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Ever After..."*

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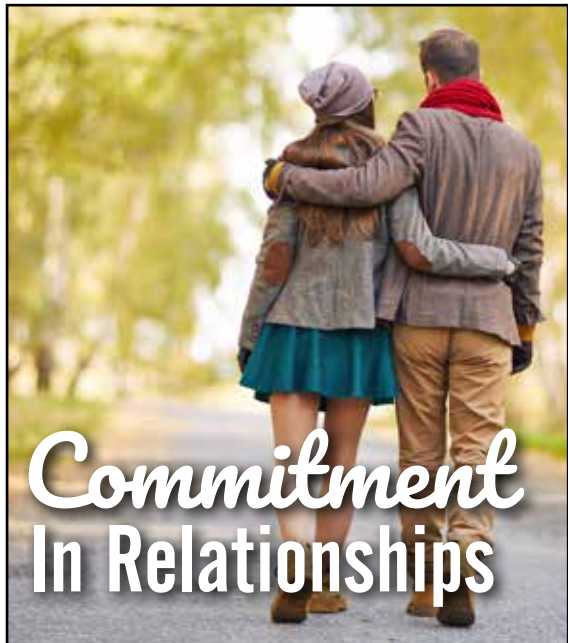
RELATIONAL HEALTH

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH





Relational Health



Commitment In Relationships

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CONTENTS

03 EDITORIAL

05 THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

07 RELATIONAL HEALTH

- Relational Health – Anthony Gordon
- They Lived Healthily Ever After – Chidi Ngwaba
- Nurturing A Warm Home Environment– Lidija Godina
- Help Me Be Good! – Karen Holford
- Emotional Intelligence In Relational Health – Jacqueline Hinds
- Commitment In Relationships – Augustus Lawrence
- Is Marriage Still Relevant? – Alanzo Smith
- Look Before You Leap – Les Ackie
- Developing Healthy Relationship – Des Boldeau
- Unhealthy Relationships – Des Boldeau
- The Joys Of Singleness – Nicole Gooden
- When Divorce Occurs – Curtis Fox
- Creating A Non-Violent Communication– Keith Boldeau
- How Do You Respond To Conflict? – Alison Awuku
- Taking The Sting Out Of Conflicts – Steve Thomas
- Money And Relational Health – Simeon Esson
- The Church Family And Relational Health – Sam Davis

34 ADVERTS

36 SUFFRAGETTES – Catherine Anthony Boldeau

38 PROFILE - Roy and Carmen Chisholm

40 DEPARTMENTAL ARTICLES AND REPORTS

48 NEWS - Natasha Carmen Pujols

50 DEVOTIONAL - Julian Thompson

Editorial

HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP HEALTH?

As we anticipate the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, we are devoting this edition to the topic of relational health and why it matters to be intentional when it comes to building long-lasting and positive relationships.

I learned early in my marriage that it takes more than finding the right partner to live happily ever after. During my pre-marital counselling sessions, our counsellor said something that has stuck with me to this day. Trying to emphasise the importance of nurturing the relationship, he said, *'Even if you fasted and prayed long enough for God to reveal the right partner to you, and God did, you would still have to work hard on your relationship like anyone else'*. My wife and I have taken this advice seriously and we have attended yearly couples' seminars, and in between, attended quarterly couples' dinners. We have come to observe that the health of any positive relationship involves an ongoing investment.

Cultivating positive relationships is something that applies to all associations whether it is between parent and child, colleagues at work, or the church family. A great deal depends on our emotional intelligence (EI) if we aim to get on well with the significant others in our lives. I encourage you to pay some attention to the subject of *'Emotional Intelligence'* by Jacqueline Hinds. EI as opposed to IQ is fundamental for handling most

challenging relationship difficulties.

Jesus's command to love one another as He has loved us is significant for developing relational health. We owe it to each other to be considerate, even-tempered, supportive and non-judgemental. The apostle Paul was spot on when he penned 1 Corinthians 13 (ESV):

'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.'

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away... So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.'

Take time to read this edition, I'm sure that this will enable you to nurture all of your relationships.

OUR COVER



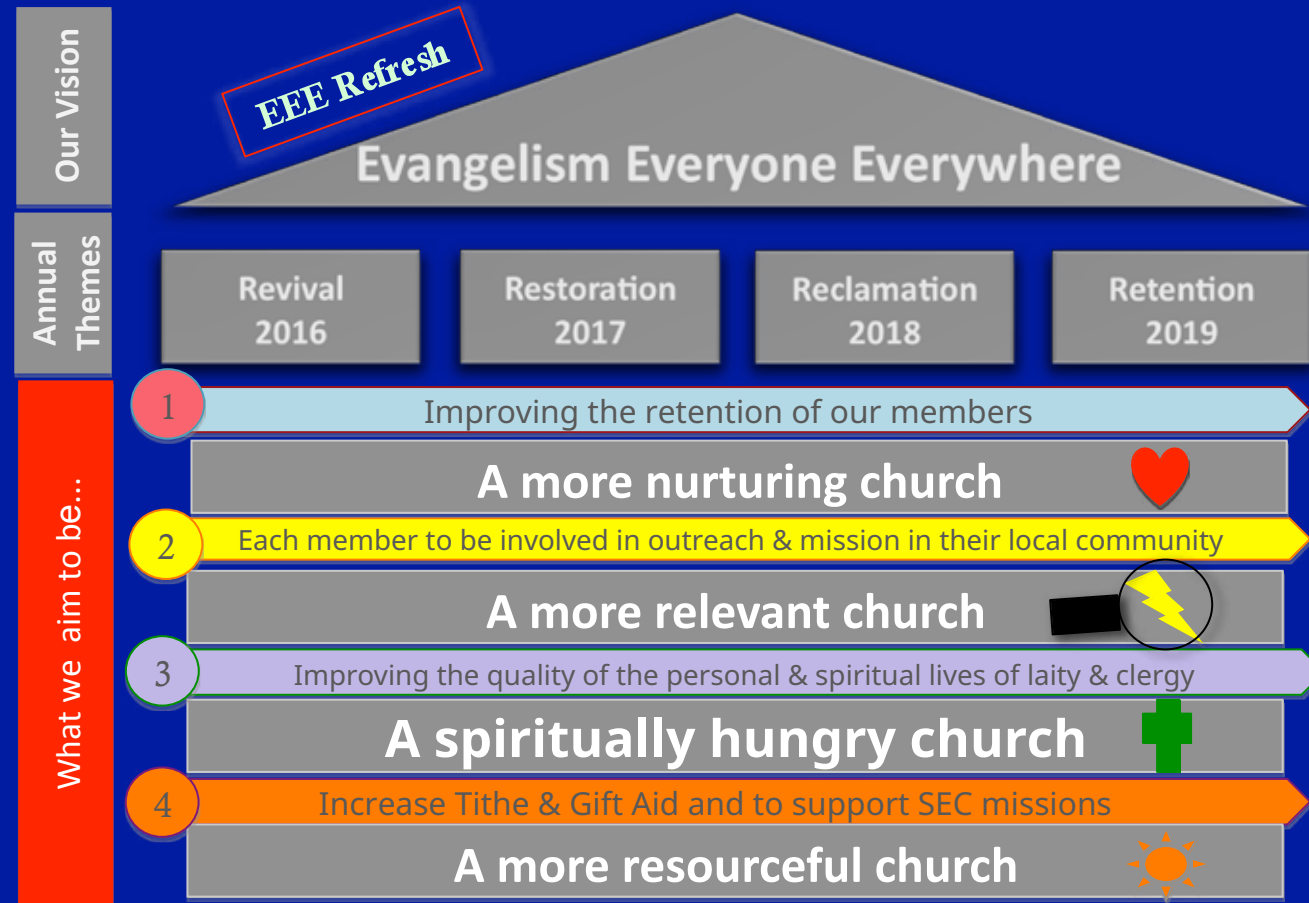
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SAM O. DAVIES
Editor

NEXT ISSUE: July 2018. Subscribe to receive your copy!

Our Transformation Starts Now!



2018 is the Year of Reclamation

- ⊗ The aim of the Year of Reclamation is to reconnect with former members, those who once worshipped with us but no longer attend our church.
- ⊗ We estimate that there are about 8500 inactive and former Seventh-day Adventists in our conference.
- ⊗ The Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15 is a story that calls us to be responsible for reclaiming missing members.
- ⊗ Each church will be involved in this non-judgmental reconnection with former members.
- ⊗ Please contact the SEC office for a "Connecting to Reconnect" pack that assist you with your reclamation programme.

The President's Desk

DR EMMANUEL OSEI



Reclamation

As the world thinks about the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, we should take time to reflect upon the marriage of Christ with His bride, the Church. Last February, I had the privilege of meeting with the elders, deacons and deaconess to share the vision of reclamation.

Whereas one might be tempted to think that people who leave church often have issues with our doctrines or church policies, the research has shown otherwise. From studies and interviews conducted among those who have left our churches, it was discovered that the main reason for them leaving was relationships that had gone sour. They have either had conflicts with the minister or other church members, or they felt lonely because they did not fit into the cliques that we very often have within our churches. However, these precious souls are part of the bride of Christ. The Lord gave His life for each one.

I shared with the elders, deacons and deaconess that ultimately, we are social beings and we desire healthy, loving relationships. Our churches are communities, and when we are bereft of loving relationships, it becomes very easy to leave. This

year, as a Conference, we are seeking to address this issue. There are signs which individuals manifest before leaving our churches known as the Drop Out Cycle.

This cycle involves:

1. Discomfort
2. Discouragement
3. Defensiveness
4. Cries for help
5. Defining moment
6. Waiting period
7. Reinvestment of time
8. Recommitment to old habits
9. Reconnecting to old friends

Although it becomes extremely difficult to win these precious souls back to the Lord, with God, all things are possible. This year we will be doing a membership audit in all our churches and will roll out an exercise to reclaim those who have once been a part of our church family.

Only genuine love shown towards those who have left will draw them back. As we do our part, we can rest assured that the Spirit of God will go before us to prepare the way and soften the hearts of those who will be reclaimed.

It is our intention to train individuals from each church to go out and find these individuals who were part of our membership. A survey will be conducted. We will be careful not to be judgmental or defensive but exercise good listening skills as we hear their stories which led them to leave the church. We will offer prayer and if they will permit us, we will seek permission to return at some later date. As we review their survey answers, the church will pray for these precious souls while we seek to invite these individuals to small group meetings. The church will be educated to receive these individuals at special Sabbath celebrations ensuring that we do not reflect the characteristics of the older brother in the parable of Luke 15.

The Lord has promised in Hosea 14:4 that *'I will heal their backslidings. I will love them freely.'* Also, Ellen G White writes that *'the church beheld converts flocking in from all directions. Backsliders were reconverted. Sinners united with believers in seeking the pearl of great price'* (8T p. 19). The Lord has promised that backsliders will be won to Him in these last days of earth's history. I look forward to working with you as we seek to reclaim God's children.

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Relational Health

The Missing Dimension in Holistic Healthcare

One of the most quoted Bible passages on health is *'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.'* (2 John 3.) Unfortunately, the Church, as in society, tends to limit the perspective of health to the physiological aspect which focuses on the state and function of the body—physically, anatomically, hormonally, chemically, and neurologically, etc.

This explains why questions about health are generally met with answers directly about the body. But to the same extent that the absence of war does not necessarily mean peace, so it is that the absence of physical infirmities or diseases does not necessarily mean total health, a fact endorsed by the World Health Organization.

There is another aspect of health which is implied in the Pauline counsel, which David captured in Psalm 139:14: *'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul (mind, conscience, heart...) knoweth right well.'* We should pay equal attention to our psychological health, which is the state and function of the mind — mentally, spiritually, emotionally, socially and relationally. This, however, is

more than talking about *'mental health,'* which tends to be a reactive sweeping generalisation about mental illnesses and conditions as delineated in the DSM5.

