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# CONTENT

## Dear friend

**03** New Year, new opportunities

## He and I

**04** Abigail

## My little flock

**06** We are parents, and now what's next?

## You will be my witnesses

**08** You are the light of the world

## To your health

**10** A perspective of temperance for ministerial families

## Testimonials

**12** I will sing to Jehovah

**14** God still speaks

## Between us

**16** God fulfills

## What a good idea

**18** Look in the right direction

## Laugh heartily

**20** Do what you think you should

## Our news

**21** Central Mexican Union  
Interoceanic Mexican Union

03



04



06



08



10



10



18



18



20



21





# Dear Friend, NEW YEAR, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Is it not true that certain phrases are capable of filling our hearts with hope? Happy New Year, is one of them. It's a phrase filled with joy that is typically used at the beginning of a new year. Upon hearing it, precious memories are evoked. I recall the welcoming of the new year at church and the celebrations at home. My mind remembers all the traditional meals, prepared with the best seasoning, but more importantly, with love for the family. Personally, I have tried to keep these memorable traditions alive in my home. They are like a treasure.

Curiously, throughout the years, other traditions have been added. When I got married, an ingredient was added; my Father-in-law, a pastor with a lot of experience who taught his children to initiate the year with the family gathered together giving thanks for all the good things God had given. The occasion also served as an opportunity to pray for the challenges the new year would bring and to ask for a blessing for our new year goals.

Since the first time I attended this new year gathering, the fact that the holiday was not just about celebrating stayed imprinted in my mind. It's a time to give thanks, and focus on the doors of opportunity that God will open in the coming year. These activities foster a firm conviction of Divine direction from the past and the confidence of His presence in the new year.

New opportunities. A topic in which our heavenly Father is a specialist, and although we can find a numerous amount of Biblical examples that could illustrate this, I would like to review some lessons from my favorite Bible character, Rahab, with you. While clinging to God's hand, she found joy in the new opportunities of her life. Let us read from scripture:

**1. "Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim.** "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there...(But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)" (Joshua 2: 1, 6).

Rahab is aware of her limits, but this condition impedes her from being of service. She allows God to use her, despite risking her life. God does not expect us to be completely perfect and mature in our faith. He will use us if we are willing and we will see the extraordinary become a reality for our own benefit and that of others.

**2. "When we heard of it,** our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below." (Joshua 2:11).

By faith Rahab did the impossible and she allowed herself to dream of a powerful God. Our situation doesn't matter, our troubles, wherever we are or whoever we are; in beginning this new year we are invited to take a simple step of faith. God is the one who transforms and fulfills our dreams. As His chosen daughters; enabled to be pastors wives by His grace, let us move forward confiding in His omnipotence.

**3. "Now then, please swear to me by the LORD** that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign... that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death." (Joshua 2: 12, 13).

Rahab intercedes for her own life and that of her loved ones. She believes that God will save, not only her, but also her family. Dear friend, God does not only desire to make your dreams come true, and give you new opportunities, but he also determined to save your family. Together He wants you to reach your individual and collective goals, so that as a family you may make it to heaven.

**4. "Salmon the father of Boaz,** whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse..." (Matthew 1: 5).

By grace Rahab received more than she ever dreamed of. God saved her life and that of her family, she was accepted into God's kingdom, she married Solomon, and ends up becoming an ancestor of Jesus. We can find her in the heroines and heroes of faith list.

Dear friends, in this new year I invite you, just like Rahab, to take ownership of the promises of a powerful God; who is willing to help us reach our goals. He will fight for us, because we are incapable. He will strengthen our faith, so we can take the leap and make that decision. He will unite our families to save them. He definitely will grant us more than we could have imagined. Happy New Year!

