



SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

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Who Comes to Your Church? Barrington Brennen

Who comes to your church to worship each week? Who are the members of your church? What kind of individuals and family units come to your church for instruction, inspiration or healing? Are you aware of the different types of family units that come to your church each weekend; each one with their own needs and challenges and each with different expectations. Knowing about these family units and learning how to meet the unique needs of each family unit, are important to effective ministry and is the essence of Christianity.

Unfortunately, even if we are aware of some of the unique family units that come to church each week, the language or rhetoric from the pulpit often does not really match the needs of the family units present. For example, although divorce is not ideal but often necessary at times, we forget that there are countless divorcees worshiping each week and the language focuses only on “healthy married couples or families.”

We also know that it is not God’s plan for any one to drink alcohol or become an alcoholic, however, on many weekends there may be individuals who are struggling with the desires to drink or the habit of drinking. What do we do instead? Often we condemn and criticize rather than offering healing or encouragement. Rather than spreading the gospel we may be creating “toxic faith.” Yet Jesus said “come to Me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Do you realize that most of the sermons on Saturdays or Sundays are geared to the nuclear family unit only, which constitutes in many congregations less than one-third of all family units? Even the person who gives the main prayer often forgets to mention the single parents, never-married-singles, divorcees, widows, drug users, recovering homosexuals and alcoholics, etc., who are members of the church.

We love to pray for the “healthy husbands and wives” and “families” but we neglect to mention persons or family units in our churches who have also been “washed by the blood of the Lamb.” We say that the church is a hospital for sick people; so let us not keep them sick by not meeting their needs. This weekend make a special note of all those kinds of family units who come to church. Below is a list of 30 types of family units that might be in your church each weekend. Ask yourself if your church is truly meeting the needs of each of these units.



November 2012

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

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1. Nuclear families (married mum and dad with children)
2. One married parent with dependents while the other parent is in prison
3. Never-married single adult families (mum or dad alone with children)
4. Divorced with no children
5. Divorced with dependent children
6. Separated with dependent children
7. Separated with no dependent children
8. Widowed with dependent children
9. Widowed with no children
10. Step and blended families (One or both adults have children from a previous marriage or relationship)
11. Extended families (Adult relatives (not parents) living together with children)
12. Grandparent with dependent children
13. Teenager supporting young siblings.
14. Common-law relationship (adults living together long-term with no commitment or plans to marry).
15. Seasonal (or nomadic) union. When one partner lives abroad for extremely long periods or permanently, only seeing each other annually or on very rare occasions.
16. Emotionally separated or divorced union. This is a husband and wife who are living together but are going through severe problems and refuse to improve or divorce.
17. Affair-compromised union. One partner is aware that the other partner is having an affair and either tolerates or accepts it. Or the innocent partner finds it difficult to leave because of financial reasons.
18. Same-sex unions.
19. Homosexual/lesbian adult living alone.
20. Transgender/transsexual individuals living alone or with other adults or family members
21. Racially or ethnically mixed couples/families (colour, language or nationality).
22. A single, heterosexual, emerging adult (age 18-25) living with other single emerging adults (all non married males and/or females) - communal living.
23. Cohabiting couples
24. Senior family member who has Alzheimer's, or dementia, or other mental challenges living with other family members.
25. A family unit with a severely developmentally disabled child/adult (Autistic, Down Syndrome, etc)
26. A family unit with a wounded war veteran.
27. A family unit with a member who has a longer-term physical illness
28. Aged retired couple living alone with severe limitations.
29. Spiritually single family unit. One spouse is a Christian or religious or both partners are of different faiths or religions.
30. High profile leaders' family unit. (This can include government leaders, pastors, or any one in a high profile position). Too often children and spouses of high profile leaders are neglected.

(read the full unedited article at www.soencouragement.org)

*For further articles by Pastor Brennen, please visit www.soencouragement.org
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Look Before You Leap: The Crucial Role of Pre-Marital Counselling

Pr Les Ackie

The more time I spend working with couples in crisis, the more I feel compelled to ‘beat the drum’ for rigorous premarital counselling for those considering marriage. A little gentle probing into the history of couples experiencing difficulties often reveals that pre-marital counselling was either non-existent or inadequate.

Effective premarital guidance illuminates the biblical principles undergirding Christian marriage; prepares couples for the transition into married life; enhances relational skills; provides the opportunity to evaluate the decision to marry and helps to develop confidence and trust in the pastor/counsellor and the counselling process.

