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CONNECTED

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THE POWER OF THE STIMULUS

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Dear Friend,

Like any woman, I love to laugh and spend time with those who are witty and have a good sense of humor. I find traits like this all through the Bible. I see a Father whose actions are unequaled, but yet a good sense of humor in the enjoyment of His creation.

From the beginning of mankind, the importance of establishing a good relationship was evident. Interestingly, Adam was created alone. His only experiences in relationships were with animals. I like to think that God smiled to Himself and waited for the right moment. The moment when Adam felt the "urgent need" for companionship and expressed it. Only then did God create Eve, the ideal companion who would complete Adam in every sense.

We were created with the capacity to form relationships. Only through healthy relationships do we feel complete. The life of Jesus provides us with the best example of this. Nothing was more important to Him than the interpersonal relationships He invested in. We can always find Him interacting with His Father, the disciples, His family, the sick, the poor, the rich, and with anyone who desired it. Relationships, relationships, always relationships.

We all have experienced the benefits of a close relationship with Jesus that brings fulfillment to a pastor's wife. Taking the time each day to speak with Him, to listen to His words as they are presented in the Gospel, undoubtedly will fill our day with a vast amount of blessings. Even in the midst of our toils, we will feel Jesus' affectionate embrace.

If we are discussing relationships, certainly one of the most pleasant relationships we can experience is the one we have with our spouse. This union should be strengthened daily. In today's world, marriage has become one of the most fragile of relationships we can have, therefore it requires much of our attention. Taking the time to talk, to spend time together, and share the experiences of our day, will surely strengthen our marital union.

When we strengthen our relationships with Jesus and our spouses on a daily basis our children will also experience fulfillment. Without noticing it, we will become a source of joy and comfort for them. Our children need a mother who is attentive to their needs. The truth is that a pastoral family's mother has more time to spend with the children than the father who is a pastor. A mother who is happy and dedicates time to her children will help them grow feeling loved and secure.

Dear friend, our purpose during the next five years is to motivate you to work like our Master did, building strong relationships that last. Beginning with our homes, and then expanding the joy of serving others to those that are in need of our help. Whatever your talents or gifts are, use them for the benefit of others, and this will bring happiness and satisfaction to your life.

Let us work towards building strong and healthy relationships. God wants to enable us with enough strength and love, so that a smile may be brought to our own hearts, but more importantly, bring a smile to those whom we come in contact with, with their salvation in mind.

Cecilia Iglesias

THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING AND CARING for the Pastor's Children

Hector Sánchez

Ministerial Secretary for the Inter-American Division. for the Pastor's

Meditation: To be read as a couple

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth". (3 John 4)

He who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in his family life. It is as essential that as a father he should improve the talents God has given him for the purpose of making the home a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, he should make use of his God-given powers to win souls for the church. As the priest in the home, and as the ambassador of Christ in the church, he should exemplify in his life the character of Christ. Pastoral Ministry 88.3

You have likely heard that the three parts that form a person are: Family, academia, and society. From a secular perspective, this sounds correct, and the joint effort of all three typically yields good results. However, from a Christian perspective, there is a fourth element that plays a crucial role in the upbringing and development of a child's character; this element is the church. We will be discussing this fourth component, hopefully providing greater strength to the process of raising our children.

I would like to focus this article on the Pastoral family and the influence that the church exerts on the educative process of the Pastor's children. I realize that this topic is not an easy one to discuss, however, it is necessary one to analyze given the current condition of the church and the Pastoral families within. Experience has taught me that we will never cease to be agents of influence in the lives of our children. Presently I am a grandfather of four, the fruit of my two children, and have come to the conclusion that only my death could interrupt the influence as a teacher over this flock that God has given me to care for.

Pastor's children and the congregation's expectations

Above all, we must admit that the church plays an important role in our children's development, but can also become a great obstacle because of the many expectations it exerts. Let us evaluate some of those expectations:

Pastor's Children:

- Must be holy.
- Must have extensive knowledge of scripture.
- Must be involved in every activity.
- Cannot leave the sanctuary during church service.
- Must set the example for other children.

Truthfully, the list could easily be extended. In some instances the expectations are

so strenuous that our children's names are forgotten and the church members simply refer to them as, "The Pastor's son or daughter." We must admit that such ecclesial esteem exists, has always existed, and will exist until the end. I admit that initially, I was harsh in criticizing these expectations. However, with time I began to understand that, to some degree, these demands make sense and are a part of the call to Pastoral ministry, ratified when we are married and activated upon engaging in ministry. Our children's conduct with the congregation is also a reflection of how we have educated them and of the environment created for them at home. It is a sad reality, but sometimes some of the Pastor's children that have been neglected in their rearing, upon leaving the home no longer have a desire to return. The training and education of our offspring pose for us today, more than ever, a mighty challenge.

The Pastoral Couple and the Challenge of Educating their Children

The father's role – Pastor. Carefully observe the order in which the roles are presented. The Pastor's vision for his family results in the determination of God's purpose in their home. The Bible and the gift of Prophecy are the wife's key role, but the priest of the home is the father. The reason is simple: She is above all else mother and wife, and she should be seen as such by her husband. Many times the roles are confused and the wife becomes motivated to act like an associate pastor (And this is how the congregation and her children perceive her), like an honorary pastor, adding to this is the fact that the conversations in the home revolve around ecclesiastical matters, causing her to ignore the problems of everyday home life. Especially any issues pertaining to the children. Some relevant recommendations in regards to this are:

- The only components that should be within the four walls of a home are A father, a mother, and the children.



Pastoral work should remain outside of those walls. The role of the father is also a priority, as is the role of mother.

- The children need a father, not a Pastor. This servant found great pleasure when preparing for a seminar I approached my children, consulting them in regards to this matter. Their response was that before viewing me as a pastor, they viewed me as their father.

- This gave me comfort in knowing that our children want a father, someone to play with, protect them, make them laugh, who loves their mother, hugs them, provides them with undivided attention, teaches them how to best take advantage of their time, how to play with and organize their toys; someone to talk to and share their struggles, fears, and temptations with. The quantity and quality of time spent are important in accomplishing this.

- Our children need conversation, not sermons. The congregation is outside of the home. Our words should sound like a sweet melody to their ears, even on occasions where that melody must take on a firm tone.