Relational health, the least addressed of the five sub-aspects of psychological health, is the quality of the intra/interpersonal relationship that exists in the mind between persons, and is measured by the strength, intensity, trend and patterns of the four psychological vital signs of relationship: connection, rapport, bond and support. Since all human relationships begin, and continue to exist in the mind, then the matter of healthy relationships should be taken more seriously than it is.

There needs to be organised, systematic, measurable and treatable systems of care for relational health, because the state of the mind often influences the state and function of the body (psychosomatic health). The quality of the relational health at home between husband and wife, father and mother, parents and children and siblings is an indicator of the relational health at school, church, the workplace and in the society. Governments and NGOs invest multi-millions of dollars into research projects

aimed at improving physiological healthcare, while society is reeling and writhing from the mayhem of crime, violence, social dislocation and destabilisation. One reason for the diminishing returns and loss on these investments, which is subtly eating away at the human and economic capital and destroying the quality of life, is poor relational health. Balance needs to be promoted and maintained between these two main aspects of health in the interest of all concerned.



ANTHONY GORDON

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"AND THEY LIVED

... HEALTHILY EVER AFTER"

What is it about a royal wedding that is so fascinating? For months, the press have been updating us; the TV studios have been abuzz with interviews, experts and commentators; and social media has been alive with rumours, discussions and predictions. Everyone seems interested.

I remember when Prince William and Princess Kate were getting married. I watched the ceremony while running on a treadmill in the gym. As I looked around, I could see dozens of burly, muscular men, some with tears in their eyes, glued to the TV screens, watching every movement.

I suppose, when you think about it, it's not that surprising. There's something about a royal wedding, or any wedding, that takes us back to the end of those wonderful fairytales that we read as children:

'...so, the handsome prince married the beautiful princess... and they lived happily ever after. The End.'

Of course, although it reads *'The End'*, it's really the beginning. And the level of happiness that

they enjoy really depends on the quality of their relationship.

As with all of us, any relationship has the power to affect our body, mind and spirit. People in happy relationships live longer and have fewer diseases, including emotional and mental wellness issues.

Good relationships are more powerful than the strongest drugs. In the old fairytales, we read about *'love potions'*. Well, did you know that we create our own love potion? It's called oxytocin, and every time we're in the presence of those we love, the pituitary gland in our brain releases this hormone. Especially when we hug! This love potion helps us make positive attachments, fosters good relationships, reduces stress, and generates sexual arousal, among many more benefits.

On the other hand, many of us find ourselves in unhealthy relationships where there is little or no love, no affection, no trust and no support. This causes us to lose connections with each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In his book *'Lost Connections'*, Johann Hari demonstrates how depression is not, as we've been told, a random chemical imbalance in our brains that can be corrected by drugs. When we look at the research, there is no evidence to back this theory up. Even worse is that there is no real evidence to suggest that anti-depressant drugs work.*

The truth is that depression comes when our connections or relationships are either missing or break down. Our relationships include those with each other, with God and with our work or purpose. Disconnection can lead us to spiral into self-doubt, self-anger, or focusing on ourselves, our pain, and our loss. The resulting depression cannot be cured by drugs; it must be treated by getting to the heart of the problem. Dr Gary Smalley, in his book *'The DNA of Relationships'*, uses a key proverb to address the problem:

'Guard your heart with all diligence, For out of it springs the issues of life.' Proverbs 4:23

This proverb makes perfect medical sense. We know that the *'issue of life'* is another name for blood, and that it springs, or

flows, from the heart. However, this proverb has a deeper meaning. It states that the issues in our lives are not because of a bad neighbour, terrible spouse or a horrible job. The issues or problems in our lives come from our own hearts. The stress in our lives is not dependent on our circumstances, but on our response to those circumstances. If I'm in a poor relationship, instead of hoping and praying that my spouse will change, why don't I seek God's help to change myself, where needed? If I find myself in a poor environment that is not changing, how can I start to trust the Lord that He may have a purpose for me, even in this hardship? This sort of thinking requires humility & trust in God:

'By humility and the fear of the Lord, are wealth, honour and life.' Proverbs 22:4

The truth is that whatever difficulty we find ourselves in, God will have a plan for us, and it is to make us better than we were before. Knowing that gives us peace in all circumstances. This makes it easier to relate with all sorts of people, and helps us to live healthily ever after.

*** WARNING** Although the evidence for the effectiveness of antidepressant drugs is poor, we do know that coming off the drugs without proper supervision is VERY dangerous, so always seek advice from your GP before making any changes.



Dr Chidi Ngwaba MB, BS

SEC Health Ministries Director



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A WARM HOME ENVIRONMENT

For those of us who are parents, it is impossible to forget the overwhelming joy we felt after welcoming a newborn child into our lives. And yet, very soon it becomes apparent that we have been entrusted with one of the most demanding and important tasks any human was given.

We might master the skills of looking after their physical and social needs and even their cognitive development. However, research and personal observations suggest that ensuring that our children and young people grow up into confident, secure, respectful and loving individuals who have strong faith in God is something much more difficult to achieve (Strahan and Craig, 1995).

I would like to highlight only two characteristics because of their potential to contribute to both harmonious upbringing and positive developmental outcomes. They are:

- 1) A warm and nurturing home environment
- 2) A positive religious experience

The helpful impact of a warm and nurturing home environment is well documented in both secular and Christian literature (Baumrind 1996; Kuzma, 2006). However, warm parenting could be easily confused

with the absence of boundaries, when in fact clearly defined boundaries, expressed through warm parental interactions that acknowledge individuality and choice, are at the core of this child rearing practice, often named as authoritative parenting (Baumrind 1996). The importance of warmth, affection and unconditional love, as well as humour and playfulness, is an invaluable gift we could offer our children (Treisman, 2017).

Researching growing-up experiences in Adventist homes in the UK has highlighted the importance of sharing a positive picture of God and religion (Godina, 2008). We are living in times that are affected by ongoing change Collins believes is 'so powerful that it rocks every part of our lives, including our families' (1997, p.16). I would argue that it has never been more important than it is now to consider very carefully which picture of God our lives are painting. When I asked my research participants how they saw God as children, there was a close relationship between the view they had about their parents and the picture they formed about God and religion. For example, somebody said, 'I saw Him as kind and really, really wanted to meet him...' 'I suppose I was having an image similar to who my father was - loving, fair...'

Making Sabbath child-centered is what some Adventist parents did very well. 'Friday nights were always, always good. That was the time when the phone went off... Friday night was family time, and we usually had the same meal and had candles and music and dad would play with us...' Another individual talked about their mother changing beds every Friday and putting little home-made presents in their beds. They talked with warmth and affection about the effort their parents put into creating special times for them. I remember wondering how much this had to do with the lovely person they have become.

When talking about parenting Omartian exclaims, 'It's the best of jobs. It's the most difficult of jobs. It can bring you the greatest joy. It can cause the greatest pain...' (2000, p.13). She then points out that we do not need to be fearful, nor do we need to be perfect parents. Instead, she states that we should turn 'to the expert parent of all time - our Father God - for help.'

If we as parents have a strong commitment to being the most loving, kind and nurturing parents possible, coupled with equally devoted prayer life, we will give our children the best chance to live the lives God intended for them.



Dr Lidija Godina
 PhD, MA, PgDip

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HELP ME Be Good!

As parents we have a special opportunity to help our children behave well. The happier and more loved our children feel, the more likely they are to behave in happy and loving ways.

But our children often behave *'badly'* because some of their basic needs have not been met and they feel miserable inside. It's easy to overlook these needs, because our children can't always tell us what those needs are. So here is a basic checklist to help you.

Check your child's physical needs:

- Are they hungry, thirsty, tired, or ill? All of these make it very difficult for a child to stay calm and well-behaved because they feel so miserable inside. Remember, that your child may need food more regularly than you do because their stomachs are small and they are

more active.

- Are their senses overloaded? Some children have overload *'tantrums'* when they spend too long in noisy, busy, bright and confusing places, like supermarkets. They need a calm and loving parent to soothe them and take them somewhere quiet.

Check your child's relational needs:

- Are they lonely for time with you?
- Do they need your acceptance after making a mistake?
- Do they need your affection and hugs?
- Do they need your appreciation for something special they've done?
- Do they need to know how special they are to you?
- Do they need your focused, positive and loving attention?
- Do they need your comfort and soothing after being distressed?
- Do they need some

encouragement from you?

- Do they need your respect? Have they felt insulted or shamed by you?
- Do they need your help with a difficult task?
- Do they need you to help them feel safe from fear and harm?

Behaviour = Communication

Most of the time a child's disruptive behaviour happens because they are trying to tell you one of the following things:

- I need your love and attention. Please spend some time with me.
- I'm overwhelmed by difficult feelings and too much stimulation. Please help me to calm down.
- I'm confused and I don't know what to do. Please guide me.
- Please change something! I can't handle this situation anymore!

Setting clear boundaries

- Choose a boundary or rule that is important for your child to obey or stay within.
- Show what it looks like – physically demonstrate the desired behaviour.
- Explain why the rule or boundary is important for your child's well-being, safety and happiness.
- Check the child understands and recognises the boundary – ask them what they think the rule means.
- Make it easy for them to keep inside the boundary – do what you can to help them and warn them if they are getting close to the edge.
- Enforce the rule or boundary warmly, gently and consistently.
- Give positive, warm and happy attention to your child when they're doing well. Tell them when you notice them staying within the rules.

This is a very powerful way to help your child choose positive behaviour.

- The most important time to discipline is when a child has intentionally and rebelliously crossed an important boundary.

Loving, wise discipline

- Pray and ask for wisdom to respond well.
- *'Connect before you redirect'* – show your child warmth, love and understanding, and calm them down, before trying to deal with their behaviour. You need to be calm too (Ephesians 6:4).
- Respond to their distressed, angry or upset emotions before responding to their behaviours (Proverbs 15:1).
- Remember that enforcing rules without building a relationship leads to angry rebellion. Your calm, loving, and understanding responses can keep them on track.
- Find a good time to talk calmly and privately with your child about what went wrong.
- Make sure they understand which boundary/rule was broken and why it's important to make sure it doesn't happen again.



- Quickly show your child warmth, love and acceptance after they have done something wrong (Psalm 103:8-11). Don't make them feel alone (Genesis 2:18). *'Time in'* (quality caring time with you) is often much more effective in helping a child behave well than *'time out'* (leaving a child alone).
- Making a child feel worse does not help them to behave better.

Putting it right

- Discipline is not about punishment – it is about encouraging your child towards positive behaviour.
- Positive discipline often uses natural and logical consequences – this links discipline closely and logically to the inappropriate behaviour. For example, if they took a cookie before dinner they don't get one when everyone else does. If they mess up their bedroom, they have to help tidy it. If they say something nasty, they need to say something kind or write a letter of apology, etc.
- Help your child to put things right again as much as possible – pay for things they break – tidy up their own mess – do something nice for people they've hurt.
- Give special attention to your child when they are behaving well. *'You've played happily with your brother for ten minutes. Choose a book and I'll read to you!'*
- Try a different kind of discipline for a couple of weeks and see what happens. If it works better, and you and your child are happier and closer, then you've made a good choice.
- Adjust your discipline as your child grows. You'll need to change your techniques as they mature.



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Emotional Intelligence IN RELATIONAL HEALTH

With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2-3

The question often asked, 'Is emotional intelligence compatible with our Christian beliefs?'

The answer is that emotional intelligence affects our entire life. What is Emotional Intelligence? Emotional intelligence (EI) is a set of emotional and social skills that collectively establish how well we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain relational health, cope with challenges and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way. Simply, it is a predictor of success in life and all working arenas. In order for you to utilise EI daily, including in your spiritual life, it is necessary to build your own emotional skills by understanding your own feelings and attuning yourself to the feelings of others. This helps to create your relational health system by feeding it with understanding. You can use this to enhance your own performance to manage or support the performance of others, especially if you are in an official, leadership or supervisory role.

