



SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

In this issue:

**The Enemy Within:
The Dangers of
Spiritual Abuse**

TV or Not TV?

Upcoming Events

**Recommended
Reading**

The Enemy Within: The Dangers of Spiritual Abuse

Pr Les Ackie

Abuse of any type occurs when someone has power over another and uses that power to hurt. Spiritual abuse happens when someone with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce, control or exploit another, causing spiritual and emotional wounds. Spiritual abuse differs from most other forms of abuse in that it may be perpetrated with no intent to harm, which can shield it's insidious nature within families.

This form of abuse is essentially using the principles of the Enemy in the name of Christ. Its seriousness is indicated by the fact that Jesus spent more time challenging spiritual abuse than any other problem in the church of His day (see Matthew 23). The reality however, is that spiritual abusers do not become so when they walk through the church doors, they bring this destructive mindset from home. Spiritually abusive church leaders tend to be spiritually abusive husbands, wives and parents.

In the context of family life, it is a daunting thought that parents stand in the place of God for their children and these children tend to get their image of God from their most dominant parent or carer. Parents' task is somewhat akin to the role of John the Baptist - to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. By modelling God's love, grace and truth to their children, spiritual parents make it easier for their children to accept Jesus when He makes a direct appeal to their hearts, because they would have already encountered Him through them. In her book *Child Guidance*, Ellen White states, "You may be evangelists in the home, ministers of grace to your children" (p.478). Unfortunately, too many parents are ministers of religion more than 'ministers of grace.'

Spiritually abusive parents distort the image of God in the minds of their children. Protestant reformer Martin Luther once stated,

I have difficulty praying the Lord's Prayer because whenever I say 'Our Father', I think of my own father who was hard, unyielding and relentless. I cannot help but think of God in that way" (Gregorovius, VIIIa, 249).

The subtle power of spiritual abuse is that it presents a false view of God and a false way of serving Him. Jesus was particularly concerned



December 2012

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

SEC FAMILY

over the people. While at face value, these leaders were morally upright, highly ethical, radical health reformers, sacrificial tithe returners and totally dedicated to church services, Jesus declared,

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20).

Spiritually abusive people generally lack awareness of their dysfunctional mindset and how much harm they perpetrate. This can often manifest itself in overly-critical, shame-based parenting, and a controlling or manipulative relationship with a spouse.

Spiritual abusers tend to use power, fear and intimidation; exhibit hypocrisy by observing the letter but not the spirit of the law; make unfair and unreasonable demands; major in minors; use knowledge and language to control and manipulate, are highly sensitive to, and intolerant of criticism and judge and shame those who 'step out of line.' C S Lewis commented, "Of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst" (Reflections on the Psalms, 31-32). Religious 'bad men' tend to perpetrate harm fully justified in their own minds that they are doing right, often using Scripture to reassure themselves. Legalism has a form of godliness but denies the power of the gospel to transform lives.



In order to effectively resist abusive spirituality it is vital to understand and experience healthy spirituality. Paul counsels us, "Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" 2 Corinthians 13:5. Combatting spiritual abuse begins with self-awareness and self-reflection. It requires us to allow God's grace to saturate our own hearts. Micah 6:8 states, "He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

More often than not however, spiritual abusers do not cease to be so by themselves. According to Arterburn & Felton, "We must have the courage to follow Christ's example and overturn the system, be it a marriage or an organization, if that system is wrong" (Toxic Faith, 72). We all have a responsibility to acknowledge the problem and address it with a 'grace offensive'. This involves the cultivation of healthy relationships in which we respond rather than react; have high, although reasonable expectations; have a healthy balance between discipline and nurturing; are sensitive to others emotional needs; are respectful of boundaries, even our children's and we encourage responsible decision-making while still under protection of the home.

Ken Blue summarizes that, "The only cure for the abuser, as well as the abused, is a sufficient dose of God's mercy and grace" (Healing Spiritual Abuse, 120). In this regard we must heed the counsel of the apostle,

. . . let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

"Grace isn't a little prayer you chant before receiving a meal. It's a way to live. The law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out."
Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899)

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



TV or Not TV?

Pr Les Ackie

Recently the debate over whether television is a ‘tool of the devil’ was reignited when Angus T Jones, star of the popular American sitcom ‘Two and a Half Men’ urged viewers to stop watching the show, condemning it as unbiblical ‘filth’. In what has been reported as a ‘Christian rant’, Jones attributes his comments to a spiritual awakening having embraced the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the video interview, Jones states, “Do some research on the effects of television and your brain and I promise you, you’ll have a decision to make when it comes to television and especially what you watch on television. It’s bad news.” In spite of media reporting portraying Jones as a religious crackpot, there is a serious discussion to be had regarding the validity of television as a legitimate source of entertainment.