- Maintain a moral standard. Many times we forget when educating our children to implement a high moral value standard. Pastor's children are aware that this is not easy to obtain in a world lacking morals, and they also are aware that their father could even lose his ministry if they give in to one of the traps presented by the enemy. Of course, this does not guarantee that a child will not stray from the straight and narrow path at some point in their life, but if they have been molded by defined and exemplified morals, it will be difficult for them to discontinue walking with God indefinitely. This is a point that is frequently forgotten.

- To educate as a father - Pastor is not a matter of preaching whenever the child strays from the path. It is to live your life in such a way that imitating Christ becomes irresistible to follow.

- It's good for the Pastor's children to have an understanding of what is expected of them from the church. They should be guided and prepared to confront any situation. In order to accomplish this, the Pastor should present topics related to Pastoral family life when speaking to the church. This will allow for the congregation to understand that the Pastor's family is also composed of human beings like them, who also struggle in all areas of life and, just like them, are seeking salvation. This will also allow for them to understand the necessity of the Pastor's family in taking free time to be together in a recreational setting in order for them to grow as a family.

The role of mother. Almost all women dream of becoming mothers one day and a Pastor's wife is no exception. If God blesses her with children, she is tasked with a great responsibility: The parenting of her children, with the collaboration of her husband so that they can grow to become a blessing in their father's ministry and for the church. The servant of God describes it in this manner:

"The minister has his line of work, and the mother has hers. She is to bring her children to Jesus for His blessing. She is to cherish the words of Christ and teach them to her children. From their babyhood, she is to discipline them to self-restraint and self-denial, to habits of neatness and order. The mother can bring up her children so that they will come with open, tender hearts to

hear the words of God's servants. The Lord has need of mothers who in every line of the home life will improve their God-given talents and fit their children for the family of heaven". Adventist Home, pg. 236.1

In Conclusion:

It is true that with the growth of the church there comes more demand for Pastoral attention. For this, there is a solution, but there is no solution for watching our children lose eternity. Although the decision is there's to make, God will not exempt us from our responsibility in this matter when the time comes for Him to give His verdict.

However, the Lord is good and merciful. He longs for our children to be saved. It is advisable that mother and father reflect on these words: "While engaged in our daily work, we should lift the soul to heaven in prayer... (Christian Parents) The Christian whose heart thus stays upon God cannot be overcome." To Be Like Jesus pg. 33



LYDIA'S OF THE **XXI** CENTURY

Belkis Archbold

Health Director for the Inter-American Division

As a teenager, I enjoyed spending Sabbath afternoons with my friends playing Bible games. One of these games consisted of trying to guess a Bible character whose name began with the first letter of our names. Since I have two names, I always loved choosing my first name because it was challenging to think of Bible character's names beginning with the letter L, some of whom are Lot, Laban, Lois, Leah, Luke, and Leví, but no one would ever think to mention Lydia of Thyatira.

When given the opportunity to speak with groups of women, I enjoy challenging them by asking which woman from the Bible they most identify with. I watch their reactions and immediately the names of Sarah, Rebecca, Naomi, Dorcas, Deborah, Leah, Esther, Rachel, Maria, and other notable women, are spoken; However, just like with the Bible game from my youth, I find that Lydia is rarely mentioned.

Perhaps it is due to the fact that we know so little about this woman who sold, what the Bible calls, Purple. In the book of Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 16:13-15,40 we find that she was a leader of a small group that met on the shores of a river to worship God due to the lack of a synagogue in the city of Philippi.

When Paul and friends arrived at Philippi, they were walking through the city when they noticed there was no synagogue or place to worship the Almighty. Upon inquiring, they were informed that there was a group of women that met on Sabbaths near the shores of the river, and this is where they found Lydia.

Some characteristics that stand out about this woman in Apostolic times are (See v.14): 1. She was an entrepreneur, she owned her own business. Although her hometown was Thyatira, she had moved to Philippi, Macedonia, due to its thriving business climate and prosperity. She sold Purple, a very special fabric that got its color tone from a species of mollusks that

required a very delicate process to achieve. Only citizens of high socioeconomic status were able to afford this fabric, such as princes and kings. 2. Lydia worshiped God, she wanted to live her life in obedience to His commandments. 3. She knew how to listen, she used her ears more than her mouth. She was always prepared to let God open her heart with the intention of speaking to her. 4. She was hospitable, kind, and persistent.

We can follow the example of Lydia and other women of the Bible. Their lives provide many lessons for all of us, especially for the wives of pastors. We should seek God with all our hearts through constant prayer and submission of our lives to our Creator. On the shores of our own "rivers" of tasks, changes, and worries; we can pause and consider these counsels, which from my perspective, will help you carry your ministry with joy and devotion.

1. Take control of your health. Don't wait for others to suggest it, just like the time you take to do your personal devotional, take the time to analyze how you can improve your habits in order to be in optimal health. Be the entrepreneur of your own body.

Stay in motion so that you can live life to the fullest. It has been scientifically proven that exercise is the fountain of youth. Mrs. Ellen White already provided us with this information in her book, *Ministry of Healing*, pg. 163:2 : "Inactivity is a fruitful cause of disease. Exercise quickens and equalizes the circulation of the blood, but in idleness the blood does not circulate freely, and the changes in it, so necessary to life and health, do not take place." Staying active will help maintain your energy, thoughts, and actions coordinated. Your endurance will increase and allow you to have the ability to sustain prolonged physical or mental exertion. Physical activity helps you maintain ideal posture and balance and keeps you focused on tasks since the circulation of the brain increases significantly when we exercise due to the

oxygenation of the blood. "Stay in motion so that you may live life to the fullest."

2. Keep a positive attitude.

Our attitude influences greatly how we view the world. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. The most important decision we make on a daily basis is the attitude we will have. "Of course" - you may say-, "It's easier said than done because as a pastor's wife I am exposed to all type of emotions and they are more often than not negative." Therein lies the importance of choosing a positive attitude. You can find plenty of reasons to experience negative emotions, such as anger, resentment, and complaints, but you wouldn't trade the peace that comes from being good-tempered for any of those emotions.