To better understand your emotional skills, the first step to take is to familiarise yourself with the four basic components of emotional and social intelligence. Only then can we start to align it with the Bible and our walk of faith.

1) Self-Awareness

This is considered the foundation for all the other components of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness means being aware

of what you are feeling, being conscious of the emotions within yourself.

People who are in touch with their emotions are better able to guide their own lives. Team members need to be in touch with their emotions to interact effectively and appreciate emotions in others.

Those with high levels of self-awareness learn to trust their 'gut feelings' and evoke a level of discernment around these feelings. This can provide useful information about difficult decisions, where answers are not always clear regarding who is at fault when problems arise.

2) Self-Management

Managing emotions is the second key component of emotional intelligence. Operationally, it means that team members need to be able to balance their own moods so that worry, anxiety, fear or anger do not get in the way of what needs to be done. Those who can manage their emotions perform better because they are able to think clearly. Managing emotions does not mean suppressing or denying them but understanding them and using that understanding to deal with situations productively. Team members should first recognise a mood or feeling, think about what it means and how it affects them, and then choose how to act.

3) Empathy & Social-Awareness

Being empathetic and socially

aware means that you understand how to react to different social situations, and effectively modify your empathy and interactions with other people so that you can achieve the best results.

It also means being aware of the world around you and how different environments influence people. Increasing social awareness means improving your skills to connect with others verbally and non-verbally.

4) Relational Health-Management

The final component of emotional intelligence is the ability to connect with others, build positive relationships, respond to the emotions of others and influence others on the team. Relational health-management includes the identification, analysis, development, and maintenance of relationships with people inside and outside of your church, social, and/or working environments. It is also a vital component in negotiating successfully, resolving conflicts and working with others toward a shared goal.

The picture is a representation of Emotional and Social Intelligence, with suggested scriptures to guide you as you build and maintain your emotional and relational health profile.

Helpful pointers in building and maintaining your relational health:

- Familiarise yourself with the

four basic components and apply these in your daily life.

- There are many ways you can sharpen and hone your skills:
- Undertake an Emotional Skills Assessment Profile (EISAP).
- Exercise the Fruit of the Spirit daily, loving one another as God loves us.
- Get a coach or engage in coaching partnerships to help you work on and improve any skills gaps you may have.
- Learn what your triggers are and work on them for better relational health.
- Ask for constructive feedback and listen to it from an objective viewpoint, enabling knowledge, growth and competence.
- Conduct regular temperature checks on your emotions and behaviour, undertaking further development as deemed necessary.

Foster and build upon relationships, acknowledging others' needs and feelings.



Jacqueline A Hinds

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Commitment IN RELATIONSHIPS

"So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days." Genesis 29:20 NTL



The relationship between Jacob and Rachel illustrates an intense marital love even though it was not trouble-free. In fact, all relationships have the potential to enrich our lives and add satisfaction. It is true, however, that these same relationships can cause dissatisfaction or inflict harm. Although the story of Jacob and Rachel is one full of pain, married couples today can learn valuable lessons of relational health as they seek to model commitment, despite early family life challenges.

In the light of early disappointment, Jacob showed commitment in his desire to have Rachel as his wife by labouring tirelessly to fulfil this goal. The example of Jacob and Rachel's marriage shows young couples that the marital relationship has its share of suffering and difficulties. However, commitment to God in prayer and determination rather than engaging in marital arguments and discord will result in relational health.

Relational health is being able to sustain connections we have and model healthy interactions with others over time, offering support during difficult times.

It is the building of healthy relationships, nurturing and supporting each other, that forms the platform on which commitment stands. When it comes to commitment, there are two things that Jacob and Rachel modelled. The first thing they modelled is an understanding of the importance of a long-term view. That is, regardless of their circumstances, they were committed to each other. Stanley, Trathen, McCain, and Bryan (2002) stress that a long-term view is crucial for a marriage to thrive over time because it frees a person to grow closer while allowing him/her to feel secure enough to take the risks of disclosure. In contrast, however, where the couple's focus on the long-term view is uncertain, commitment will be short-term and unclear. One can assume that both Jacob and Rachel had a clear long-term view with a strong expectation of a future rooted in solid commitment, despite the imperfection of their marriage. What this means is that couples should be motivated to understand that growth in commitment to marriage is not a swift and abrupt thing. It is a process that is continual over the life

of the marriage, fostering healthy connections involving the couples modelling the love of Christ for His church in which He was willing to exercise sacrificial love. Thomas Hart (1979) said that if a marriage is growing, it is growing through deaths and resurrections. If it is not growing, it might be because there is a refusal to die the deaths that have to be died and seek in them the direction in which new life is breaking. If Jesus had refused to die because of fear, He would not know the kind of life He now knows as risen Lord, nor would we have the gift of his Spirit. The point that Hart makes is that every marriage will have bad days in which commitment will be challenged as a result of pain, hurt, and conflict. However, married couples should be encouraged to bury negative feelings and thoughts by modelling relational health by the grace of God, learning to rise from the grave of unhealthy connections with a new sense of empowerment to resolve conflicts, and fostering a genuine connection with those around them.

The second thing Jacob and Rachel modelled was a dedication to commitment. From the marital tensions that resulted from Rachel's not being able to conceive a child and the sibling conflict, Jacob showed commitment both to his family and to faith in the God who showed commitment to His covenant relationship with His children.

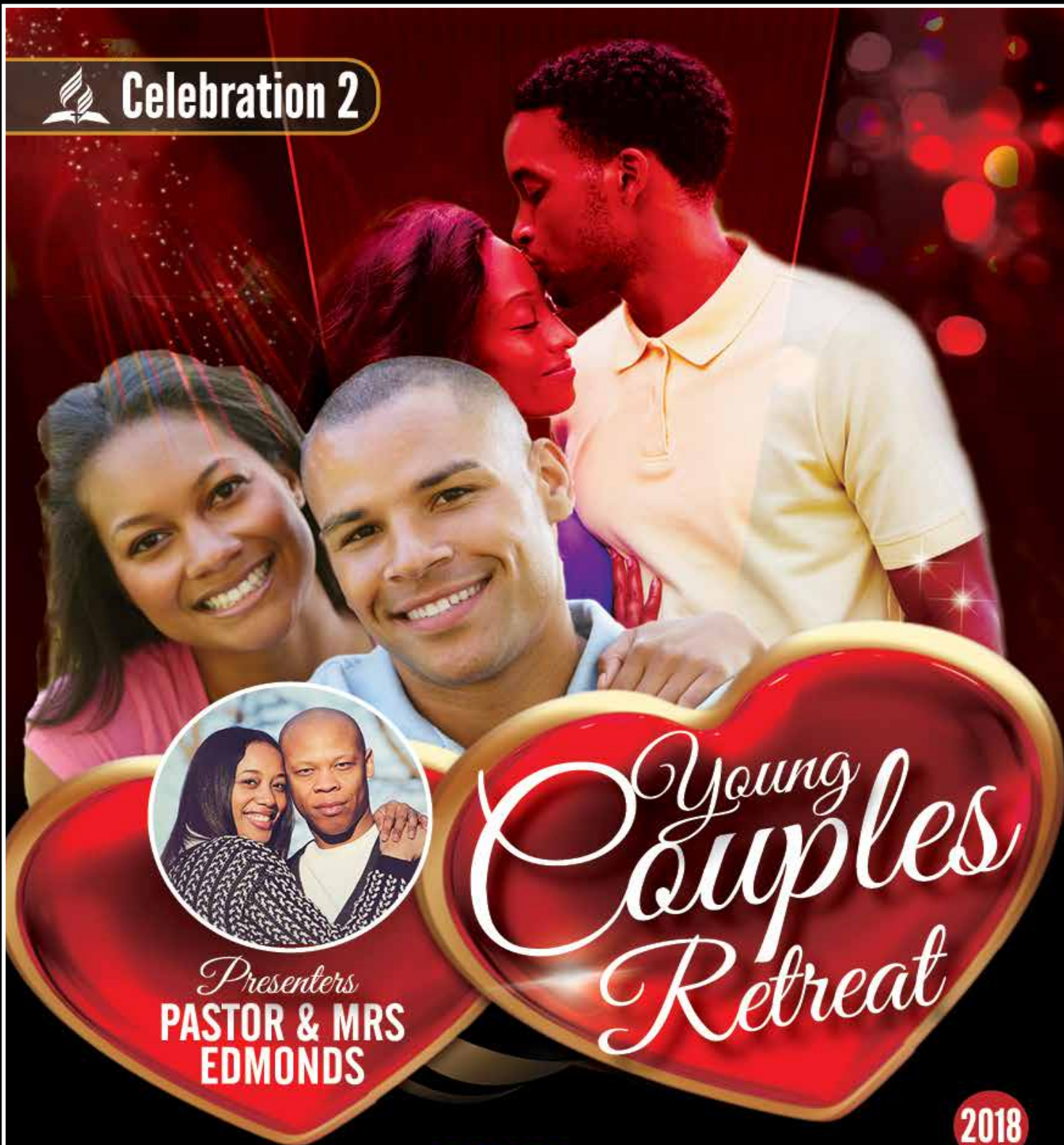
Commitment calls to those who want to experience its power and structural principles to say, "Through grace and faith, I will be intimately faithful even when my needs for intimacy are frustrated in my marriage." This is the power commitment wants to infuse in all of us. The God of Jacob and Rachel stands ready to share His enabling grace that can result in a relationship that can be compelling and life changing. You can take hold of commitment and relational health by intentionally calling, "Lord, help me!"

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Dr Augustus Lawrence
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IS MARRIAGE STILL

Relevant?

IN THE 21ST CENTURY

They walked into the counselling office, she—tearful, he—belligerent. She wanted to give her marriage a chance. *"I'm not happy in this marriage and I want a divorce,"* he blurted out.

Twenty-first century marriages are challenged. According to research, 50% of all existing marriages will break up, and nearly 3 out of every 5 new marriages will end in either divorce or permanent separation. Second and third marriages even run a higher risk of break-up. These mounting statistics beg the question, is marriage still relevant in the 21st century?

Even more daunting is the profound and long lasting emotional effects on not just the divorced couple and children, but family members, mutual friends, the church, and society at large.

It should be noted that Great Britain has the highest divorce rate in the European Union (EU). The number of divorces throughout the EU is on the increase with an average of 1.8 divorces for every 1,000 people, but in Britain the rate is 2.8 divorces per 1,000. According to Nicole Martin, not only does a couple's prospect of a lasting marriage seem bleaker in Britain than in the EU, but the United Kingdom has the largest proportion of lone parents.

Despite the frailty of marriage and the discouraging statistics, every year millions of people are united together in 'holy matrimony.' So, why is it, then, that one's source of joy can become the ultimate nightmare? Does this not speak to the irrelevance of marriage?

When God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet,"* He formed the first marriage. When Jesus reiterated God's pronouncement and went one step further and said, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,"* He was legitimising the permanency of marriage.

To ask if marriage is still relevant in the 21st century is to delegitimise a sacred institution. But can we stem the decline of broken marriages?

Some believe that most marriages fail, not because of bad people, but because of inadequate governance. Couples must agree on the majority of the rules they set, in order for the marriage to achieve equilibrium. Happy and successful marriages implement the practices that strengthen relationships.

For example:

- Communicate effectively
- Be faithful and honest
- Be willing to say 'sorry'
- Resolve conflicts peacefully
- Spend quality time together
- Seek professional help, when indicated
- Be open and transparent with finances
- Find congruence in child-rearing
- Forgive
- Be faithful to God

People who choose to be married need to be loving and caring, and to abide by their governing rules. Yes, to be married is a relevant choice today.