*Cecilia Iglesias*





# Abigail

**Ptr. Adán Ramos**  
*President of the Honduran Union*

She was a woman of strong character and intelligence. Her name, Abigail, means: **"My father is joy or father of joy"** (2 ABC, pg. 574). Everything we know about her is summarized in 1 Samuel, chapter twenty five. Despite the brevity of her story, her wisdom, sensitivity, and determination are displayed. She also demonstrated great interpersonal skills and patience that is worthy of imitation. Glimpses that invite us to stop and reflect on her story.

Samuel, the last judge of Israel, had died; following his burial, David and his men went into the desert. Nabal, Abigail's husband, was a man of wealth who had his own sheep and goat business. The name Nabal literally means, "fool, senseless" (2 ABC, Pg. 574). The Bible tells us that he was a "man who was surly and mean in his dealing." However, Abigail, his wife, is pointed out as being intelligent and beautiful. What a contrast! It is like seeing a princess married to a fool or a young Christian woman married to an unbeliever. Although, if Nabal married Abigail, he must have not been so foolish after all.

Nabal was in Carmel fleecing his sheep. David had cared for Nabal's sheep for three weeks. In those days, it was customary to compensate a person caring for sheep. David sent his men to collect the amount of compensation he deserved. Nabal, despite having accepted the help, not only denied David his payment, but also insulted him and his men; staining his family's honor and refusing to help them (1 Samuel 25:10-11). David became enraged and set out to Nabal's home with his army to settle the score.

One of Nabal's servants saw what had occurred and went to Abigail, seeking advice regarding the situation and intervention within what was possible on her behalf. What would you have done if you were in Abigail's position? Would you have packed your things and run away from there? Note the wisdom that proceeded from her.

Without her husband's consent and with the help of some of the servants, Abigail gathered a large amount of food and supplies to appease David's wrath, she knew David wanted revenge for the insult received. She herself went to find David and his battalion.



She found him in a location protected by a hill and did the following: "When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say" (1 Samuel 25:23-24).

Abigail addressed David with respect, honoring him and treating him with deference. She presented her situation eloquently and successfully. She made no excuses for her husband's foolishness ("He is foolish and senseless, like his name describes"), Abigail pleaded for Nabal's life, and asked David to pay no mind to Nabal's behavior. She gave evidence of not only her wisdom, but also being pious. Abigail addressed David with the same level of reverence one would use to speak to a crowned monarch. Nabal had contemptuously exclaimed, "Who is David?" but Abigail called him, "My Lord." With kind-hearted words, she calmed David's ire, and implored on behalf of her husband.

Her words healed the hurting and pained heart of David. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"* (Matthew 5:9). If only there were more people like this woman from Israel, who could soothe the irritated emotions and suffocate reckless impulses, avoiding great wrongdoings through words managed correctly and infused with wisdom.

When Abigail returned home, she found Nabal and some guests enjoying themselves in a large party. She did not share with Nabal what had happened in her encounter with David until the following morning. Deep down inside, Nabal was a coward; when he realized how close to death his foolishness had taken him and fearful of David wanting to

follow through with his plan of seeking vengeance, Nabal became filled with terror and paralyzed. "About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died." (1 Samuel 25:38).

## ¿WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ABIGAIL'S STORY?

**1. That the differences between a husband and wife** doesn't mean that a marriage should end in divorce. How many have rushed into a marriage, only to separate months or years later? Why? Why can't they reconcile their differences? The rate of divorce is increasing among Christian marriages, including within families in ministry.

Why? Because the majority are not willing to work hard so that their marriage may function well. If anyone was in a relationship that deserved to end in divorce, it was Abigail. Regardless, she stayed married and gave her very best to try to ensure her marriage would work. Do you want to have a successful marriage? Don't give up.