I became intrigued with the influence of TV after my attention was drawn to a couple of unusual statements penned by Ellen White many years before the idea of television was birthed in the mind of John Logie Baird. She said that, “Satan exercised his power of hypnotism over Adam and Eve” (Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 5, 1081) and that, he through “mesmerism [hypnotism] . . . works with that power which is to characterize his efforts near the close of probation. The minds of thousands have thus been poisoned and led into infidelity (Mind, Character, and Personality vol. 2, 711).

Hypnosis is an artificially induced mental state characterised by an individual’s loss of critical powers and consequent openness to suggestion. The hypnotic state can be accomplished through various mechanisms including the use of music, flashing lights, monotonous tones and rhythmical movement.

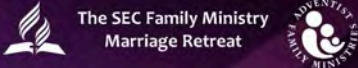
Social scientist Fred Emery states that “Television is a . . . direct technological analogue of the hypnotist” (The New Internationalist, January 1983). His research has indicated that the rapidly changing scenes of reference, especially in drama and entertainment programming can produce alpha brainwave activity, which is akin to the hypnotic state. The danger here is that when the brain is functioning in the alpha state, much of the information received is not processed by the rational part of our brains, but goes straight into our subconscious. As a result, TV is an ideal tool for psychological conditioning. The purpose of psychological conditioning is to trigger new thought patterns in the imagination in order to extinguish emotional reactions to ideas or events. This can be positive or negative depending on the new thought pattern we are seeking to create.

The best conditions for psychological conditioning are when an individual is calm and relaxed in a comfortable place and in good humour. Our own living rooms are the ideal environment. Ken Matto in his book *The Dangers of Television*, states that, “Many of the anti-Christian and immoral precepts are bellowed forth in situation comedies. They get you to laugh . . . much reprogramming is done through comedy (www.scionofzion.com/tv.htm).


The mounting evidence regarding the effects of television on the brain is of particular concern in light of the many hours of viewing to which our children are often exposed. Some of the effects shown by research are, moral influence; lowered attention span; altered dreams; social isolation, obesity and desensitization to stimuli which should invoke moral response.

Is television the ‘tool of the devil’? No, but it is a tool used by the Enemy. Our challenge in regard to television is to make discerning choices about what we watch and to what we expose our children. (continued on page 6)

SEC FAMILY




The SEC Family Ministry
Marriage Retreat



Strength to Love

Spiritual Foundations for Marital Unity



An exploration of practical solutions for the inevitable challenges that threaten spiritual and emotional harmony

Presenters:
Les & Irma Ackie

Date: 22nd - 24th March 2013
Venue: Hellidon Lakes, Hellidon, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 6GG
Cost: £230 per couple (subsidies available for early booking)
Register at www.secnews.org.uk or call Anna McLarty on 01923 232 728



SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TRAINING WEEKEND



Families 1st

CONNECTING LIVES FOR ETERNAL LIVING
Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire
8-10 March 2013

CERTIFICATE IN FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

Come and enjoy a weekend of faith, training and fellowship in the beautiful surroundings of Wyboston Lakes

- Biblical Foundations for Family Ministry
- Communication
- Anger & Conflict Resolution
- The Family as a Centre for Evangelism
- Leading out in Family Ministries

Single Room	£127 per person
Shared Room	£108 per person
Child (5-14)	£86
Child (under 5)	Free

SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT
25 St John's Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD17 1PZ
Phone: 01923 23 27 28
Fax: 01923 25 05 82
Email: fm@secadventist.org.uk

Register @ www.secnews.org.uk or call Anna McLarty on 01923 232 728

Jesus in the Family



KIDS IN DISCIPLESHIP
Designed for Families Focussed on Children

Equipping parents, 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



10am - 5pm
13th January 2013
Newbold College

Making God known

SEC Evangelism Expo 2013

Pastors and Members from all South England Conference Churches are invited to this special **ONE DAY ONLY** training event.

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

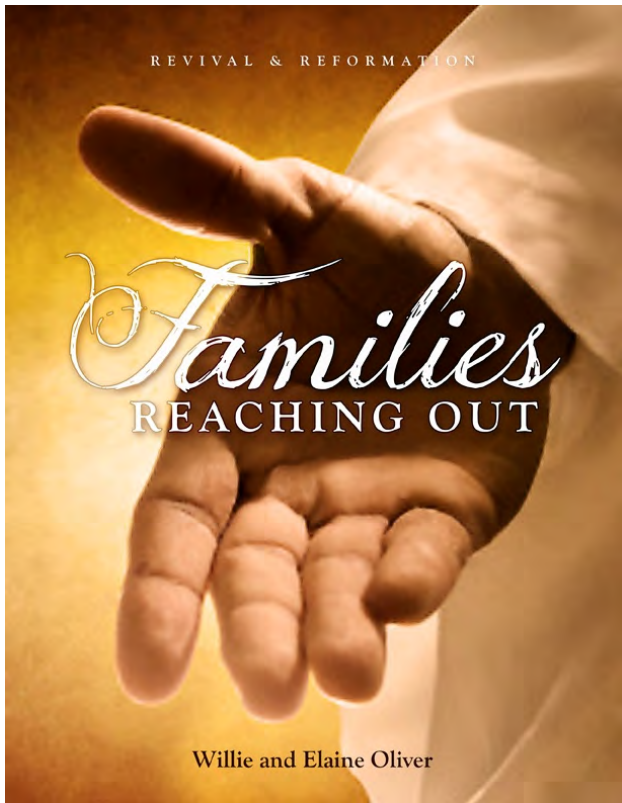
For more info call: 01923 656 500 Visit: www.secadventist.org.uk