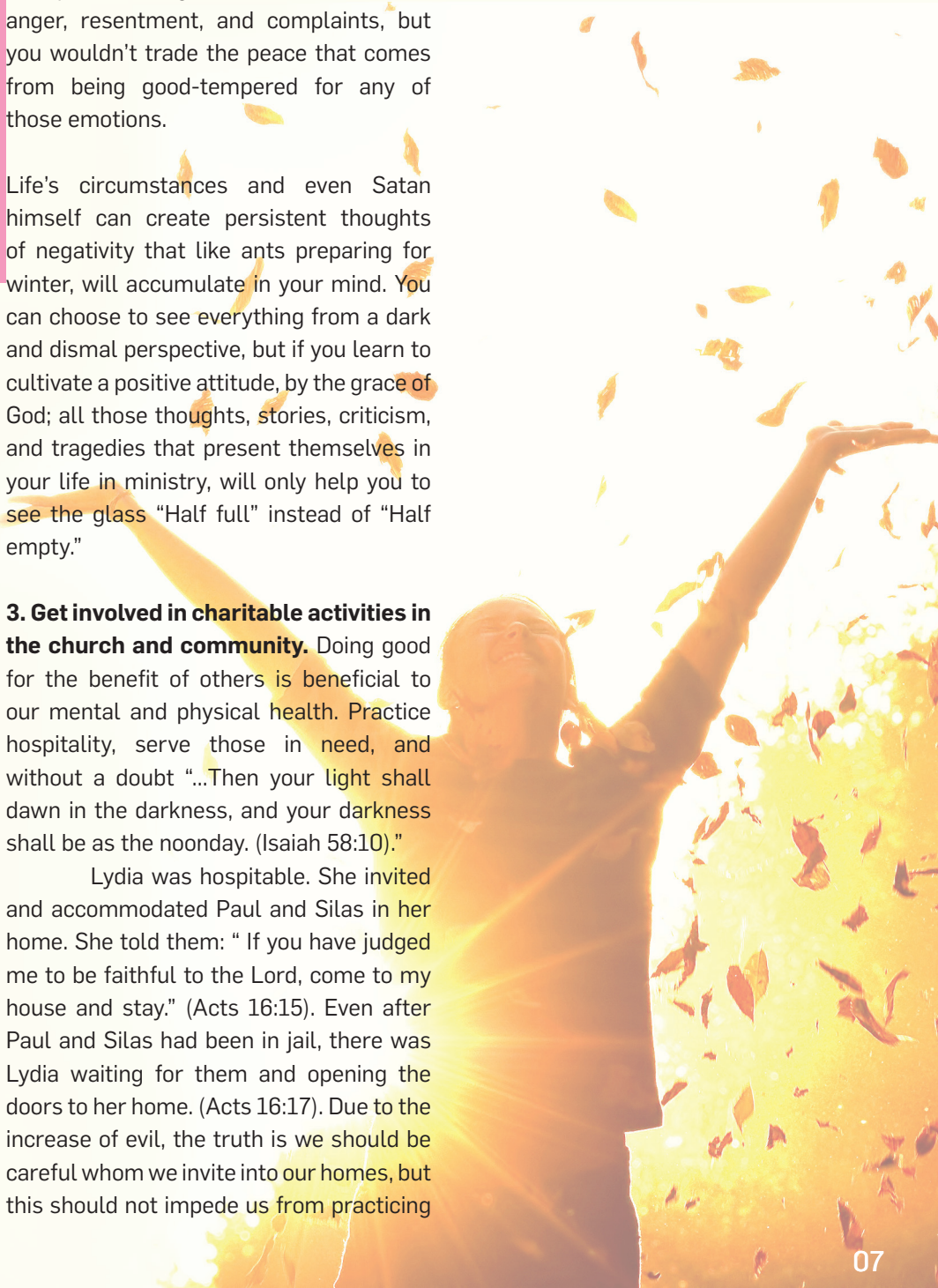
Life's circumstances and even Satan himself can create persistent thoughts of negativity that like ants preparing for winter, will accumulate in your mind. You can choose to see everything from a dark and dismal perspective, but if you learn to cultivate a positive attitude, by the grace of God; all those thoughts, stories, criticism, and tragedies that present themselves in your life in ministry, will only help you to see the glass "Half full" instead of "Half empty."

3. Get involved in charitable activities in the church and community. Doing good for the benefit of others is beneficial to our mental and physical health. Practice hospitality, serve those in need, and without a doubt "...Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)."

Lydia was hospitable. She invited and accommodated Paul and Silas in her home. She told them: " If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." (Acts 16:15). Even after Paul and Silas had been in jail, there was Lydia waiting for them and opening the doors to her home. (Acts 16:17). Due to the increase of evil, the truth is we should be careful whom we invite into our homes, but this should not impede us from practicing

this method that Jesus took advantage of during His ministry on earth. He dwelt among the needy, listened to them, taught them, supplied their needs, and then told them, "Follow me."

I invite you to follow Lydia of Thyatira's example. God opened her heart and transformed her very being because she was willing to listen to His voice. Try it and you will see the transformation in your life.



LET US INCLUDE EVERYONE!

Melchor Ferreyra / PM, IAD Director

“Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God’s work. Too often in the past, this has not been done. Plans have not been clearly laid and fully carried out, whereby the talents of all might be employed in active service. There are but few who realize how much has been lost because of this”. (Christian Service, 61).

We could ascribe the title: TOTAL MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT (TMI), to this quote from Ellen G. White. Our leaders must devise creative ways in which we can involve the most amount of people in the beautiful task of spreading the gospel. Many do not participate in the commission and it’s not always due to a lack of interest, but because they don’t receive any training, motivation, or the essential tools needed. We have often failed to create the conditions necessary to facilitate the involvement of all our church members. Any plan that aims to preach the gospel must be intentional and appeal to all church members.

In the comings and goings of my ministry, I have been sent to districts that were facing difficulty in growth. One of my churches was located in the mining town of Marcona, 450 km from the country’s capital city. Like many mining towns, Marcona had a fast-paced lifestyle, led by the worker’s schedules and shifts, who only lived for their income. There was no interest in spirituality, it was a materialistic city, driven by consumerism and the fleeting satisfaction of the senses. There was a small church of ours located in this town, that consisted of a non-committed membership. They were living a comfortable life, influenced by the surrounding environment. Since all of them worked for the mines and took shifts that required them to labor on Friday nights and Saturday’s, none felt worthy enough to lead in the church, much less commit to the mission of spreading the gospel! All the strategies that were previously implemented to improve the situation, involved the few men that made up a portion of the congregation, but due to their lack of spirituality, they avoided any real commitment with the church, leading every effort attempted to fail.