**2. The main role of a wife is to support her husband.** This is what the Bible teaches, a mutual support. This has nothing to do with feminism or being sexist. This is what Abigail did when she put her life at risk to meet with David. When you said, "I do" to your husband, you accepted the responsibility of helping him and lifting him up. God created you to be your husband's helpmate. He needs you; without you he is incomplete. If there ever was a woman who had the perfect excuse to not support her husband, it was Abigail. All she did was give, while Nabal only received. This was Abigail's chance to get rid of him. She could have told David: -David, I do not agree with anything Nabal does. Please, don't hold this against me. I brought you food and supplies; forgive me, and do what you wish with him. Alleviate me from my misery. But she decided to support her husband, she helped him, even though he did not deserve it. Loving and respecting someone who treats us well is easy, but loving and respecting a person that doesn't treat us well is difficult, if not complex. Do you want to save your marriage? Exercise grace and mercy on a daily basis. There are men that find success because of their wives, others find it without them, but there are still others who succeed, "despite their wives." Which one of these situations do you identify with?

**3. A husband's principle responsibility is loving his wife:** *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."* (Ephesians 5:25, 28). "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3:7). Husband, how are you treating your wife? As a spouse, mother, homemaker or servant? Many wives suffer because of their husbands bad choices.

God can work in your life, even amidst difficult situations. Without a doubt, Abigail had a strong relationship with God; she used it as a support system to survive in her marriage. We should follow Abigail's example. We should use our relationship with God as means to overcome our daily struggles. *"In Abigail's character; who was Nabal's wife, we find an example of a woman in Christ; while her husband illustrates what can happen to a man when he enters Satan's domain."* (2 ABC, Pg. 1016).



# WE ARE PARENTS, AND NOW, WHAT FOLLOWS?

**Shirley Chacón de Casiá**

*Educator, married to Pedro Casiá, ministerial secretary of the Western Association of Guatemala, and mother of two children (Pedro Luis and Abigail)*

When talking about the education of children, each parent has much to contribute because of the richness of the experiences and also the learning that is acquired during their growth. Children are like a school where parents can learn in a personalized way. It is true that someone can tell you how to do things or what to say, but you yourself eventually chooses and structures its own methodology.

**I recently had the pleasure of teaching a parenting school at an Institute for Young Teens. It was very enriching for me because when I shared my knowledge with the group of parents and children, I learned a lot about them and their experiences.**

“It is not easy to educate a son” - a father of a family said to me, “I have done everything humanly possible and I feel that I still have a lot to learn.” I gave the reason, the education of our children never ends and it is also complex. Therefore we must carry it out of the hand of God so we can know what to do or say in the appropriate circumstance.

My mother always said to me: “Shirley behave well, remember that one day you will be a mom and you will know how difficult this task is.” I, for my part, always said to her: - “Mommy, when I have my children I will not make the same mistakes as you, ah! And I will not be as tolerant as you are with my brothers. “ I never

thought I'd have to “swallow” those words someday. Today that I am already the mother of two teenage children, I realize that in the words of my mother there was much wisdom.

It is important to recognize that each child has the ability to reason and choose between good and bad. Although the training we give them is the best, in the end they will choose their path. Of course, everything that we sow in them, sooner or later will bear fruit. The wise man Solomon illustrates in this sense when he says: “Train the child in his way, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22: 6). Thank God for such a wonderful promise that it is a safeguard for those who have been instructed in the knowledge of God.

In the times we live, our children, rather than scolding, need to be listened to, loved and feel that they are important both to God and to their parents. Let them see in us not only a mother, but also a friend in whom to trust and relieve their sorrows and sadness. Keep an honest friendship, listen to it and value it for what it is. Remember that wars are won by making friends with enemies. And the best way to educate our children and correct those choices that might be harmful to them (TV programs, video games, vocabulary and even friendships) is to get to know them well. We should not criticize them or attack them at first, but rather, confidently explain the dangers and consequences that life can bring them. A negative action causes unwanted behavior and a positive action causes a desired behavior.

**I want to share with you 12 principles that I have put into practice and that have helped me a lot in the education of my children.** While it is true that I have not done everything perfectly, I have seen good results. You have probably already apply them and you will know with certainty of what I am speaking:

**Principle # 1 Grow in the fear of Jehovah:** Each morning it is important that they know more of God through personal worship before performing their daily tasks, so that when they go to the “battlefield” they can



be protected by the Spirit of God.

