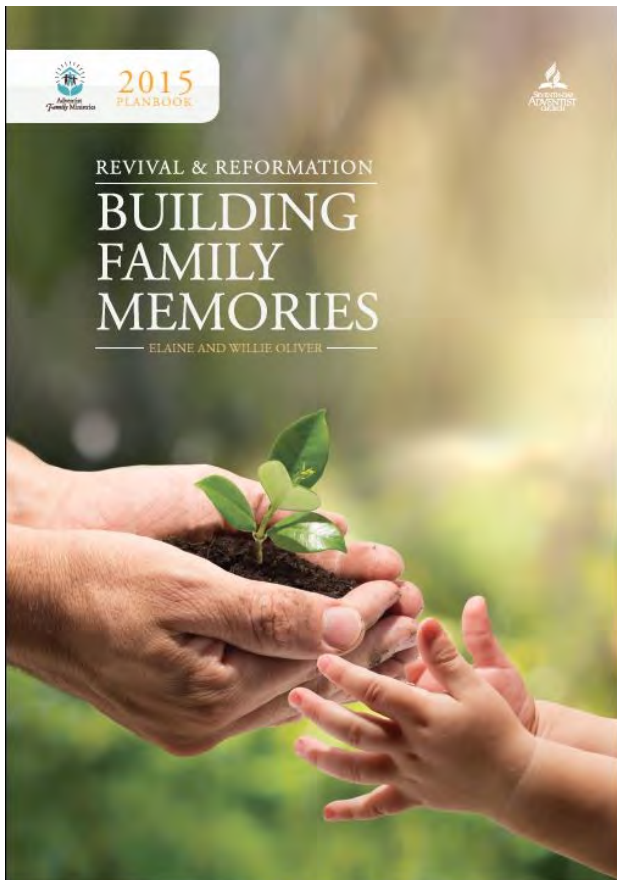
Training dates:
Sunday 8 March Part 1 10am-4pm
Sunday 22 March Part 2 10am-4pm
Sunday 24 May 2015 Part 3 10am-4pm
Sunday 7 June 2015 Part 4 10am-4pm

Training may be accessed at any point as each module can stand alone and will be repeated at a later time to facilitate completion of the course

Attendees will receive all seminar materials and more to facilitate effective ministry
Lunch will be provided based on the numbers registered


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

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

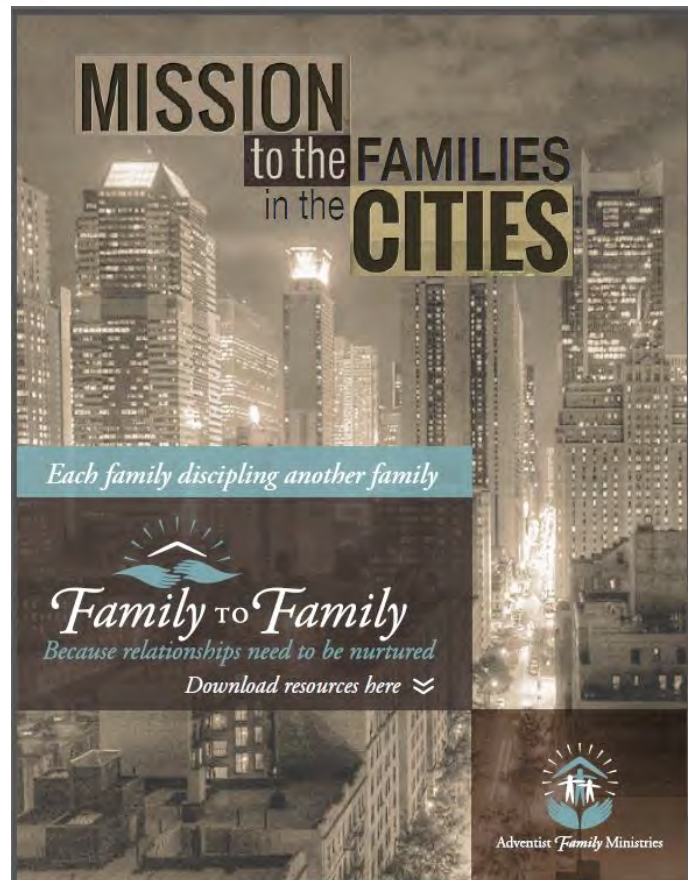


2015
PLANBOOK

REVIVAL & REFORMATION
**BUILDING
FAMILY
MEMORIES**
— ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER —




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



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to the
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in the
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Adventist Family Ministries

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

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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

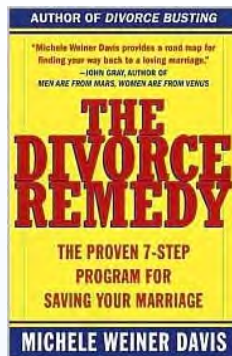
Kids in Discipleship - www.kidsindiscipleship.org/

North American Division Family Ministry - family.nadadventist.org

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

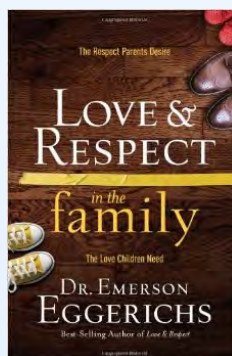
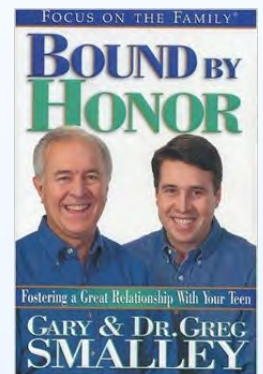
South Pacific Division Family Ministry - www.adventist.org.au/family-ministries

Recommended Reading



The Divorce Remedy is an empowering and encouraging guide for revitalizing marriage and building stronger, more loving bonds. In a down-to-earth style that is free of psychobabble, Weiner Davis outlines a realistic, solution-oriented seven-step program for managing marital problems, which, when left unchecked, can drain the life out of a relationship.

It is hard for parents to make the transition from a child who believes your every word, to a child, who seems overnight, to question everything you say. In *Bound by Honor*, Father and son team Gary and Greg Smalley present a practical guide for fostering a great relationship with teens. Emphasis is placed on the need to show honour to our teens by maintaining healthy communication, and demonstrating respect.



In *Love and Respect in the Family*, Emmerson Eggerichs builds on a foundation of his previous book *Love & Respect* which focussed on marriage. His basic premise is that children want love and parents want respect. He presents strong biblical principles that allow families to break the “Crazy Cycle” of children withholding respect and parents withholding love.

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