This was the sad reality of this congregation. However, on the other hand, I also saw another type of church that was almost entirely composed of women, who witnessed what was happening to their congregation, but had no possibility of intervening in the church’s growth since all the programs and strategies were always directed towards men. No matter how hard they tried, their hands were always tied. It was under these circumstances that I met a very consecrated woman with a huge desire to see her church move in another direction. Her name was Assunta, she was a mature middle-aged woman who was passionate about the Lord’s work. One day she told me, “Pastor if you would trust the church’s women and teach us how to guide our church to experience a different level of spirituality, we would be willing to do it.”

I was faced with two options: One was to

leave things as they were and just ignore the situation that had been functioning this way for years, or dare to believe in the words this woman of God had shared with me. I returned home wondering how I could help this church. At night while I was searching for answers to prayers and my pillow, I was struck with an idea: “Why not create a small group from this church that would meet in sister Assunta’s home?” Since the name Assunta, sounds similar to ‘situation’ or ‘problem’ in the Spanish language; I cracked a smile of satisfaction and said to myself: “Problem solved.” The following day, with a solution already planned out in my mind and the determination to help the women from this church transform their congregation, I went to visit sister Assunta. When she heard my idea, tears began to run down her cheeks, and she said: “Finally, a solution.” The plan was put into action. The congregation was composed of

fifteen women whose husbands were not committed to any church-related responsibilities.

These women were instructed and each assumed a role of leadership. Shortly after beginning the small group and training these women, the results were evident, the small congregation was strengthened. One year later, sister Assunta had achieved, with God’s help, a spiritually strong church that was experiencing growth. The women of Marcona were the leaders in a movement for change in Marcona. As expected, sister Assunta became the church leader and assisted in guiding the leaders of other small groups. All the other women assumed roles of leadership in different areas of the church. My heart was filled with emotion when I saw these noble and consecrated women working for the Lord.

This experience became a pilot plan for me. I began to study the numerical proportions of men and women in church congregations. Almost always, we find more women than men. Should we not then change our emphasis in our church plans and projects to take advantage of this fact? We need to open our eyes to the reality: If we look at worldwide statistics, the Adventist church membership has a higher percentage of women, versus men. How can we involve them in the great commission and take advantage of the spiritual gifts God has given to each individual?

Latin American countries are characterized by a growing population of young people and women. Should we not be assessing and planning on how we could use this great army in our church's mission? We need to train and not entertain. We could



be gathering the women and youth of our church to multiply our small groups. Surely they will not disappoint!

EMPHASIS ON MISSION AND NOT METHODS

Our focus is the Mission, not the Method. All church leaders we all have the same duty of expanding the mission. Instead of focusing our attention on protocols, we should be urgently seeking to get our church to fulfill the mission. Sometimes it is easy for us to get lost in minor issues regarding what the church should be like, and we begin making changes on a large scale when we should actually be following the example given to us in the New Testament. They were not concerned with large buildings, or complicated methods. Their only focus was to preach the gospel utilizing a simple and functional

method. Wolfgang Simson said: "By living a simple and flexible life, and keeping a strong spirit of Faith amidst persecution, the churches that gather in homes is able to continue to evolve when confronted with persecution, something a traditional and very visible church that has a cross on its belfry cannot accomplish."

Through Divine inspiration, Ellen White provides a glimpse of the primitive church and reminds us that harmonious action is more valuable than our large buildings. "What God requires is not a large number



of institutions, large buildings, or great display, but the harmonious action of a peculiar people".

¹ Wolfgang Simson, A home that will change the world, Editorial CLIE, Galvani 113, Terrassa Barcelona, Spain, 2003.
² E.G. White, Christian Service, pág. 94





YOU CAN NEVER OUTGIVE GOD!

Janet Page

Serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."
Luke 6:38

WE WERE AT CAMP MEETING. It was Sabbath morning, and I woke up arguing with God. "I could have married a rich surgeon! I think it is enough of a financial sacrifice to be married to a pastor."

We had an annual camp meeting evangelism offering, and the night before I had been impressed to ask the people to pray and ask God how much they should give. Then we had a time of silence while the congregation prayed.

God was after me to ask Him the same question. I was afraid. I didn't want to give more money than we had. I already knew the amount God was impressing me to give. "There is no way we can do this," I told God. "We don't even have that much money in our savings account."

When I opened my Bible, my eyes fell on a verse that shook me up. "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45, NKJV).

Later, Jerry asked, "How much is God telling you that we should give?" I said, "You don't want to know. You will just laugh at me." In the past, if I had told Jerry some new idea I had for giving to a worthy cause, he had just patted me on the shoulder and said, "We will think about it." End of conversation.

This time, he didn't give up, so I told him, expecting uncontrollable laughter. Instead, he said, "We must do it!" I passionately explained why we couldn't. "We don't have that kind of money. We can barely pay our bills." Smiling, Jerry said, "We can sell our furniture." Nobody would want our old, hand-me-down furniture. He handed me the pledge envelope and told me to turn it in.

My son Zac weighed in. "Mommy, if God told you to give that amount, you should

do it." I left crying and turned in the pledge with tears and trembling. I had no idea where we would get the money.

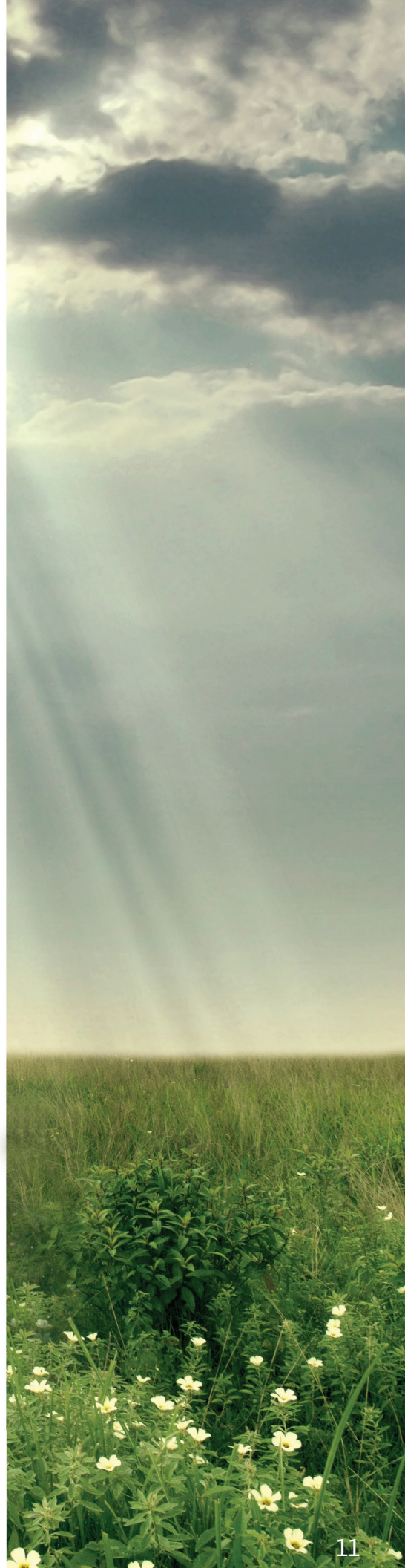
That was July. We had until the next June to pay it off. By March, our pledge was paid in full! God did amazing things, and the money came in many different ways. It was an incredible, life-changing experience for our whole family.