**Principle # 2 Prayer:** How wonderful it is to pray each morning for our children, to deliver them into the hands of our good God, but even more so when we pray with them and experience how much we care about their lives.

**Principle # 3 Wise and simple advice:** When advising your children, do it simply, as if it were for yourself: short, practical, without so many rules, clear and to the point. Our children sometimes bother to hear so many sermons that in the long run only annoy them and encourage rebellion.

**Principle # 4 Tell them each day how much God loves them:** Before my children leave home, I say the following phrases "May God be with you and bless you so much". For them, those words are a blessing and whenever they say goodbye to me to go to school, they wait for them. Although simple and small, they have great value.

**Principle # 5 Remember that your children are not perfect:** Never forget that God gave us the ability to choose. There are no perfect human beings. Perfect God alone. Your child may be wrong; If you do, be there to help him, not to criticize or question him. Love begets love, do not forget it.

**Principle # 6 Respect.** There is no doubt that trust is important in the good education of our children, however they must understand that abuse of the same can bring problems. Respect is an important factor in good relationships. Not only to God but also to parents, siblings, family, neighbors and friends.

**Principle # 7 Listen to them:** Do not let the chores of life take away the opportunity to spend time with your children to listen to them. Remember that they trust you and there will be times when they want to be heard, so when you ask for it, leave what you are doing for a moment and take time to listen and advise them. They will thank you.

**Principle # 7 Show them your love:** Sweet words are like a spring to the soul. Those small phrases like "I love you", "you look good", "you're smart", "I thank God for having you as my son", and "you can", among others, impact in such a way in the life of Our children and will keep them away from feelings of inferiority or mediocrity and let them know how

important and valuable they are to us.

**Principle # 8 Play with them:** Although there are many people who argue lack of time, there is always time for everything. Remember that you are the one who organizes your time, not time organizes you. So as much as possible, take time and go out and play with your kids on the grass, in the rain, on the football field. Play with dolls with your daughter or with carts with your son. Those little moments will be of great value and irreplaceable for your children.

**Principle # 9 Teach your children to be thankful for everything:** My husband and I are accustomed to take our children to a restaurant of their choice once a month and we always tell them that thanks to God and the fidelity of the brothers, Daddy has Money to bring them to this place.

It is also good that our children thank God every day for what they have and do not have. That they learn to live in abundance and in scarcity always, be grateful to God for their great and rich blessings

**Principle # 10 They learn to be independent as they grow up:** It has cost me a lot in this aspect. With my son I did not have many problems because from a very young age he learned to dress himself, to tie up his belts, to ask for things, and so on. However, with my baby this was not the case. We have taken care of her so much for being a woman, that I found it difficult to teach her to be independent. That is why I think it is very important to let our children develop their independence. It is part of their present and future success.

**Principle # 11 Get to Know Your Child's Friends:** We must remember that our children's friends are a powerful influence on their physical and emotional development, so it is good that we know not only who our children's friends are but also what they usually do and what they do in their free time.

Personally, when my children ask me to go to a friend's house, I ask them to bring them home first. I like to know how they are and what they do, to be sure of who my children's friends are. Remember that "he who walks with bees, in more than a moment will be suck in honey.

**Principle # 12 Family worship:** Not being the last principle is less important. I believe it is essential and necessary that we seek God every morning and evening

as a family. Those little moments are basic for the formation of our children. May they also become involved in worship and contribute ideas and knowledge that enrich it. This will be a great blessing for our home and our future generations; Let us remember that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap."