1. Smith & Smith, 2002. Why good relationships turn bad. Brentwood Press
2. Daily Mail. "Britain has highest divorce rate in EU"
3. Nicole Martin, Feb 2002. Daily News
4. Matt 19: 4-6



Dr Alanzo Smith

Executive Secretary, Greater New York Conference
Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT)
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LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

The Crucial Role of Pre-Marital Counselling

The more time I spend working with couples in crisis, the more I feel compelled to 'beat the drum' for rigorous pre-marital 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 pre-marital 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 model of agape love — the love that 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 with 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).



Les Ackie

BUC Family Ministries
Director

DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

When I was younger, kids received advice from our parents and older and wiser heads who had 'experienced' life when it came to dating and relationships. Youngsters today gain their 'relationship counselling' from social media. The rise of blogging and vlogging on the topic of relationships is at epidemic level, and therefore young people are often counselled by the misinformed, the angry and the naive, or by those with the greatest number of followers or likes.

As an 'oldie' maybe, I can offer some insight that might help the young people in the 21st century. Some of it might seem rather old-fashioned, but for me, this tried and tested advice.

Here are some characteristics which can contribute to developing healthy and long-lasting relationships:

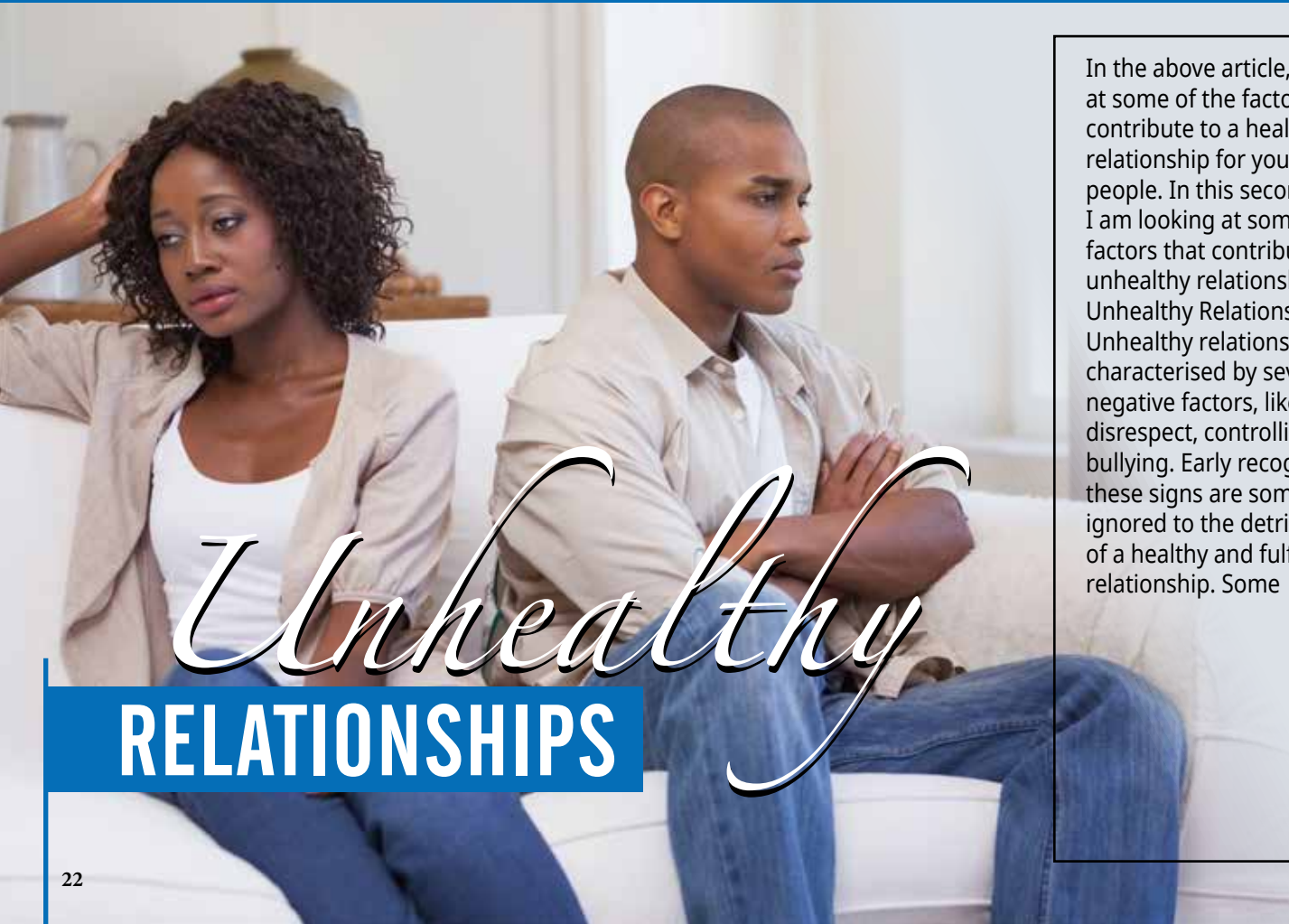
- As children of our Heavenly Father, we should consult Him on our plans and our choices. Therefore, prayer becomes an

essential ingredient before you start to engage in meaningful relationships. Talking to God and inviting Him to help you make the right choices might seem strange, but you ask your friends what they think of your 'future mate,' so why not ask God, who knows everything?

- Mutual respect means that each person values who the other is and seeks to understand and esteem the other person, respecting their boundaries and morality.
- Partners should grow in trusting each other and giving each other the space to develop this gift. With trust comes honesty that creates the environment of openness.
- Individuality - Neither partner should have to compromise their identity. God made you unique and doesn't want you as a copy of anyone else. You will naturally change as you get older.
- Good communication is about learning to read and understand each other. BT used to have an advertising slogan that said 'it's good to talk.' Talking opens the door to understanding and consensus.

But remember that men and women communicate differently.

- Anger control. The problem is not anger, but how we express and manage it. You need to recognise your issues and take responsibility for controlling yourself - easier said than done sometimes!
 - Fighting fair. Everyone argues at some point, but those who are fair, stick to the subject, and avoid insults and muddying the waters. Find strategies for dealing with tensions. Understanding each other's emotions will go a long way in fighting fair, and I'm not referring to physical fighting. Human relationships can be complex, but if we are willing, we will grow to understand that anything that is of worth does not come cheaply! We will mature by remaining in the relationship rather than walking away because things are tough.
- If you believe that God is influencing your life's decision, then stay and fight for what He wants you to have and enjoy! The second part of this article will address the other side of this issue. Stick around!



In the above article, I looked at some of the factors that contribute to a healthy relationship for young people. In this second part, I am looking at some of the factors that contribute to unhealthy relationships. Unhealthy Relationships Unhealthy relationships are characterised by several negative factors, like disrespect, controlling and bullying. Early recognition of these signs are sometimes ignored to the detriment of a healthy and fulfilling relationship. Some

characteristics of unhealthy relationships include:

- Poor self image and self esteem which is evident in some poor choices and decisions that can affect us for our entire life.
- Control. Have you ever experienced or witnessed a situation where one partner makes all the decisions and tells the other what to do, what to wear, or who to spend time with? This is not the basis for a mutually fulfilling union.
- Hostility. Picking a fight with or antagonising the other challenges the nurturing process and hinders a peaceful relationship.
- Intimidating behaviour produces fear and generates insecurity. This can lead to physical violence, where one partner uses force to get his or her way (such as hitting, slapping, grabbing, or shoving). Observe how they treat their parents and siblings, because that is sure evidence of how you're likely to be treated.
- Sexual violence. One dating partner pressures or forces the other into sexual activity against his or her will.¹ This behaviour constitutes a criminal offence and should be reported immediately.
- Dishonesty. If you can't trust what your partner says now, what can you expect when you are married?
- Disrespect. This is one manifestation of undervaluing the other person. How can you say 'I love you' while putting him or her down?
- Unhealthy dependence or attachment to the other person, which could be a sign of passive aggressive

behaviour and subtle control.

- Constant family interference can be a hinderance to a satisfying, maturing relationship. This is not to say that you shouldn't heed parental advice, but never underestimate the role that families can play in the formation of your relationship. Being aware of the potential impact of these external factors is as important as planning for a future together. It is important to educate youth about the value of respect and the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships before they start to date. Some may not be emotionally equipped with the necessary skills to develop and maintain healthy relationships. In this case, it is wise to seek guidance from your pastor or a qualified counsellor.



Dr Des G. Boldeau

Pastor, Enfield and Edmonton Churches

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THE JOYS OF *Singleness*

Singleness does not have to be synonymous with loneliness. Singleness does not mean that you are flawed in some way, or incapable of developing or maintaining meaningful relationships.

There can be great fulfilment in singleness if you take the opportunities to focus on the One who gives life. There is time to seek His purpose for you.

Besides your spiritual ambitions, you can take a fine-tooth comb to your personal endeavours and complete a full self-evaluation. What are you hoping to accomplish and do you have a time-frame in mind?

- Is it exercise – what are your hopes for your health?
- Is it education – is there an interest that you would like to explore?
- Is it finance – do you need to get your house in order?

When you can focus on self improvement, productivity follows. Singleness can be a rewarding time to raise the bar for achievements, accomplishments and self-discovery. Your horizons broaden to encompass an unforeseen future. This future is already laid and paved by the Almighty.

You can walk tall, knowing your relationship status does not ultimately define you. Whether you are single or married, you are a person seeking to live a holy life.



Nicole Gooden
BA in Marketing and
Business Studies



Divorce Care

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WHEN DIVORCE OCCURS

Divorce is not just the experience of two individuals, but of larger social systems such as family, community, school, work, and church, among others. It is often a difficult experience with present and future long-term effects in people's lives.

Divorce is often a revelation or coming-out for some. Many people who are divorcing or have divorced would have already given significant thought to their decision, offered prayers in hope of reconciliation, and sleepless days and nights in anguish over losing a very important relationship that they had hoped would last a lifetime. Many people talk with family, friends and others. That said, it is important for couples to consider and seek to benefit from the help of a trained, unbiased professional who can help with resolving important issues.

As some people become aware of a divorce case or a couple who just got a divorce, they try to get into the mix and revisit the couple's issues or reasons for the divorce. Others make judgment on the issues, and

polarise their allegiance based on their interpretation of the story as they understand it. Such behaviours help to create greater pain for the couple and their families.

It is important to note that divorce is not just a court decree. The couple may have children to co-parent. Their finances may still be co-mingled. Their religious community may still be part of the fabric of their lives and can serve to foster shame, marginalisation, and/or excommunication. Divorce is complex and the effects linger as people deal with reconciliation fantasies, separation anxiety, grief and loss for the relationship, emotional effects for the couple and children, and a host of other issues.

After divorce, many people have challenges reconciling their experience with their religious faith. There is shame, guilt, and uncertainty about how they will be received in their faith community. Their prayer and devotional lives may be impacted. They may become second-class members, they may give up or be dropped from church office, and then

they may begin to fall by the way. A caring church and pastor may be on the lookout for that experience and efforts should be given to offer a loving and supportive ministry as needed. Care should be taken to avoid language that is oppressive and insensitive to people who are divorced. Axioms, such as the "family that prays together stays together" may take on new meaning and can be offensive and disturbing to a divorcing couple.

When divorce happens, it is a good time for each party in the divorce to spend time exploring some of the dynamics involved, grieving the loss of the relationship, regaining a healthy sense of self, and reintegrating into healthy friendships and social contacts. This may be an opportunity to reorder one's personal spirituality for growth and maturity.

As a church, efforts and hopes are often expended to help prevent divorce. Because effort does not always equal positive outcome, it is necessary for communities, including church communities, to help people with their adjustment to divorce. Furthermore, it may be necessary for church communities to provide programs that prepare people adequately for marriage, to support enrichment programs for those who are married, to refer to services that can help when or if they have problems, and to lend empathic hands and hearts if divorce comes. This is supporting relational health at its best



Dr Curtis A. Fox
Ph.D., LMFT, CFT, CFLE

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CREATING NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION

Good communication is the key to family happiness. Communication itself can be very complex since (93%) is non-verbal and only 7% verbal.