The next year, I knew God would not expect us to give that much money again. But this time, when we asked God how much to give, He doubled the amount. In faith, we decided to do it. And again, God blessed with the money.

Yes, we had to make some sacrifices and changes in our family spending. But what a blessing it was for our family! I don't have space to share all the blessings that came our way—new furniture, cars, houses, and clothing—and all in incredible ways.

Instead of arguing over money, Jerry and I started to work together on how we could give more to God. It has been the biggest blessing to our marriage and to our sons.

I have limited God so many times. He has been teaching me to follow Him and showing that He will provide. If you are struggling with finances, I would encourage you to sit still and listen as you read the Bible. God will show you how to live life differently. The unknown can be scary. But you can never outgive God!



Money, money, money . . .

Karen Holford

He is a pastor's wife and family therapist. He lives in Scotland

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AT ODDS WITH YOUR SPOUSE ON THIS TOUGH TOPIC

MOLLY STARED AT THE credit card statement in her hands. How come they were more than \$10,000 in debt? Why hadn't Bill spoken about it before? And how could they ever pay it all back?

Hannah hid the blouse under the groceries when she carried them into the house. She didn't know how to tell James that she'd bought something new.

One of the most challenging topics for couples to talk about is money. It can open up so many painful emotions that it's easier to stuff them all in a garbage can and sit on the lid. Money is not just about paper and coins; it comes all tangled up with concepts of ownership, power, identity, and entitlement.

THE MEANING OF MONEY

What does money mean to you? Here are some tips to keep in mind as you answer that question.

.Instead of thinking about money as "my money" or "our money," think about it as "God's money entrusted to us."

- Try pausing before you purchase and ask yourself, "Why am I buying this? Is it what I really need—or am I trying to fill an empty space in my heart?" Sometimes we buy things because we think they will make us feel better. It could be anything from a doughnut to a designer handbag. But maybe what you really need is a hug, some special time with your spouse, or some appreciation, comfort, encouragement, understanding, or support.
- Pray about your use of money. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you can make changes and grow.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Every marriage needs a balance of wise saving, wise spending, and wise sharing or giving. All of this complexity needs careful planning. Here are some strategies for achieving that.

- Talk about your finances together. Make it feel safer by telling each other three things you appreciate about your spouse's use of money, at least one thing you would like to do better in relation

to money, and one financial goal you'd like to work toward together. Avoid blaming each other, because that will push you further apart and make it harder to talk honestly and openly.

- If you have any debts, work out a manageable plan to reduce them. Aim to owe less at the end of each month rather than more.
- Set short, medium, and long-term financial goals together. Determine



how much you want to save each month and how you plan to save for a long-term project, such as buying a home.

- Give each other an allowance that can be used freely without question. Agree what can be spent on household purchases with, and without, the other person's consent.
- If talking about money becomes emotional or difficult, take a break

and consider why you feel sad, ashamed, embarrassed, angry, guilty, afraid, etc. When do your financial choices make you feel truly happy, hopeful, peaceful, loved, and loving? What are the relational needs that you need your partner to meet in order to help you feel loved and safe again, such as respect, forgiveness, understanding, time with each other, physical closeness, acceptance, comfort, and encouragement?


Don't be afraid to go for financial counseling if your money is in a muddle. The sooner you start to address the problems, the easier it will be to solve them.

FINANCIAL VALUES

It's important to establish a value system in your approach to money. Here are some ways to do that.

- Make a list of five to six values relating to your finances, and list them in order of priority. Encourage your spouse to do the same. Then share your lists, explaining what your values mean to you, where they've come from, and why you placed them in that order. Next develop a shared financial value list, discussing how you want to blend and prioritize your values as a couple. Use this value list to help you evaluate your spending and financial planning.
- **Study biblical values connected to finances.** Consider the ones below:
 - **Prayer:** Asking God to help you use His money wisely, and asking Him to heal the hurts and struggles connected with your use of money (Philippians 4:6, 7).
 - **Faith:** Believing that God will provide the things you need (Philippians 4:19).
 - **Trust:** Trusting Him with your tithe (Malachi 3:10).
 - **Gratitude:** Thanking God for your money, recognizing that every penny comes from His generous provision to you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
 - **Stewardship:** Providing wisely for the current and future needs of your family (Luke 16:10-12).
 - **Generosity:** Giving generously to those who are in need or to bring joy to others (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).
 - **Honesty:** Being open and transparent with each other about your financial challenges and spending (Matthew 5:37, Proverbs 19:1).
 - **Hospitality:** Sharing the gifts of your food and home with others so that they can experience God's love and your care for them (Romans 12:13).
 - **Forgiveness:** Forgiving yourself, and others, for past financial mistakes (Colossians 3:13).
 - **Patience:** Being patient with each other when financial mistakes are made (1 Corinthians 13:4).
 - **Economy and resourcefulness:** Using your resources wisely, including reusing and mending things rather than discarding and wasting them (John 6:12).
 - **Saving:** Being willing to save and invest money wisely rather than spend it immediately (Proverbs 13:11, Matthew 25:27).
 - **Hard work:** Doing your best at whatever you do, as though you're working for God (Colossians 3:23, 24).
 - **Sharing and lending:** Helping others to save money by lending them the things they need and letting those things go (generously) if you don't get them back (Luke 6:35, 1 Timothy 6:17-19).





Women who attend church are no exception when discussing the topic of encouragement. There are a number of sisters in Christ that we see with sad faces who are suffering due to a need they have or a circumstance they are experiencing. While many needs are physical, the majority are emotional by nature. Upon noticing the reality of these women's situations, we naturally are inclined to want them to feel better, therefore, desiring their involvement in projects and activities within the church that they would benefit from. How do we encourage them to participate in church activities, especially those activities that would be of most benefit to them? Without a doubt, motivation plays an important role in this scenario.