The servant of the Lord, Ellen White, advises us: "In the home is where the child's education must begin. This one must be their first schooling. There with his parents, as teachers, he must learn the lessons that will guide him through life; Lessons of respect, obedience, reverence and self-control. The educational influences of the home are a decided power for good or for evil. They are, in many respects, silent and gradual, but if exercised in the right way they become a power to encompass truth and justice. If the child is not properly instructed in the home, Satan will educate him by instruments chosen by him. How important is the home school. "

Each home is different, each child is different, therefore, we must ask our heavenly Father to teach us to be consecrated parents and with good values. It is upon us, the parents, that the obligation is to make our children have a good physical, mental and spiritual education. Be careful that our children cultivate a balanced character. I know it is not an easy work, but on the contrary, it requires a lot of dedication and sacrifice, but unless we become strong and firm, the results will be adverse.

God is the source of life and wisdom and if we have problems in the education of our children we ask him to teach us how to do it. "If the Lord build not the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127: 1)

*"Children are the inheritance of God, the fruits of the womb are a reward" (Ps.127: 3).*





# YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!

The authors are the founders of the Gifts from God Foundation, which is based on Christian principles and values that foster the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their individual environment, family, and community, via the creation and implementation of projects, social, cultural, and recreational activities with the purpose of strengthening physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

***"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*** Matthew 5:14-16

When you work for someone with a disability with love and care, your light cannot be hidden. Even if you don't desire it, it becomes evident, it illuminates and dazzles. When I state that it dazzles, I mean that people become bewildered because they cannot fathom how you help them, serve them, care for them and their children. It is clear that, that light reaches the disabled and their family, but also illuminates the surrounding community. Serving in this manner can provide a practical understanding of Jesús love by a father or mother that may be consciously or unconsciously be upset with God, and can't understand the reason for their child's situation. It can bring a father who identified as an atheist to now want to praise God, our Creator, and lift Him up at home. This attitude can make a child or adolescent with a disability feel loved, so loved that they may not want to separate themselves from you. They wouldn't want to let go of everything you represent. You are simply a reflection of God's love.

This has been my experience for the past six years. But my story started before this... In 2010, I found myself working as a teacher in an institution for youth with intellectual disabilities. On a certain occasion, the director commented on his desire for the youth to participate in some form of camp. Of course my mind was quickly thought of the pathfinder camping trips that our church took early. The director took the time to listen to my idea and finally agreed to authorize the youth to attend a camporee that would take place within our conference that year.

**I later asked God to please show me how I could physically take these young people to this camp, since the majority of them came from humble homes with low income and few are the people that are willing (Due to fear or the unknown) to work with this population. I spoke with my sister (Who also is a teacher in this area and pastor's wife) and together, with God's guidance, we began looking for ideas, the finances, and some volunteers to take the kids.**

On my part, I spoke with the parents that desired to send their children and nine young people with mental disabilities and other conditions, that year they attended the camporee. We were like a Pathfinder unit and the Club welcomed us with enthusiasm and love. However, this unit was not composed of only youth with disabilities, there were also other young people there without a disability that had joined us in this project. We called our unit, **GIFTS FROM GOD.**

There were so many unforgettable experiences during that first camporee! It's true that we did encounter a number of inappropriate comments and behavior, as well as discrimination on behalf of some of the other youth and even leaders from some of the clubs. Thank God this was not the attitude of the majority. There were youth and leaders that showed themselves to be open to fellowship with our kids and include them in conversation, games, pictures, and more.

A few days after the camporee, the positive comments came flooding in from the parents who allowed their children to participate in this experience. They mentioned that their kids had come back, "changed," full of energy, happy, and excited with new friends who they communicated with throughout their days. Many times, when they would be walking with their kids through the streets, or on public transportation, the kids would greet strangers with a lot of love; the parents would ask their kids who those people were, the youth would respond, "friends from camp."



The camporee was the first step for these families to see that a community exists that accepts them as they are, without wanting to change them, or seeking personal gain. They began to see the first glimpses of Jesus. The parents could not understand how people had spent an entire week with their children without charging them; just to give these young kids another experience and share their activities with them.