Family to Family
Because relationships need to be nurtured

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

SEC FAMILY



Willie and Elaine Oliver

Click on the link to download the GC Family Ministry Planbook at <http://www.adventistinfo.org.uk/departments/familyministries.php>

SINGLESEVENTHDAYADVENTISTS.COM
 Info@singleseventhdayadventists.com

The brand new FREE A.S.I member official supporting ministry exclusively for baptised single Seventh-day Adventists. Join single Adventists from around the globe in fellowship and perhaps find the person made just for you.
 Genesis 2:18

Facebook.com/adventistsingles
 Twitter.com/singlesdas



FAMILY WORSHIP APP

This app provides family worship ideas that are fun, easy, and inspirational for the entire family

A supporting ministry sponsored by the SEC Family Ministry Department

SEX AND THE SANCTUARY

Assisting young people to safely navigate the pitfalls of sexual temptation and fall in love with Jesus

- Sexual Purity Weekend Retreats
- Youth Programmes
- Seminars & Workshops

Ages 13-19

Contact: Isha Prince or Khaya Chiweshe
 protectingthepassion@gmail.com

Passion & Compassion

THE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT FELLOWSHIP INVITES YOU TO THEIR ANNUAL SEMINAR FOR COUPLES.

GUEST PRESENTERS:
 BARRINGTON BRENNEN WITH ANNICK BRENNEN

Marrriage Enrichment Seminar
 May 24-26 2013

Barrington Brennen
 With Annick Brennen

HOT TOPICS:

- "BONE OF MY BONE" (GOD'S PERSON IN MARRIAGE)
- "COMPASSIONATE LISTENING" (CONFLICT RESOLUTION, ETC)
- "PASSIONATE ROMANCE" (AFFECTION, INTIMACY, ETC)
- "BITTER PASSION" (INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)

VENUE;
 DE VERE HOTEL, STAVERTON PARK, DAVENTRY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

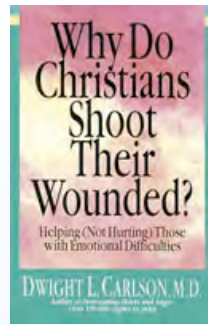
By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

(continued from p3)

So, should we pull the plug? Ask yourself, ‘Do I control the TV or does it control me?’ Does my viewing constitute good stewardship of the time God has entrusted to me? How do the values expressed measure up to God’s standard? If the images portrayed for my entertainment were taking place literally in the room in which I am present, would I still watch? Paul counsels us in 1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

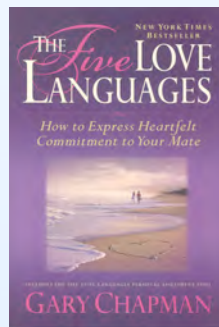
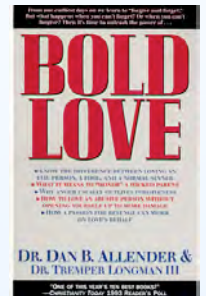
In order to “guard well the avenues of the soul”, we need to follow David’s example in making a covenant with his eyes, he says, “²I will behave wisely in a perfect way . . . I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. ³I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. Psalm 101:2-3

Recommended Reading



In *Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded*, Dr Dwight Carlson explores the attitude of some Christians towards mental/emotional illness, and also looks at some causes. He examines some of the unhelpful teachings about mental illness (i.e. “It’s your fault because you’re in sin”). Dr Carlson provides an explanation of the biochemical and genetic factors that contribute to mental illness. He challenges the church to reach with compassion to those who are suffering.

In *Bold Love* Dan Allender and Tremper Longman present a view of love which is far removed from the weak and insipid picture often portrayed in the media. The authors show that love does not require us to passively submit to inappropriate treatment in unhealthy relationships. While we are challenged to love others sacrificially, we have a responsibility to safeguard our own spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing.



In *The Five Love Languages* Dr Gary Chapman guides couples in identifying, understanding, and speaking their spouse’s primary love language—quality time, words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, or physical touch. Your love language is the way that you most feel loved and cared for. The problem is that most people love how they want to be loved, and that doesn’t tend to align with how their spouse wants to be loved. The challenge then is to learn a ‘new’ language in order to communicate love effectively.

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
Hope CHANNEL

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