What is more interesting is that so many people enter the most relationally intensive union in society (marriage) with severely underdeveloped skills.

John Powell in his book *'Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?'* points out that we communicate on at least five different levels.

Level 5 is where chit chat takes place. Level 4 reports the facts. Level 3 addresses one's ideas and judgments. Level 2 addresses one's feelings and emotions. Level 1 is where open and truthful communication takes place.

Many social scientists believe that few couples have achieved level 1.

Level 1 makes it possible to know each other emotionally and personally. Couples can know a great deal about each other without really knowing each other. Level 1 makes it possible for us to understand the true meaning of the other person's life.

Healthy communication involves three elements: speaking, listening, and reasoning. It is speaking in pleasant tones so that your listeners will be encouraged to listen. It is listening to the feelings behind the spoken words. It is tuning in to the needs and feelings that will encourage the one speaking to speak.

It involves learning to listen and understand rather than to listen

and argue. It is reasoning in such a way as to allow love to win. The late Nancy Vanpelt wrote, *'In many homes, up to 80% of all communication is negative.'* Negative communication contributes to tension in the family and destroys love.

Here are two unhealthy communication styles you want to avoid in your family.

ESKIMO STYLE COMMUNICATION

In this style of communication, members of a family who are not happy with how the discussion is going just freeze each other out. *'They back off, seal up, stop talking and just freeze each other into detachment.'* This kind of behaviour is also called the 'silent treatment.'

COWBOY STYLE COMMUNICATION

We shoot from the hip without even listening to what others have to say, and we see who is left standing when the *'dust settles.'* Very often most family members are injured.

The Bible gives some great counsel on healthy communication in opposition to the cowboy style of communication. 1 Peter 3:10 says, *'For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.'*

TIPS TO ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNICATION

No more than 50% of your communication should be spent on you talking.

Be sure to set ground rules when dealing with issues. Deal with one issue at a time; stick to that specific issue so that change can be made.

Show respect for each other's points. You don't have to share his/her view but at least you can respect his/her opinion.

Everyone must give each other their full attention when addressing an issue.

Learn to compliment family members as compliments encourage confidence. Negative criticism causes division.

Be open with each other as bottling things up may lead to suspicion, doubt, and an explosion that can be devastating.

Be honest enough to admit where you are wrong and learn to forgive and forget.

Avoid arguments over minor things; choose your battles very carefully.

When addressing burning issues, avoid the use of words such as *'everyone,' 'always,'* and *'never.'* These are called gunpowder words as they can be very explosive. These words can distort truth and intensify arguments. They focus energy on challenge and defense rather than solution.

Use *'I'* statements when addressing issues rather than *'you'* statements. *'I'* statements are effective because they reveal the problem within the person making the statement. An *'I'* statement expresses the way one feels. *'You'* statements, on the other hand, can be explosive because they are perceived as accusing statements.

SALTING TECHNIQUE

This technique can be the answer to enhance communication between

male and female members of the family.

The salting technique involves the formulation of questions in such a way that does not require a Yes or No answer. Use the same method as when you are adding salt to a pot – a little at a time until you get the taste you want.

Generally, because some men tend to resist expressing themselves freely but communicate more by dropping hints, questions should be formulated that require descriptive answers. Ask one question at a time. Use skill in formulating the questions.

Your questions must not appear as though you are demanding answers or else the process will be counterproductive. Keep on asking questions (adding salt) using a pleasant tone of voice, a pleasant facial expression and a gentle request for a descriptive response until you get the information (taste) you need.

Each person must be given the opportunity to speak uninterrupted.



Keith Boldeau
Pastor, Brixton Church

HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO CONFLICT?



Dr Steve Thomas
Pastor, Peckham Church

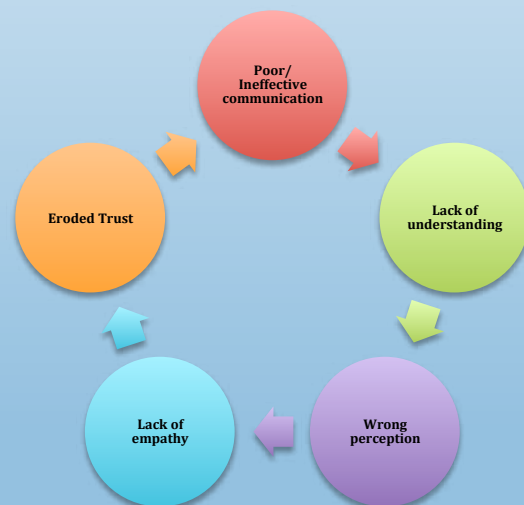
Taking the Sting OUT OF CONFLICTS

The Oxford Dictionary defines conflict as 'a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one.'

There are different reasons why relational conflicts may arise. Many conflicts caused by unmet expectations are as a result of or result in:

- Cultural differences
- Ineffective communication
- Betrayal of trust or lack of trust
- Character and personality differences
- Differences in our values and beliefs

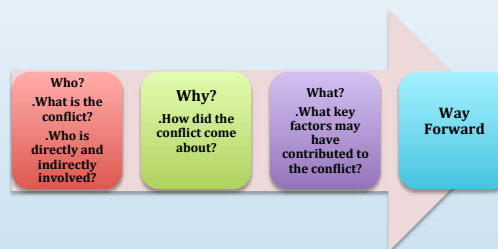
Here's an example of how poor communication and lack of trust can lead to relational conflict:



When a conflict arises, it impacts the individuals involved on mental, emotional, spiritual and physical levels. If prolonged and not managed or resolved, conflicts can cause stress and make individuals feel hurt, angry, guilty, insecure, and unfocused. Stress can even result

in physical health problems such as headaches, ulcers, and chest pains, to name a few.

So how can we best manage conflicts when they arise? Here are four key steps:



1. Understand WHO is involved.

2. Establish WHY it came about.

3. Explore WHAT key factors contributed to the conflict.

For example, which one of the following (or other) factors has brought about the conflict?

- Cultural differences
- Ineffective communication or misunderstandings
- Betrayal of trust or lack of trust
- Character and personality differences
- Differences in our values and beliefs
- Lack of a shared vision and purpose
- Our own internal conflicts such as pride, envy, jealousy, anger, fear, bitterness, worry and anxiety

4. What is the WAY FORWARD?

Once the Who, Why and What have been established, focus on the way forward.

Consider the following:

- Take time to listen to each other
- Be genuine without being aggressive
- Acknowledge the feelings of the other person, even if you don't feel the same
- Consider and discuss lessons learnt
- Focus on what you have in common
- Determine and agree on a shared purpose and vision
- Let go of the past and focus on future goals and aspirations

Relational conflicts can present a great opportunity for individuals to learn more about themselves and others. To move forward after a conflict, it is important that we keep an open mind and focus on what builds us up rather than what can destroy us. Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV) states that we should 'get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger... along with every form of malice...'

May this be our daily prayer!



Alison Awuku

Published Author & Writer
on Relationships
Counsellor/Therapist at CCS

The following guide provides some useful approaches to resolving conflicts in relationships.

Use these with an ongoing issue in your relationships, with yourself, and your significant other, as well as with future issues.

1. Set a time and place to look at, talk about and/or re-examine the issue.

2. Define the problem. Be specific about the issues/challenges. Be honest with yourself. If you cannot be honest with yourself, it is very difficult to be so with others. The Bible talks about loving others or treating others like you treat or love yourself. Often times we fail in relationship because we are unable to understand and cope with self.

3. List the ways you each contribute to the problem. It is important to note that you have a part to play in the conflict. I mean the real you

and not the one that may be sitting behind a mask! In order to list ways that will make a real significant difference to the situation, there is a need to look back at a) your parental home, and b) your cultural groups (the way you were taught how to relate to people and situations).

4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful. Trying the same approach to every situation and expecting a different outcome indicates a lack of learning. The longer you are in a relationship, the better you ought to be when it comes to the 'not-go-there-again' approach.

5. Brainstorm—Pool your new ideas and try to list at least 10 possible solutions to the problem. (knowing yourself and what works ought to generate at least 50 solutions!) Do not judge or criticise any of the suggestions at this point. It is always best to select solutions that are personally driven, affecting the self rather than the other person.

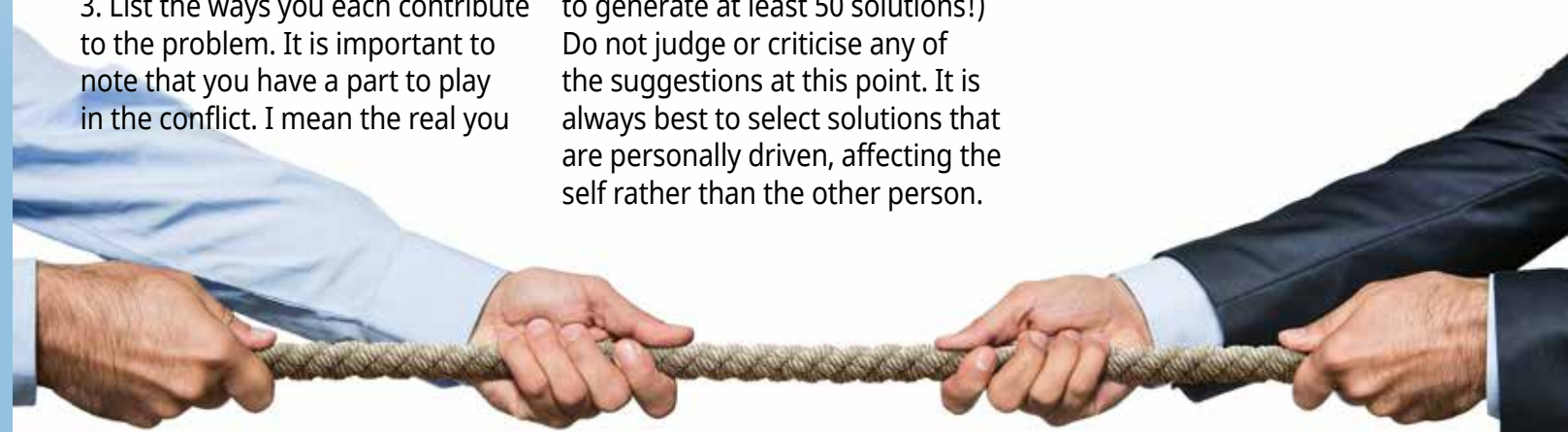
6. Discuss and evaluate each of these possible solutions. Be as objective as possible. Talk about how useful and appropriate each suggestion feels for resolving your issue.

7. Agree on one solution to try and, if necessary, request a time-out for self-care. Call a time-out for yourself by saying something like 'I'm just too angry to talk right now; I need to take a time-out. Please give me an hour to calm down and gather my thoughts.'

8. Agree how you will each work toward this solution.

9. Set up another meeting to discuss your progress.

10. Reward each other for progress.





Sam Davis

Certified Nutrition Counsellor. IIOM
Former SEC President

The CHURCH

family and RELATIONAL HEALTH

I was blown away recently when I came across a quote that appears to provide some valuable insight into what is happening within the church family and our relational health. Ellen White says, *The gratitude we offer to God for His blessings is greatly affected by the food placed in the stomach. Indulgence of appetite is the cause of dissension, strife, discord, and many other evils. Impatient words are spoken and unkind deeds are done, dishonest practices are followed and passion is manifested, and all because the nerves of the brain are diseased by the abuse heaped upon the stomach.* — Manuscript 93, 1901 CD 53.3

Modern science has borne out the truth of that statement. So, how does our eating manifest itself in our relationships?