This information began spreading throughout the institution like water being poured out. Other parents began to become interested in letting their kids also participate in these activities. Since the enthusiasm was so great, we did not want to just leave things as they were, but decided on following up with the inquiries by initiating our own Pathfinder Club meetings. The following year, we attended the camporee as our own club, Gifts from God. We had twenty-two young people enrolled in our club, among them were some fully functioning and some disabled. We also had more kids that wanted to attend, but for one reason or another could not.

Till this day, **the Gifts from God club** has continued to meet without any interruptions and has also participated in every camporee that is programmed. Two young people have been baptized: A girl and a disabled young person. Additionally, although the majority don't belong to an Adventist church, they enjoy participating every year in the Adventist Youth activities that are planned by our conference, alongside the parents. They also attend a small group that we have in our homes with these families, they organize seminars that promote awareness for the integration of disabled church members, as well as many other activities.

Currently the club has five volunteers that form part of the board and it's important to mention that none of them

are "experts" in special education. however, they have big hearts filled with God's love, a positive attitude towards disabilities, and a whole lot of desire to serve. This is all God asks of us in order to accomplish great miracles.

In 2015, the first UVO Conference for Special Needs Ministries took place, and our **club, Gifts from God** was present. It truly was a blessing for our club and each participating leader at this event. The leaders that attended realized that accepting someone with a disability in our churches does not consist of a choice, but in reality it is obeying a Divine mandate. The most beautiful part of it is, when meeting a family that has someone with a disability, we don't need to be experts in that area. We are only required to have Jesus in our lives, He will "equip us", prepare us, and enable us for all good works. 2 Timothy 3:17.

During this time a desire to work with the families in our church and communities near the church who had a disabled family member arose. So a First Encounter was planned and executed for the families of the boys, girls, youth, and adults with disabilities. It is important to note that this reunion has occurred for three consecutive years. The objective is to provide support to these families via topics of interest: Motivational, Spiritual, Health related, and social activities designed for the disabled. Like the Stands tales exposition with: Massages, information for assistance and guidance, occupational therapy exercises, as well as the Stands exposition related to the 8 natural remedies and their benefits for the disabled; free medical assistance in diverse areas, and legal advice.

The first two encounters were planned by SIEMA, the Caracas chapter, who were the hosts for the event. It resulted in an extraordinary experience of growth for all the pastors wives who participated. They all understood that those who have a disability possess gifts and abilities to share, derived precisely from their life experiences. These practical experiences have become opportunities for learning and acquisition of spiritual maturity for the community in general and especially for our church.

**The Gifts from God club is not only a pathfinder club now, we have become the Gifts from God Foundation that is based on Christian principles and values that foster inclusion for people with disabilities in their own personal environment, family, and community via the creation and execution of projects and social, cultural, and recreational activities with the purpose of strengthening physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth. The third encounter for families, boys, girls, youth, and adults with disabilities was organized by our foundation.**

Looking back, I see how God has lead through all of this and I can only express words of gratitude to Him, and each person that has allowed themselves to be used by the Holy Spirit to make this a reality. Jesus' instruction is clear. The gospel can be shared to the world by anyone. You and I are called to share it. Let us not lose the opportunity to reflect God's love to every human being, no matter their condition.

**Tatiana Ruiz de Manrique y Rocío Ruiz de Chacón;**

*TTatiana and Rocío are both pastors wives in Caracas, Venezuela. They are also both Special Education teachers who work with the Mentally Retarded.*



# A PERSPECTIVE

## ON TEMPERANCE FOR FAMILIES IN MINISTRY

In the cosmic conflict waged in this world, all who have been called to work for God in service of others, should consider the immense importance of our collaboration in the commission. Human history has shown that the Lord is concerned with ensuring that His people don't forget His ordinances, His will, and the importance they bear in successfully resisting the devil. For this reason, God has repeated on numerous occasions the essential messages for our well-being and specifically a very important topic in which we will discuss today: Temperance.