Bearing in mind that the best marriage is still the union of two imperfect people, it is necessary that couples learn at the pre-marital stage which flaws in their partner they can accommodate and which they cannot. However, too many couples are so caught up riding the roller-coaster of emotional ‘love’ that they often fail to ask the cold hard questions necessary to evaluate themselves and their partners as candidates for marriage. Ellen White counsels, “Those who are not willing to adapt themselves to each other’s disposition, so as to avoid unpleasant differences and contentions, should not take the step” (*The Adventist Home*, 84). Couples make a potentially fatal error when they enter marriage with the intention or hope that their partner will change. More often than not, the computing acronym WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) applies.

Because emotions have such a powerful influence on the way courting couples relate, it is vitally important for them to engage in an objective process to clarify their experience at the earliest opportunity. The Bible warns, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9. This is especially true in matters of ‘love’.

In his book *The Road Less Travelled*, the author M Scott Peck, makes the distinction between being ‘in love’ and ‘real love.’ Too many confuse the euphoric, involuntary, obsessive, effortless, self-centred, temporary, delusional experience of being ‘in love’ with what Peck describes as, “The will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth (p 81). Real love is characterised by the biblical concept of agape love. That love which operates out of principle rather than emotion. While romance is a vital component of every marriage, being ‘in love’ must give way to mature agape love. A rigorous pre-marital process enables couples to measure their experience against real love as defined in Galatians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 13.

As a church we do a disservice to couples when we bend over backwards to facilitate their ‘whistles and bells’ weddings, yet fail to hold them accountable to each other and God through a thorough pre-marital counselling process. Ellen White comments that, “Marriage, in a majority of cases, is a most galling yoke. There are thousands that are mated but not matched” (*The Adventist Home* p 44). We can avoid much heartache by assisting couples to make spiritually mature choices at the pre-marital stage so that their marriages may be characterised by the sentiment that, the warmth of true friendship that binds the hearts of husband and wife [may be] . . . a foretaste of heaven (ibid.56).



Where is He? The Dilemma of Christmas

Pr Les Ackie



As the year draws toward a close, the annual debate reignites among us over how we ought to relate to Christmas. Should we buy presents, send cards, attend the Christmas dinners, put up Christmas trees, allow our children to participate in nativity plays? The dilemmas come thick and fast. While some jump into the Christmas spirit with both feet, others wish to pull the covers over their heads until the season goes away.

Some basic facts are clear about Christmas. We know that the date, the 25th December and many of the traditional practices of Christmas have their roots in paganism. We also know that there is no biblical command to celebrate Jesus birth on a particular day. So should we take a firm stand and “touch not the unclean thing”? Or can we in all good conscience separate ancient pagan practices from the modern observance of the day?

The December 1996 issue of the SDA publication *Signs of the Times*, stated, “The major problem with Christmas in our day is not paganism, but materialism” (p. 14). Obviously no church members will be celebrating Christmas by bowing down to pagan gods. However, there is a strong argument that materialism is merely a modern form of paganism with many worshipping at the altar of consumerism. The ‘hard sell’ commercialization of Christmas seems to start earlier and earlier every year. News reports indicate that in this country the average household spend on Christmas will be around £900, with much of that spent on a fruitless pursuit of happiness.

The Christmas season is often described as ‘the season of goodwill.’ Undoubtedly many intentionally good things happen at Christmas, but if the statistics are to be believed there is often more bad will than good. The voluntary organization Lifeshare, which caters for the needs of homeless people, state that, “Whilst Christmas brings joy to many, for others it is a time of loneliness, hardship and depression - when the suicide rate traditionally peaks” (www.lifeshare.co.uk). The sad reality is that for many, Christmas only brings an increased sense of loneliness and isolation. There are more incidences of domestic violence; more alcohol related deaths, more relaxing of sexual morality, more financial difficulties and more marital breakups. All in a season supposedly celebrating Jesus.

When the Wise Men entered Jerusalem, they had one question on their lips which is of great relevance to us today as we debate the Christmas issue, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? (Matthew 2:2). Whichever side of the debate we lean toward, the question is, “Where is Jesus?” In our attempt to promote our viewpoints, we can share a truth obnoxiously and we can embrace a lie graciously. The danger is that we can lose sight of He, who is supposed to be the ‘reason for the season’.

Ellen White took a very pragmatic view of Christmas. She stated, “As the 25th of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed 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 Adventist Home* p 478). Few would take seriously a suggestion that we should stop using the names of the days of the week because they are pagan in origin. It is possible to utilize Christmas without buying into its falsehoods and excesses.

Again Ellen White comments, “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 (*ibid.* p. 479). She emphasizes that Jesus should not be forgotten; that Christmas should be used as a time to honour God; we should turn the thoughts of

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(continued from p 4)

the children toward unselfish service rather than personal gain, and that we should provide innocent enjoyment for the day.

Mark Finley comments that, "The Christmas season is a time to celebrate and rejoice. It's a time to praise. We were not left alone in the depths of our sin. In the darkness of our rebellion, there is a light. Imprisoned in sin's bondage, there is hope." (*Solid Ground*, 393).