The positive impact of encouragement can generate great expectations for those who receive it. It helps them discover their inner potential, grow, and develop confidently.

Some strategies that can be implemented and practiced in order to involve these women so they become active in Church projects are those that provide encouragement. They can be simple, yet effective, or more complex:

- **The formidable and beautiful encouragement of a smile transcends the unknown.** Smiling does not require the use of words, however sharing a genuine smile with a Sister in Christ, emits nonverbal indicators and obvious emotion, which in turn is easily reciprocated. After the constant use of this type of encouragement, it would be difficult to receive a negative response to an extended invitation to a meeting.
- **Another effective form of encouragement is physical contact.** Human beings, especially women, need affection and a sense of connection. This provides another important resource for encouraging one another! It makes a woman feel good when she is approached and made to feel valued, this

THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Psic. E. Edith Ruiz de Espinoza.

Shepherdess Director for the Southeastern Mexican Union.

In the devotional Above All, written by Monica Diaz, she references an experience that the Theologian Lewis B. Smedes had on his first day of Elementary school. "The teacher asked the class to write a short essay about themselves, and Lewis very eagerly completed the assignment. The next day, the teacher read all the essays that had caught her attention out loud to the class, without divulging the names of the authors. Lewis was elated to hear his essay being read second. Once the class concluded, the teacher approached Lewis as he was exiting the classroom to the hallway and said: 'Lewis, you are a

good writer.' They were only four words and one pat on the back, but to Lewis they meant the world; no one had ever told him anything like that before. The teacher didn't even know him, but she had generated within his childhood heart, the dream of becoming a writer." (Pg. 197).

Who can measure the true value of the power of encouragement? It is directly linked to motivation and emotion, two factors that contribute greatly in influencing our behavior. Every woman, man, and human being require motivation in all areas of life. In other words, encouragement to achieve a goal.

can be done by the simple act of placing your hand on her shoulder for affirmation, giving her a hug, or a pat on the back while letting her know verbally that everything is going to be alright. These women will most definitely want to be a part of our meetings when they experience love and affection on behalf of friends and sisters in the Faith.

- **Creating an environment that promotes a healthy and good self-esteem is another method for the retention of women in our church.** How may you achieve this? By ceasing criticism of one another and avoiding comparisons. A woman will never consider being part of a group where she feels rejected by criticism that attacks her personally, or is being compared to someone else, who is lauded as better than her. We must care for the self-esteem of our Sisters in Christ, loving them and accepting them as they are.

- **A positive attitude. All attitude is directly connected to our emotions, in other words, it affects us.** Attitude is learned, involves relationships, and maintains properties related to motivation--It affects us and others. How do we enroll other women in our activities? It's easy, by having a good attitude. Empathy is also a great attitude to possess as it attracts others. By putting yourself in your friend's "shoes" (Taking in their perspective), you will encourage positive emotions and a sense of enjoyment in participating within the groups that you lead. To actively listen is another attitude that is necessary to possess. It is said that we were given one mouth and two ears to listen more and speak less. Let us make an effort to listen to others, lend our ears to what they have to say, and be a source of support. This type of encouragement is significantly attractive and promotes the desire to continue attending and being

part of our groups.

- **Directly addressing their needs. Jesus also encouraged others in this manner,** "attending first to their needs and then telling them: Follow me." The importance of vigilantly attending to the needs of others is basic. While many needs may exist, we must create a plan to help by visualizing and executing that plan. This type of action will produce physical healing effects, but more importantly heal their souls in such a way that the beneficiaries will remain linked to their benefactors.

- **Encouraging membership consists in creating an environment of fellowship and harmony that will make our friends and visitors feel welcome among us.** Motivate them to participate, encourage them to use their God-given talents and knowledge, ensuring everyone communicates effectively.

Knowing how to encourage others positively is a talent and a blessing to those that surround us. It generates

positive thoughts that in turn promote positive emotions, such as joy, longing, happiness, hope, and physical well-being, among other things.

Being a positive person has its benefits, and evidence exists that demonstrates how positive thoughts affect our physical health, but also psychologically these thoughts can create:

- **A more relaxed person.**
- **Peace, serenity, balance, harmony in our relationships with others and with ourselves.**
- **Optimism.**
- **Motivation and action.**
- **Creativity and drive.**
- **Clarity and effectiveness.**
- **Focus.**
- **Respect for oneself and others.**
- **Hope, desire to enjoy life, to live, and share the best moments of our lives.**

Today, once having finished reading this, ask yourself, "How am I motivating others? What am I doing to ensure others want to be a part of the groups I associate with?" Make the decision to be a positive influence in the lives of those that you are a part of Family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. May you speak words that heal, may your attitude and smile provide encouragement; and allow your gaze to be one filled with empathy and above all, love.

Let the power of encouragement flourish within you



A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white lace dress with a brown belt, is smiling and holding a large bunch of colorful balloons (red, yellow, pink, purple, green, blue, and white) with both hands. The balloons are tied with colorful ribbons. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with green foliage.

Count Your Blessings!

Por Sara Park-Salazar

Is a nurse who enjoys working with her husband and helping the church. They have two children

HSome time ago, coming to the end of the year, I received a gift from a church member. It looked to be a diary; I thanked her for the gift and went home, only to leave the diary on our bookcase. I thought that it wasn't of much use to me. I was never disciplined enough to keep up with a diary.

Some months passed and due to a surgery, I was on bed rest. Becoming bored one day with my television, I began looking around my room when my eyes focused on the bookcase. I found myself staring at the diary, still wrapped in its transparent cover. I opened it and to my surprise found Bible verses written in English. I smiled and said: "It's very beautiful, but I don't understand much." I forced myself to translate: Lamentations 3:22,23 **"The LORD's mercy. We were not completely wiped out. His compassion is never limited. It is new every morning. His faithfulness is great"**. I repeated the verse in Spanish out loud.

While trying to translate this Bible verse, I came across another one that was a well known Bible verse too. It was then that the Lord touched my heart and I understood that I was to make these words my own. His faithfulness in my life, every morning He surprises me with His mercy, patience, care, and guidance. I turned the pages back to the date I had received the diary as a gift and realized how many blessings I had missed out on, blessings that I had been brought to God as requests on a daily basis in prayer, but I had not recognized them as having been answered.