Our frontal lobe is the control centre of our being. It is the seat of judgment, reasoning, intellect and the will. Our moral principles and spirituality are controlled

from the frontal lobe. It follows then that this important organ needs to be looked after in order to have optimal function. The sad truth is that no-one thinks about frontal lobe function or performance.

We get up in the morning and deal with the externals. However, no one ever says, *'Let me protect my frontal lobe today.'* This is something that we need to consider seriously because the day's performance is contingent on good frontal lobe function. So, what does poor frontal lobe function look like? How, does it affect my relationships?

The effects of a compromised frontal lobe are:

- Impairment of moral principles
- Social impairment (loss of love for family)
- Lack of foresight
- Incapable of abstract thinking or reasoning
- Inability to interpret proverbs

- Diminished ability for mathematical understanding
- Loss of empathy
- Lack of restraint (boasting, hostility, aggressiveness)

It's amazing how all of this is so closely connected with what we ingest. Items that negatively affect the frontal lobe and cause us to under-perform are the following:

- Drugs, illegal or prescription
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Nicotine
- Sugar
- Cheese
- Meats
- Refined foods

Often in the morning we grab a juice or fizzy drink and a bagel for breakfast. You've already started the day with a compromised frontal lobe.

To protect your frontal lobe and enhance the quality of your relationships, start the day with a healthy breakfast consisting of whole foods. Fruits, nuts, grains, whole wheat bread, cereals etc., are just examples of the best foods we should be eating. Vegetables, pulses and legumes for lunch or dinner will build on the good start. As you go through the day, avoid snacking on sweets, biscuits, cakes or crisps as much as possible, since these are essentially junk foods.

Because the frontal lobe is the CEO of the body, the Apostle Peter counsels us, *'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.'* (1 Pet 5:8) Let us endeavour to stay sober by protecting the frontal lobe and preserving our relationships which are so important.



Money AND RELATIONAL HEALTH

In 1986, Gwen Guthrie popularised the song *'Ain't nothin' goin' on but the rent,'* – no romance without finance - a powerful song indicating the impact of finance on relationships. Money has the capacity to wreck even good relationships. Surveys and research states that, *'Finances is the leading cause of stress in relationship.'* *'Money has the power to either make or break a relationship.'*

'Arguments about money are by far the top predictor of divorce... not children, sex, the in-laws or anything else. It's money - for both men and women,' says Britt, an Assistant Professor of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University. She also discovered that it takes longer to recover from money arguments than from any other kind. Furthermore, arguments about money are more intense; the language used is harsher and they last longer.

So what can couples do to mitigate against this kind of fall-out occasioned by conflict over money, and instead experience the blessing that money should bring to the relationship? Here are a few tips that, if considered and applied, could serve to strengthen your relationship as you enjoy the wealth that you have worked hard to achieve.

1. Take God and biblical principles of finance into your financial planning. Recognise that it is God who gives you the ability to get wealth. God requires you to honour Him with the wealth He has empowered you to earn (Deut. 8:18 Pro. 3:9).

2. Seek to understand your personal as well as your partner's attitudes and orientations to money. One's attitude and orientation toward money are always carried over into one's relationships, whether these be filial, romantic or business. If couples have incompatible attitudes and orientations towards money, the possibility of conflict will be heightened, and the greater the difference, the greater the challenges. Couples who share similar spending and saving habits tend to have thriving relationships.

3. Be honest about how your individual attitudes and money orientations are affecting your relationship, with a view of putting

the relationship first. Seek to be the positive change you envision for the health of the relationship.

4. Seek to establish a budget, which might allow some latitudinal control of spending to each party in the relationship. A budget is a written-down organised plan for matching expenses to income. If both partners are involved in creating and constructing the budget, it will serve to strengthen the health of the relationship.

5. If there is failure to resolve conflict, seek professional help.

Consider the words of King David recorded in Psalm 35:27. He says, *The Lord delights in the prosperity of His people.* This is exciting. God is pleased when His people do well financially. So go ahead, both of you together; let God be pleased by your financial management and watch the positive impact it will have on the health of your relationship.



Simeon Esson

BA, MA, MBA, Advanced Cert in Christian
Counselling, Area 6B Coordinator
Greenwich Church Pastor

All England Student camp



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Reclamation

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Prestatyn LL19 7LA.



Adult Commitment Speaker
DR. CARLTON P. BYRD

Breath of Life Speaker/Director
NAD Field Secretary



June Price
Youth Speaker



Dr Alanzo & Dr June Smith
Family Life Speakers



Dr Elliot Williams
Bible Study Speaker



Pr Isaac Lybird
Juniors Speaker



Pr Edsel Cadet
Teens Speaker



Dr Chidi Ngwaba
Health Speaker

 **EVANGELISM
EVERYONE
EVERYWHERE**



SUFFRAGETTES

Values, Voting, Vision, Victory

2018 marks the centenary of women receiving the right to vote in England. This right was already granted to women in the Isle of Man nearly 17 years previously in 1881 and our American cousins didn't grant this right to women until 1920.

The right to vote in 1918 was only granted to women over the age of 30, although a man had this right granted to him at the age of 21 through the Representation of the People Act. And while we celebrate the suffragette movement today, they endured much suffering, toil, pain and even death for their belief that women should have equal rights as men.

Forced feeding was one of the demeaning forms of torture that was used to combat the number of hunger strikes that the imprisoned women were forced to undergo. These were not only humiliating and invasive to the women but were thought to cause long-term health challenges. Many of the women were seriously man-handled and even arrested for minor offences. With the power of the law on their sides, those who opposed the role of the suffragettes had little concern for their physical, social, emotional and sexual wellbeing.

These women were outcasts in a society that prided itself on its lingering Victorian values based on religious piety. Perhaps it was because their behaviour, resilience and defiance to the order of the day was diametrically opposed to the Victorian Ideal that was a strict code of conduct which included sexual restraint and strict standards regarding behaviour, speech, attitudes, dress and appearance.

So, what spiritual lessons can be learned from these women?

Let's go to the story in Numbers 27 where we meet the five Daughters of Zelophehad. Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcha and Tirzah were destined to have no inheritance in the Promised Land, because their father had died in the wilderness, leaving no male heir. This meant they would be destitute strangers in a foreign land. So, they took their plight to Moses, who immediately spoke to the Lord on their behalf. God created a new and very permanent law that would advocate for the property rights not only of the five sisters but of future generations of women who would find themselves in such a situation.

Like the five sisters, the suffragettes were not silent. Like the five sisters, they fought for their rights. Like the five sisters, their protest enabled future generations to receive property rights and voting rights because of their fearless behaviour.

Women today are the recipients of the victories of the blood, sweat, toil, and tears of generations of women who have gone before them. The rights that we too often take for granted are a product of the vision and values of our mothers, grandmothers and those women who opposed the patriarchy of an age and fought, in the name of God, for equality for all.



Catherine Anthony Boldeau
Author and Freelance Writer

PROFILE ROY & CARMEN CHISHOLM



Roy (1st left) and Carmen (4th left) with the team that accompanied them after the shipment of a 20-foot container

'The Lord had it in mind long before I knew about it,' said retired Pastor Roy Chisholm as he began to describe the journey towards setting up his charity, Helping Hands Mission Against Poverty (HHMAP).

HHMAP is celebrating its ten-year anniversary. Its founders, Pastor Roy and Carmen Chisholm, decided not to retire but to dedicate their time to helping the poor, the homeless, the naked, and the disenfranchised. The charity was originally registered as *'Helping Hands Africa Mission.'* However, God has allowed the pair to spread their work not only to Africa but also to Jamaica.

In 2005, close to his retirement, Roy had just finished setting up a church in North London when he received a call to go to Kenya for a campaign. An elder from his local church involved six others in the three-week-long campaign, where over 240 people were baptised. After the campaign, Roy mingled with the congregation and visited several families, witnessing the distressing levels of poverty they lived in.

The instant Pastor Chisholm returned to the UK, he and Carmen shipped clothes for the poor back to Kenya. However, the couple felt that it was simply not sustainable enough. So rather than sending clothes and money, in 2007, they decided to start a Goat Project, distributing over 500 goats (to date) to people who are at the bottom of the poverty ladder. The couple continued to help out, not knowing that God had a path set out for them and that this would eventually open the doors for other projects.

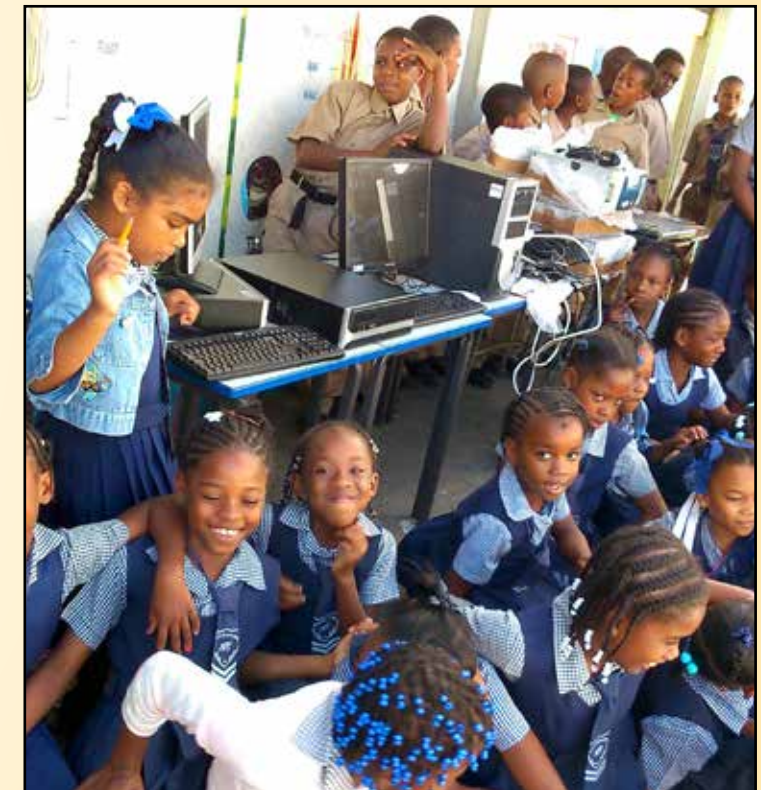
They were then asked by the Secretary of the Kenyan Union to have a look at the drought situation. They visited a school where they witnessed children collecting contaminated water to drink and take home. Immediately they decided to find out how a borehole could be drilled, a process which included getting the land surveyed and hiring the right equipment. Eventually a 156m borehole was drilled in Narok, Kenya; this was twice the usual depth. The whole project cost around £10,000, which was funded by a London donor.



These were the beginning steps of forming what is now a registered charity, Helping Hands Mission Against Poverty.

The charity is currently involved in several projects with a blend of long-term and short-term goals. In Jamaica, HHMAP were able to re-build houses, donate computers for rural schools, and provide children with stationary items. In Africa, they continue to help provide clean water, build churches, and participate in other projects, such as printing Bibles in native languages. *'We also have quite a few requests with school fees in Kenya, because people are bright but can't afford school, and lack opportunity,'* said Carmen.

The couple is just getting started with their work and have received several requests for help. If you would like to help please call **01923 606348, 07961 417838** or email **info@hhmap.org.uk**. Registered Charity number 1128856.



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hemorrhaging of young adults from
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Reports and Departmental Articles

A lack of relevant biblical
accepting church environ-
haemorrhaging of young
adults do not understand the
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some cases to the hemorrhaging of young adults.
Generally, young adults do not understand the relevance
entist Christian experience within the church.

Horrible people with a beautiful message?

STRATEGIC PLANNING

What is a nurturing church? Is it enthusiastic members? Perhaps it's a place where you feel comfortable enough to regularly bring visitors? Maybe it's the inspiring worship services that leave you reaffirming your Christian commitment?

For me, it means all that and more. It's a place where everyone enjoys good relational health and should accompany our efforts to evangelise.