Christmas, we are told, is all about giving. God has demonstrated the ultimate gift, "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Whether or not we choose to celebrate Christmas, our lives should be a celebration of the birth, death, resurrection and heavenly ministry of Jesus.



Nurturing your future through
Quality Education

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 & financial need.

Both types of award are multiannual and will provide up to 7 places for prospective students applying for entry in Year 7, Year 9, or Year 10. The maximum award is worth a 50% reduction on tuition fees.

Candidates must register and pay an administrative fee of £10. The examination will be held on the 25th of November 2012 from 14.00 to 17.00. To find out about the eligibility criteria please contact Mrs Sonia Poddar at recruit@vpsch.org or call 01923 673 268.



Scholarships & Bursaries

STANBOROUGH SCHOOL
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www.vpsch.org

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mentors and churches
to empower their
children to become
disciples who joyfully
trust, follow and
share Jesus



"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream
dreams, Your young men shall see visions."
Joel 2:28



For more information in the UK and Eire contact:
K.I.D. Children's Ministry Department
British Union Conference, Stanborough Park, Watford, WD25 9JZ
Tel: 01923 672251
www.adventistinfo.org.uk/department/childrensministries.php

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

NRPF

S E M I N A R

Be.Still.Ministries presents **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Families and Current Changes in Immigration Law**

This seminar is for anyone who is or knows someone subject to immigration control. This seminar will provide clear and accurate information as well as raising awareness of NRPF. The seminar seeks to enable and empower individuals, community and churches to play their part.

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- * Immigration Law and current changes
- * Home Office Applications and prices
- * UKBA protocols re deportation
- * Benefits/ Housing
- * Social Services
- * The Church
- * Health Services
- * Immigration solicitors (what you should know)
- * Employment/Volunteering and Education
- * The Needs of NRPF Families

If you would like this **FREE** seminar to be held at your Church, Community Centre or Children's Centre, please do not hesitate to contact:
SARAH BASHORUN (DipSW/HE, BSc)
on 07507994541 or email be.still.ministries@gmail.com

Please be advised that seminars will last approximately 2 hours. For other available workshops and seminars please enquire via email.



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Useful Links

AdventSource -
www.adventsource.org/

Adventist Parenting -
www.adventistparenting.org/

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

BUC Family Ministry-
www.adventistinfo.org.uk/

The Ellen G. White Estate -
<http://www.whiteestate.org/>

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

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

Kids in Discipleship -
www.kidsindiscipleship.org/

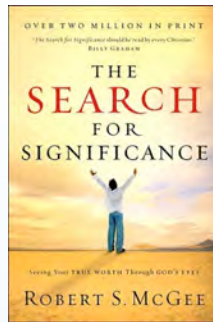
North American Division Family
Ministry - family.nadadventist.org

SEC News -
www.secadventist.com/secnews/

Share Him - [http://
sharehim.org/php/index.php](http://sharehim.org/php/index.php)

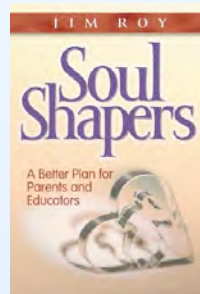
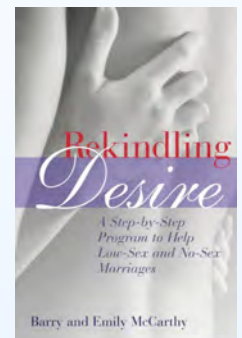
South Pacific Division Family
Ministry - [http://
adventist.org.au/family-](http://adventist.org.au/family-)

Recommended Reading



Robert McGee's best-selling book *The Search for Significance* teaches readers how to be free to enjoy Christ's love while no longer basing their self-worth on their accomplishments or the opinions of others. McGee demonstrates how false beliefs negatively impact our lives and shows how to overcome obstacles that prevent us from experiencing the truth that our self-worth is found only in the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Christ.

In *Rekindling Desire* Barry and Emily McCarthy present a ten-step programme to help low-sex and no-sex marriages. This seeks to get intimacy back into marriages and revitalize relationships. The authors show couples how to root out the "poisons" that inhibit sexual desire: shame, guilt, anger, passivity, as well as medical side effects and physical dysfunctions. Concrete techniques and effective strategies help couples increase sexual awareness, confront inhibitions and revitalize desire.



In *Soul Shapers* Jim Roy offers a new model for parents and teachers seeking to break out of the rote-memory assembly-line approach to education. He compares the ideas of Ellen White to those of contemporary educator and psychologist William Glasser. The author shows how a non-coercive approach takes children beyond grudging acquiescence to self-motivation.

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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