Undoubtedly God has a variety of ways to make us better people.

On this occasion, it was through a diary that not only improved my English, but also my relationship with Jesús. Now I no longer wait for someone to gift me with a diary, I purchase one every year myself so that I can see the many blessings God provides.

When reading the entire chapter from which we read the verses from in

Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah describes with a heavy heart the destruction of Jerusalem. He writes words that are very sad concerning the desolation, death, and consequences of sin. This is the reason for the book's title, Lamentations.

Upon reaching the last days of this year, 2016, when counting your blessings, it may be that there are also events involved that could have caused lamentation: a disease that came this year to your life or that of a loved one. Have you been through or are you living presently in the valley of the shadow of death? We may witness the physical death of family members and friends, or experience the pain of spiritual death, the shadow of sin.

However, look closely. In the midst of all our problems, God's blessings are there, just like we find in Lamentations chapter three: **"The LORD's mercy. We were not completely wiped out. His compassion is never limited. It is new every morning. His faithfulness is great"** DHH. Take a look at yourself! Many people who face the valley of shadow and death find themselves with their vision clouded by alcohol, drugs, bitterness, without being able to perceive how God has sustained their lives, how He has provided peace in the storm.

Basically, in beginning a new year are we ready to share the blessings we receive from God in our lives? Remember: **"...It is new every morning. His faithfulness is great,"** Personally after experiencing this I make an effort so that my family, church members, and friends take the time to recognize their blessings. Let me share some of the ways in which I accomplish this. They can be used at home, church, or with friends.

Counting blessings. Take a large jar with its lid. Place a sign on it that says: counting blessings. In can be placed anywhere in the home so that your family can place a blessing in the jar on a daily basis. At the end of each month, open the jar together and read the blessings you have received, then burn them. This same concept can be used at church. I have even created these count your blessing jars for my friends as a gift.

Fragrant scent. Gather 6 cinnamon sticks, tie them together. This will create a cinnamon stick bouquet that smells good. Then place this bouquet on a card with the following verse: "Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. **"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** Philippians 4:18-19. On the front cover of the card, write an invitation or a reminder to bring the end of the year offering. The idea can also be used for another special occasion.

Under His wings. Using Psalm 91:4 as a reference: **"He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings, you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler."** You can place this verse on a scarf or a blanket which will serve as a reminder during difficult times or as a form of gratitude during personal devotions. You can also use a blanket to imprint promises from God's word. The emphasis is made that this blanket or scarf represents the arms of Jesus and of our bond of friendship.

Cultivating our Faith. You can gift a small plant with an instruction card: Christ gave me a small seed of Faith, my will is the fertile soil, and the roots penetrated and broke habits in my life. My sister saw the flowers my plant had bloomed and also desired them, so I gave her a small branch that captured her soul. One day I found that due to my lack of attention, the leaves had dried, the fruits were dying, and a silence occupied the space my plant had taken. I went to my sister, and she gave me a small branch of triumph, just like the one I had given her. Then I realized that in Christ no

spiritual victory is permanent unless it is shared. (Beatriz G. De Delupí).

The meditation for this activity is the following. Facing a new year we are filled with encouragement and gratitude towards God. As the days pass and turn to months, we will face discouragement that will cause our faith to waver. Remember that you need friendships, ministry, and the church itself, where we can lift each other up and encourage one another to trust in God's promises. Remember, you can always count on friends and members of the church to encourage you in God's promises. See

1 Thessalonians 5:11: **"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing."**

It is possible that these gifts I share with you will go ignored, just like my diary was, but eventually, they may become a source of gratitude and personal reflection. Cherish them with affection and prayer so they may be useful in the lives of the people who receive them. May the Lord touch lives and hearts, holding forth his hands. Let us not forget, "Great is your faithfulness."

Today we are interviewing the wife of Pr. Derwis Antonio José, whose district is in the state of Oaxaca, Southern Mexico.

Professor, may you share with us a little bit of your background? Tell us about your family and your story?

Yes, with pleasure. My name is Virginia Jaimes Martinez. I have served as a teacher for nineteen years in Adventist schools. Currently, I teach Chemistry and Biology at Benito Juárez. I have two children that are studying at the University level: Itzel, who will soon be a preschool teacher and Derwin Abner, who recently began a Clinical Chemistry career at the University of Montemorelos.

I come from a family of generational Catholicism, but for some reason, my parents emigrated. My mother was a very devout Catholic and never permitted anyone to evangelize her, but my father was more sensitive. He died when I was nine years old, leaving my mother with six children.

I was thirteen when I discovered the Adventist faith and began attending a small church with my siblings. Fortunately, my mother was baptized soon after but was abandoned by her family upon becoming Adventist. We were very poor, so I had to go looking for opportunities

to study. This led me to discover the existence of an Adventist school located in another state, which I ended up attending. At the age of fourteen I gave my life to the Lord, and shortly after went to complete my High School education at Linda Vista, a beautiful place that gave me the opportunity to develop leadership skills in many areas. I have always worked and canvassed to be able to pay for my education, but having met Jesus changed my life. Upon completing High School, I went to Montemorelos. I met the love of my life there, my husband Derwis.

Can you share with us that crucial moment when you felt the call from God to ministry?

To be honest, accepting the call to ministry was not easy for me. Many times I tried to avoid the responsibility; I felt incapable and I was afraid of not being the person God needed me to be. I would insist that I was not the right person to marry a student of theology and kept asking God to let it be made obvious, but the more I did so, the more God showed me that Derwis was the man He had chosen for me. After two and half years of courtship, I became convinced. I felt that God desired us to be together and since he was preparing to become a pastor, I too should prepare myself for ministry.

Did you ever doubt at any moment that this was the plan for your lives?

Yes. I experienced doubt and broke off our relationship a year before he was to complete his education. The moment I felt he was going to ask for my hand in marriage, I broke up with him and told him he needed to find someone else: Someone who would actually help him because I was not the right person for him. I told him that if in one year he had not found that person, to come looking for me and see if I was still available (It was a test... a very painful one for me, since I really was in love, but I needed to know he was sure of me). I consistently asked God to help me understand His plans for my life. If Darwin was the man for me, then God would have to keep him for me, if not then he would have to take my love for him out of my heart. Truthfully, I was scared of losing him! But I had to be sure that God was including me in the plans He had for Darwin.