The Year of Reclamation

I was exposed to few early re-runs of Star Trek in the 1970s. If you were to ask me which of the characters in the show I'd liken the church to, it wouldn't be the outgoing, curious, friendly Captain Kirk. It would have to be the guy from planet Vulcan, Spock. Just like Spock, I'd say we score an A+ for knowledge and logic but a D- for being aloof and being

far more interested in rules than relationships.

Our low scoring on 'relationships' is detrimental for our church. Nowhere does the problem speak more loudly than in our retention figures. In the last issue of the SEC Communicator, our President Dr Emmanuel Osei pointed out that we are losing 40% of those we baptise.

2018 is marked as the year of reclamation. But before commencing the work of reclamation it is worth considering a few things.

It's not our work

Reclamation is not straightforward evangelistic activity. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Doctrine isn't enough

I'm not saying that doctrinal precision is no longer important and that we should settle for lax interpretations of the 28 fundamentals. I'm saying we need to make sure our passion for people is as fervent as our love for truth.

Some years ago, I heard a sermon by Pastor Roy Nugent called 'Safe to Serve.'

He described the process of due diligence that is conducted on would-be bodyguards for the US president. Checks are done not only on the prospective candidates but also on their immediate family, siblings, and parents. Even grandparents, dead or alive, don't miss out on the scrutiny. Criminal records, political leanings, past indiscretions—none of it escapes the notice of

the authorities. To be a presidential bodyguard you must first be deemed 'safe to serve.'

Is God keeping precious souls away from us because we're not 'safe to serve?' Is your church 'safe to serve?' Are you 'safe to serve?'

Getting it right

Poor relational health is serious. Political infighting, punishment of the innocent, elevation of the guilty, lack of transparency, mistrust and a church more interested in winning souls than retaining them. The end result can only be church demise.

There is wisdom for us in the warning given to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5:

"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then how far you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."

Conclusion

Creating a level of good relational health will mean committing to building new relationships and rebuilding those that are in need of repair. This will require great courage, sacrifice and humility. Until we allow the Spirit to do His work in us, we'll be nothing more than horrible people with a beautiful message.

**Relational
Health requires
Courage,
Sacrifice and
Humility!**

ANTONIO BELGRAVE



By now, you must have heard that Adventist Radio London is here. In August of 2017, God made it possible for the South England Conference to acquire a Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) license for the purpose of sharing the Seventh-day Adventist message of hope to the community of London and the home counties. The issuing of the license by the UK governing body Ofcom caught us somewhat by surprise, in that there was still so much to be done in preparation for our first broadcast. We needed a broadcasting studio, as well as equipment and personnel. We also needed programmes and resources to fill the broadcasts. Nevertheless, by faith, the studio has been built and equipment and personnel are in place. Programmes are being prepared and resources are being acquired.

We intend to go forward, looking to dedicate this mission project, Adventist Radio London, to the Lord on 7th April 2018 at the Brixton Seventh-day Adventist Church in South London. For the dedication we will be privileged to have with us representatives from the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters and Adventist World Radio; the Trans-European Division; the British Union Conference; and the South England Conference. We have come this far by faith and by faith we continue to strive forward. And so, with this commitment, we will 'go live' from our studio in Watford on the morning of 8th April 2018 with 'Daybreak' at 06:00, followed by

'Sunday Breakfast' at 06:30. The full schedule can be viewed at www.adventistradio.london.

Adventist Radio London's purpose is to 'share the Everlasting Gospel commissioned to this church with the multi-cultural population of London, with emphasis on Millennials, empowering them to make Christ their Choice.'

Our Mission Statement, based on the method and model of Christ's ministry, states that 'Adventist Radio London will unashamedly extend the teaching, preaching and healing ministries of Christ to the diverse Millennial mindset of London, discipling them to holistic living and to know Jesus their Saviour, the only hope for mankind.'

Adventist Radio London's broadcasts may be found on DAB radio. Conducting a search for and tuning in to 'Adventist Radio London' will allow you to listen to our broadcast in the comfort of your own home or in your car. One can also listen via various radio apps or from the Adventist Radio London website, www.adventistradio.london. We will be using the major social media platforms to connect with our target audience, creating access to the wealth of resources that this church has been blessed and privileged to accumulate.

Meet Adventist Radio London's dedicated staff:

- Michael Hamilton – Director
- Kallie Wheeler – Personal Assistant
- Michael Johnson – Programme Controller
- Lynette Allcock – Presenter/Producer (Co-Presenter of weekday "Breakfast")
- Sam Gungaloo – Presenter/Producer (Co-Presenter of weekday "Breakfast")

- Nigel Maunganidze – Presenter/Producer (Co-Presenter of "Drive Time")
- Vanesa Pizzuto – Presenter/Producer (Co-Presenter of "Drive Time")
- Julian Thompson – Religion Editor/Producer

Additional human resources have and will continue to come from many who want to dedicate time and talent to producing and contributing to quality programming fit for an audience who are yet to know Jesus as Lord.

We appeal to you who have a story to tell of your encounter with God – do not underestimate the impact your story will have. In reflecting on your journey with the Lord so far, ponder the following questions:

1. What was your life like before you met Jesus?
2. How did you happen to meet Jesus?
3. Now, having met Jesus, what is life like? In other words, what difference has meeting Jesus made to your life?

Your story may be the one thing that a listener is waiting to hear to assure them that the God who changed your life can change theirs also. There is power in your story! Contact Adventist Radio London now via our website: www.adventistradio.london or via email: michael.hamilton@adventistradio.london and tell us your story.

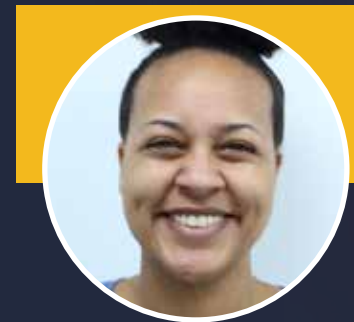
As we push forward, we sincerely solicit your earnest prayers for the power of the Holy Spirit and that we will always be 'confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1:6, NKJV).



Hamilton, Michael
Radio Director



Johnson, Michael S
Radio Programme Manager



Wheeler, Kallie
Radio/Media PA



Allcock, Lynette
Presenter/Producer



Pizzuto, Vanesa
Presenter/Producer



Thompson, Julian
Religion Editor/Producer



Gungaloo, Sam
Presenter/Producer



Maunganidze, Nigel
Presenter/Producer



MICHAEL HAMILTON

A report commissioned by Contact a Family* highlighted the fact that parents who have a child with a disability are more likely to experience difficulties in their relationship than those without disability. Their report 'No Time for Us,'¹ conducted with 2,000+ parents in 2003, indicated that 'a disabled child in the family strengthens a good marriage but shows up flaws in a way nothing else would in a bad marriage.'

Parents raising children with a disability can find it a struggle when the disability requires the full attention of the caregiver(s). This can put physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual strain on the carers and the relationships between close family members and the extended family can also be challenged.

The research goes on to say that there was a significant (84-88%) link between having a child with a disability and the incidence of stress or depression, tiredness and lack of sleep. There is also said to be a link between domestic violence and having a disabled child.

The author of the report states:
'This consultation exercise provides ample evidence of the stresses on relationships within families where there is a disabled child. Although it is clear that many families do manage to maintain and even strengthen their relationships against all the odds, many couples do struggle to stay together, and may only do so because the alternative is so grim. For others, splitting up is the only way they feel they can focus entirely on the needs of the child. It is clear that, in the perceptions of parents at least, many features of society and 'the system' serve to put additional stress on relationships.'



SOPHIA NICHOLLS

The report continues:
'This is ironic, as their very 'raison d'être' (of the systems and society) must surely be to support and strengthen family relationships. However, the negative, or at least ill-informed, attitudes of family and friends, and the bureaucratic structures of statutory services, often only add to the frustration of caring for the child. Where parents do receive the support they need, it is often only after a long 'fight' which can again take its toll on relationships within the family.'

The SDA church's response to relational health in families living with disability and special needs

The church can play a key part in helping to relieve some of the experiences and pressures of families living with disability. Members living with disability, are still experiencing isolation, exclusion and marginalisation, and experience this inside and outside of the church environment.

Here are some quotes from members and families within the SDA church from a report produced by ASNA:

- *'I do not feel that the church members care.'*
- *'I feel the members don't understand my issues and have not got time for my family.'*
- *'I don't like to come to church because I feel ashamed and guilty about my situation.'*

- *'A recent experience of being encircled by prayer warriors made me feel that if my daughter was not cured, it was because we did not have enough faith.'*
- *'I was told that after this prayer, in 3 months my son would be cured. Well, he still has his disability and we love him as he is.'*
- *'I was told that people with learning disabilities are ungodly!'*

Our churches and members can be places of 'safety, security and spiritual development'. Many families living with disability experience little time for themselves. The report 'Caring More Than Most'² identified an increase in problems with mental, physical and social wellbeing. There is also an affect on spiritual health in carers. This then has an impact on their personal and spiritual relationships.

As church members and leaders, we have an opportunity to embrace families living with disability. There is a need for members to accept that we are all made in the image of God and see the disability as diversity instead of a curse or punishment. We will relieve a lot of the stress these families experience on a daily basis.

Some of the reasons our churches fail to support people with disability involves a lack of connections with families living with disabilities. Here are some of the barriers to making these connections:

BARRIERS TO MAKING CONNECTIONS?

- FEAR
- IGNORANCE
- CARELESSNESS
- LACK OF SENSITIVITY
- CULTURAL BELIEFS
- LACK OF AWARENESS



BARRIERS TO MAKING CONNECTIONS?

- SPIRITUAL ABUSE / EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- MAKING ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON APPEARANCE VS ABILITY
- ISSUES WITH UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING DIFFERENCE
- POOR BY BUILD ENVIRONMENTS
- LACK OF SELF AWARENESS

Addressing these barriers to making connections can make a difference in the church experience of our membership and ultimately bridge gaps both within the church and outside of the church. Addressing these issues will also build the Body of Christ outlined in 2 Corinthians 12: 12 -31, as we enable everyone to feel a part of the Church.

Vulnerability Vs Shame
One of the ways the SEC Disability Department has worked to address the gaps in understanding the life experiences of people with disabilities has been to provide places for people to tell their story. Storytelling creates space for people to make connections. It enables us all to 'feel' and understand the life of the storyteller.

These connections facilitate the opportunities to create places of belonging. It allows us to understand someone else's world, their struggles and their hopes. It creates opportunities, if managed well, to embrace vulnerability and to eradicate

the feelings of shame. Families living with disability feel ashamed and guilty due to the constant bombardment of societal and religious messages they experience as seen in the quotes above. By enabling places for testimonies and storytelling, we address these painful feelings of shame.

Brené Brown,³ a research professor at Huston University, has studied this area extensively and makes some poignant statements on the subject of vulnerability, shame and relationships:

'If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive.'

'Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.'
'Through my research, I found that vulnerability is the glue that holds relationships together. It's the magic sauce. Vulnerability is not weakness. And that myth is profoundly dangerous.'
What can we do to ensure our churches become places of belonging for



everyone, where we can embrace our vulnerability and feel connected to each other and to God?

Here are 5 'Tips' (Time for Intentional Positive Strategies) for creating places of belonging:

1. Provide safe and comfortable places where members can share something about themselves and their situation on a one to one or group basis.
2. Provide opportunities for the youth of the church to feel they have a place to share current issues where they are not judged but feel they can be heard.
3. Provide opportunities for members to tell their stories if they feel ready and willing to do so. This can be a powerful experience for all involved. Members hear, understand and identify connections which leads to acceptance and belonging.
4. Provide informal opportunities for group Bible study to enable spiritual and social growth and development.
5. Provide creative and flexible opportunities for outreach and mission for everyone to be involved in, no matter their ability.

For more information on the work of the Disability & Diversity Ministry in the SEC or the work of ASNA visit www.secdiversity.org.uk or www.asna.info respectively. You can also email snicholls@secadventist.org.uk.

* **Contact A Family** is a national charity supporting families with children with disabilities and special needs.

References:
(1) No Time for Us report
https://contact.org.uk/media/446233/no_time_for_us_report_2003final.pdf
(2) Caring More Than Most report
https://contact.org.uk/media/1168966/caring_more_than_most_exec_summary.pdf
(3) Brené Brown, Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead

ACTS: Active Christians Transforming Society

Over the last six months the Youth Ministries Department has taken a strategic approach to understanding the landscape of YM in the SEC. We have worked rigorously behind the scenes in creating a whole new strategy to meet the needs reflected in our recent 50*7 project. The qualitative and quantitative research revealed that there is an identity crisis within the Adventist Church, especially amongst young adults. A lack of relevant biblical literacy, along with a lack of loving and accepting church environments, has led in some cases to the haemorrhaging of young adults from the church. Generally, young adults do not understand the relevance of their Adventist Christian experience within the postmodern/ post-Christian context, and they are unable to authentically worship in the current church context. This causes a strong sense of dissonance and they are no longer able to identify with the church.

It has been well documented that if the church wants to keep their young adults, their leaders need to be authentic, honest and transparent. The organization needs to be also transparent and accountable. The new YM strategy



has the potential to create a sub-culture of authenticity, which will allow for the church to become a relevant part of a young person's life.

In light of the above, research continues to show that while youth and young adults have a dim view of church and its relevance to their day to day lives, they have not left God. In fact, surveys by Barna shows 43% of youth desire to be closer to God. They leave church because they find it irrelevant to them personally (35%), so they leave to find God elsewhere (40%). These studies are backed by our own recent 50*7 study: 52.7 % said they were dissatisfied with the way the church attempts to meet their needs as individuals, and 65.35% are somewhat to completely dissatisfied with the way the church is fulfilling its purpose in the 21st century. Despite these statistics, we believe the results have created opportunities for us to be innovative pushing YM to the next level.



ANTHONY FULLER

Opportunity

We are currently working in the lab on one of our three soon-to-be rolled projects: ACTS – Active Christians Transforming Society. This project aims to train, develop and empower core youth and young adults within 5 target areas across the SEC. A discipleship programme will zone in on (1) Bible study and prayer, (2) community outreach and (3) social interaction, facilitated in 'safe places' to allow freedom of expression without being condemned or marginalised.

We believe after their discipleship training, these young people will become change agents across the SEC and continue to drive the implementation of the core biblical principles of ACTS. We aim to move their understanding of church and spirituality from being a one-day event to a lifestyle experience with God modelling the church described in Acts 2:41-47 – community soul winning outreach that met and fellowshiped daily, meeting the practical needs of those in fellowship while praying and studying the Word in the power of the Spirit.

Reclaiming Emotional Health Through Trust

We are well into 2018 and at the SEC, we have put a refreshing touch to our EEE strategy. Cornerstone Counselling Service has now been rebranded to CCS.

Statistically, the number of people suffering from mental and emotional health issues is on the rise. In many cases, these are linked to poor or broken relationships, where individuals have been disappointed or betrayed and trust has been compromised. It's no doubt that trust is described in some circles as *'the new currency.'* This is because trust is an important factor necessary for relationships to thrive, yet so many of us suffer because of the absence of trust in our work, school, family and social relationships.

As humans, we are relational beings. Healthy relationships build our trust in each other and give us a sense of stability and hope, thereby enhancing our mental and physical wellbeing.

Therefore, this year at CCS we are focused on rebuilding hope, partly through emphasising the importance of healthy trusting relationships. And trust is a fundamental focus of our relationships with our clients, who, because of the support and services we provide, are empowered to rebuild lost hope and cultivate purposeful and trusting relationships. This restores their mental and emotional well-being.

We are here to listen to our clients and provide professional, non-judgemental, confidential and

empathic support, ultimately empowering our clients to cope with the challenges that life so often throws at us. Our counsellors all belong to the Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) and other professional bodies such as the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapists (BACP) and British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABPC).

Our world is yearning for people who can be trusted. In politics, education, media, in our communities and in our churches, individuals have one common need – to feel valued and respected. Value and respect ultimately promote our emotional wellbeing through contributing to trusting relationships. Christ himself demonstrated his understanding of this fundamental need of humanity by meeting the needs of those with whom he came in contact and winning their trust before bidding them to follow him. Our relationship with Christ, our example, is built on trust and trust is indeed the cornerstone of our relationships with our clients and within our team at CCS.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, each one of us, for a special purpose. We can only fulfil our purpose through a sound mind, for which our emotional wellbeing is key. At CCS we are making a difference, rebuilding hope and reclaiming emotional health through trusting relationships, one life at a time.



THEMBIE MAPINGIRE

Evangelism Expo

About 1000 pastors and lay members attended the annual South England Conference (SEC) Evangelism Expo at Newbold College of Higher Education.

The Conference has entered the third of the four-year 'Evangelism, Everyone, Everywhere' plan, and the current focus is on Reclamation. This was emphasised through sharing the parable of the lost sheep, where the shepherd went looking for even the smallest sheep. As statistics show a current 40% loss of members, the congregation was encouraged to do the same as the shepherd—reclaim members that have not come to church in a while.



SEC President Dr Emmanuel Osei explained the SEC's strategy for 2018, assuring the audience that he and his team sought God first in their 2017 Directors' Residential meeting. *'We had one purpose in mind: we wanted God to speak to us on how we were to move forward in 2018,'* said Osei. In order to make headway, the mission of the Conference is simple: Total Member Involvement. This strategy necessitates every member taking part, being disciples, and utilising their God-given talents, and also engaging and working with Millennials.

SEC Elders, Deacons & Deaconesses Conference

Elders, deacons and deaconesses gathered in Daventry for the annual SEC Elders', Deacons' and Deaconesses' Conference and were told to 'crossover and reclaim the lost.' Ministerial Director Pastor Ebenezer Jones-Lartey emphasised the challenges attendees would face when being shaken out of their comfort zones as they work with God to reach out to the missing members of our Church.



SEC President Dr Emmanuel Osei explained four steps these individuals should take in order to complete the EEE 2018 mission to reclaim all missing church members:

- Phase 1 – Awareness & Education
- Phase 2 – Training for those who form part of a Reclamation Ministries Team (RMT).
- Phase 3 – Reach out and reconnect through visitations and creating small fellowship groups.
- Phase 4 – Super-glue the reconnected, asking what support is necessary in order for them to make a permanent decision.

This initiative was rolled out to all churches in March 2018 and will conclude with a special reconnecting Sabbath, specially designed for those re-joining the church fellowship.

Pastors Spokespersons' Training

SEC pastors attended a Spokespersons' Training Session with former BBC presenter and freelance trainer Jayne Constantinis in February.



The aim of this one-day event was to give confidence and control to pastors when entering interview situations. Attendees were equipped with technical skills for understanding the media and how to approach an interview situation. One of the main points Constantinis emphasised was the importance of preparation. The day concluded with a practical application with pastors presenting on camera.

SEC pastors left with a systematic framework for preparation, a set of practical tools and a more positive mindset for any challenging media interview that should arise.

Local Spotlight

Evangelist Mark Finley held a series at Stanborough Park Church on being '*Empowered by the Holy Spirit*' in January. Visitors came from as far as Holland to attend the full-house event. Finley started the series by saying '*The key to a fulfilled Christian life is grasping who the Holy Spirit is and receiving Him into your life.*' On Sabbath, he concluded by preaching about the extra power from the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel to the whole world. Finley emphasised the importance of seeking out the Holy Spirit on an individual basis and to be prepared to receive it.

At the end of the series, one person made a request for baptism and there were eleven requests for Bible Studies.

Disciple Makers in Bristol

Adventist Churches in Bristol celebrated their annual District Day of Fellowship on 3 February. Keynote speaker Pastor Michael Njagi Mbui shared a booklet with each attendee, entitled Disciple Makers Training. The booklets were filled with questions about their core values, discipleship and other Biblical questions. Through this, Mbui was demonstrating God-given advice in a method relevant to the Pathfinders in the congregation.

Church members and visitors were reminded what characteristics one should maintain in order to be a true disciple of Christ in a world that thrives on sin. Mbui emphasised that the church is God's embassy in the world and that the mission is community orientated, to minister to the needy and witness to all communities.

Attendees left the day of worship, praise and reflection feeling empowered to become disciple-makers.

Education and The Law

The SEC Education department hosted an Education and the Law seminar at the Advent Centre, London in January. Teachers, parents and church members dived into the challenges facing schools in a secular society and discussed how to be wise, yet harmless.

Attendees were updated on the upcoming government proposal to teach children as young as five about relationships and sex education. The government opened this topic to the public for consultation, however. The immediate response of the audience was, '*This is a wake-up call!*'



Tottenham West Green Road Ground-breaking Ceremony

With a Pathfinder drum-roll and a drill, Tottenham West Green Road held a ground-breaking ceremony to commence the beginning of their building refurbishments. Councillor Barbara Blake, who has had several pleasant experiences working alongside the church community during her tenure, attended and expressed her sincerest wishes for the completion of the project.

The refurbishments will include the relocation of the Sanctuary to the ground floor, a lift to facilitate the less-able, a rear extension for more seating capacity and other health and safety features.

The project is expected to be complete by the end of 2018. During renovations, please visit the church at West Green Road Baptist Church, 592 West Green Road, N15 5AF.

“Put down the phone, Philip” - DEVOTIONAL

‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time...?’ John 14:9 (NIV)

Have you ever been in a situation where you’ve been in conversation with someone, only to realise that they haven’t actually been paying attention to what you’ve been saying? How were you able to tell?

Could you hear an element of distraction in their voice? Did you ask an open question only to receive a closed response? Maybe you received no response at all? Or perhaps, like many people today, you experienced all of the above because the person you were speaking to was paying more attention to their smartphone than they were to you!

A recent article in Time Magazine opened with these words: *‘Nothing kills romance faster than pulling out a smartphone, and now, research confirms it.’* Interestingly, the research conducted by psychologists at the University of Arizona indicated that the problem is not with our use of smartphones, but with our attachment to them. If we are not careful, we can give people the impression that we are more

attached to our phones than we are to our relationships. Most of us are able to tell when someone is not really paying attention to what we’re saying, and if we’re honest with ourselves, it’s not a nice feeling. I imagine that’s how Jesus must have felt in John 14:9.

Despite spending the majority of His ministry with the disciples, Jesus continually found himself questioning whether they had been listening to him at all. While smartphones were not prevalent in those days, there were nevertheless other distractions that appeared to interest the disciples over and above their relationship with Jesus. James and John appeared to be more interested in fighting for status, Judas showed more concern over his bank balance, and some, like Peter, gave their primary attention to whether or not Jesus was fulfilling their interpretations of prophecy.

‘Don’t you know me, Philip...?’ The word *‘know’* here doesn’t refer to a superficial type of knowledge; it refers to the type of knowledge that involves a depth of understanding. *‘How is it,’* marvels Jesus, *‘that having spent so much time together, it seems*

as though you don’t know me at all?’ This dialogue suggests something very important concerning our relationship with God and others. In relationships, one of the most important factors is not the amount of time that we spend with a person, but the quality of that time. Distracted time is not quality time, and as the research implies, sometimes the best way to increase that quality of time is by putting down our mobile phones, consciously setting aside any of our distractions, and being fully present in our conversations. In the absence of distraction, true relationship and intimacy begins.

To be clear, I’m not suggesting that we get rid of our smartphones. In many ways, they have the ability to enhance our communication! What I am saying is that it is important to consider how smartphones, and other potential distractions, can influence our relationship with God and each other. Let us therefore be careful, lest the words spoken by Jesus to Philip be also said to us, *‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time...?’* John 14:9 (NIV)



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Adventist Radio London

SHARING THE HOPE