Well, I won't get into details, but God continued guiding our lives. Some time after we got back together without even having to say: "Let's date again," we began planning our wedding...and here we are, happily married.

What has been the greatest blessing that God has given you in ministry?

**“I HAVE GAINED
more than
EXPECTED”**

AN INTERVIEW WITH A PASTOR'S WIFE

Happily serving the church in different areas through the past 22 years alongside my husband, watching my children grow and embrace the same love for the gospel that we have.

Could you share with us some of the toughest challenges you've faced in ministry?

When we were first beginning our career in ministry, we experienced a rough patch. We had our newborn baby and we struggled financially for even basic items: Milk, diapers, food. It hurt me to watch my husband suffer because of our situation. Our pantry and refrigerator eventually became completely empty. Our last meal was just a plate of rice.

I recall my husband telling me with sadness, "Love, this is not what I planned for you, or for my daughter, I am so sorry." I remember us praying together asking for God's protection. Nobody was aware of what we were going through, it was between God and us. My husband left for work one day with a group of men, it was during the period of collection of donations. I remained home by myself all day with my daughter. When he returned later that afternoon, while counting the donations with the group, someone knocked on our door. It was sister Adriana, who greeted him and said, "Pastor, is your

wife at home? ---Yes, sister--he replied, --come in, she is in the kitchen.

-Sister-she began telling me--I went grocery shopping today and an emergency came up that requires me to leave town, would it bother you if I give you my groceries? I just don't have anyone to give all the food to since my mom already did her shopping too. I replied by letting her know that it was okay with me if she gave them to us. She went home and when she returned, my eyes could not believe that I was seeing. Tons of fruit, vegetables, seeds, soap, milk, cheese, butter, sugar, salt, rice, beans, everything we could possibly need for the entire month. God performed a miracle that day, confirming that He would never abandon me.

What was your secret to overcoming this difficult time?

By clinging to God with all our hearts and trusting in His promises. Staying united despite the circumstances. Praying constantly with the certainty that God is in control, even if we cannot understand everything at that moment.

Is there a specific book that has helped you during your ministry?

There is a lot of literature that became a precious treasure of education for me: The Adventist Home, Desire of Ages, The Virtuous Wife, Education, Child Guidance, Mind, character, and personality, Steps to Christ, and much more. Reading is my favorite hobby.

How have you handled adjusting to the pastoral family lifestyle?

It has not been easy, but I feel fortunate and I don't regret it. I am convinced that I've missed nothing by choosing to be a pastor's wife, to the contrary: I have gained more than I expected: a great family, the pastoral family.

How can a SIEMA support her children in the adaptation of this lifestyle?

I personally instilled in them the fact that they made up part of a team, and in a team, everyone helped so that their father could better serve the church because it is thanks to the church that we all eat, have clothes on our backs, and shoes. Everything we have is thanks to the church that we serve. I insisted that many would love to have this privilege, but God chose us, therefore, we must concentrate on the blessings that we receive.

What advice would you give a pastor's wife who is starting out in ministry?

Friend, it is a privilege to serve. When God calls, He qualifies us. You are not perfect, but what you can do, do it with all your heart. God always rewards our effort.

When you have your children they will be the reflection of what you teach them. Never complain in front of them. Don't speak negatively about ministry because criticism can poison their lives. Speak to them about the blessings of pastoral ministry, your passion for service and your longing for heaven.

Support your husband. You know him better than anyone and you are the closest person to him. Pray for him and pray together. Strive to keep the faith, for our primary goal is heaven.

Lic. Thelma Park de Reyna
Shepherdess Director for the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union.

FIELD ACTIVITIES

Puerto Rican Union

Our first Ministerial Retreat



We celebrated our first Ministerial Retreat from January 15th, 2016 to the 17th, 2016 in the small and welcoming town of Guayanilla, located in the South of Puerto Rico. We had the pleasure of hosting forty-nine pastoral couples, who have served anywhere from one to fifteen years in Ministry. The main theme was, "Transform me." Special guest speakers included Pr. Gerson Do Santos, who was accompanied by his wife, Laila, from the General Conference, and the productive power couple Pr. Pedro and Cecilia Iglesias, both who serve as Directors for Family Ministries in the Inter-American Division. The event greatly motivated not only the pastoral couples but also the Administrators of the Puerto Rican Union who were blessing us with their unconditional support. We would like to give special recognition to **Pr. Jaime Blanco, the current Ministerial Secretary for the Puerto Rican Union.**

We are grateful to God for such a wonderful experience!





The Shepherdess spiritual



From March 4th through the 6th, 2016, the Shepherdess spiritual retreat was held at Eastern Puerto Rican Conference's Adventist Camp Yuquibo. The theme was: "Living stones in the hands of Jesus." We were blessed with the presence of Pr. Pedro Iglesias and his wonderful wife, Cecilia, from the Inter-American Division. We were also accompanied by Dr. Miriam Hernández and Hipólita García, a psychologist. Together we experienced a unique camaraderie and felt God's presence in our lives. We concluded the retreat with a ceremony giving special recognition to the wives of our retired pastors: Sixta García Agrinoni, Rosa Rodríguez Vda. de Molina, Lucy Rivera, Ita M. Sanguinetti, Zulma Torres, Eva Escobar Vda. de Medina, Antonia Guzmán, Miriam Hernández y Lydia Cruz.

Bélgica Maldonado, Shepherdess Director for the Eastern Puerto Rican Conference.



ACTIVIDADES DEL TERRITORIO

Honduran Union

In April of this year, the pastor's wives from the Honduras Atlantic Conference, enjoyed a pleasant retreat in the diaphanous environment of the island, Útila. It was a retreat full of warmth, spirituality, and unforgettable moments.

In the month of March, a beautiful meeting was carried out for the pastor's wives from the Comayagua Conference, Honduras. The event aimed to train our dear sisters and strengthen our bond of friendship. We thank our Heavenly Father for such delightful moments!



1. The pastor's wives



2. meeting was carried out for the pastor's wives

The Northern Mexican Union.



In the Northern Mexican Union, we had a virtual meeting with all the pastor's wives from our territory. The topic of importance for our meeting was: "Preparing our children to leave the nest", due to the infrequent preparation of parents and children when the time comes for them to leave home.

We also recorded a lecture for Continuing Education to post on the SIEMA Union's web page. The special guest speaker for these events was our sister Cecilia Iglesias, SIEMA Director for the Inter-American Division. We thank God for the knowledge we acquired.