**To God, our worth is immeasurable and He desires** that we be examples for those among us. This is why in the Holy Bible we find the following text: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face

those who hate him. Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today. If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land—your grain, new wine and olive oil—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor will any of your livestock be without young. The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you." (Deut. 7:6-15)

**This portion of the Bible expresses God's will and desire for His children. I am sure that you, who are reading this today, have heard of the importance of temperance more than 5 times in your life, but possibly it was not enough. Just like you, many of us need to take this important issue more seriously in order to have a successful Christian life.**

Sister Ellen G. White states: "I feel distressed as I look upon our people and know that they are holding very loosely the temperance question. It has been a mystery to me how any of our people with all the light they have had, could manufacture and sell cider. From the light God has given me, every member among us

should sign the pledge and be connected with the temperance association." —The Review and Herald, October 21, 1884

As a special people we have been confided the responsibility of making the message of health reform known. There are those who believe that diet is not of significant importance to include it as part of their duties, but are committing a grave error. The Word of God states: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. The topic of temperance, in every aspect, has an important place in the work of salvation. —Testimonies for the Church 9:112.

God has called us to His service with great expectations for our lives and He expects from each one of us that we use a hundred percent of our abilities, therefore, we should cooperate with Him in caring for our bodies and faculties in the same manner. When we let ourselves go with respect to our health, we are going against God's will. "We must strive lawfully, if we would win the boon of eternal life. The path is wide enough, and all who run the race may win the prize. If we create unnatural appetites, and indulge them in any degree, we violate nature's laws, and enfeebled physical, mental, and moral conditions will result. We are hence unfitted for that persevering, energetic, and hopeful effort which we might have made had we been true to nature's laws. If we injure a single organ of the body, we rob God of the service we might render to him. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost



which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's". — The Review and Herald, October, 18, 1881.

Many take comfort in that not eating meat, drinking soda, quitting sugar, and so on, will not save us, which is true, but sadly many of us are becoming prematurely ill. If we wish for this not to happen, it is necessary that you stop being complacent with your perverted appetite, and stop eating sugar, salt, fats, and many other foods.

Some of us are ignoring their overweight bodies, which is a detonator for a numerous amount of illnesses. As a consequence of these bad habits and carelessness in regards to our health, we are not only damaging the one body we have, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), but all of our being and putting our salvation and happiness at risk. Sister Ellen G. White states: "The body is the only medium through which the mind and soul are developed for the edification of our character. This is where our adversary seeks to tempt our debilitated and degraded physical faculties. His success in this relies on the succession of evil for all our being. Unless you are under the protection of a higher power, the propensities of our physical nature will certainly lead to ruin and death." — [Te 91.4] Sadly, a leader that does not consider this an important issue, loses all moral influence on those he leads to be careful and stay away from practices that affect their health and giving themselves up entirely to become vulnerable to the enemy's attacks.

It's easy to be shocked at the vices and bad habits of those who don't know the gospel of Christ, but surely, without realizing it, we are partaking of something just as bad, if not worse. "What man would, for any sum of money, deliberately sell his mental capabilities? Should one offer him money if he would part with his intellect, he would turn with disgust from the insane suggestion. Yet thousands are parting with health of body, vigor of intellect, and elevation of soul, for the sake of gratifying appetite. Instead of gain, they experience only loss. This they do not realize because of their benumbed sensibilities. They have bartered away their God-given faculties. And for what? Answer. Groveling sensualities and degrading vices. The gratification of taste is indulged at the cost of health and intellect. —The Review

and Herald, March 4, 1875." — [RH March 4, 1875, par. 10]

It sounds frightening and like an exaggeration, but the enemy wants us to give little importance to this topic, so that every time we wish to practice temperance in our eating habits and actions, we will fail. He wants us to believe that it is only phantasy or fanaticism; since it would motivate us to give up every time we fail. Sadly, many times we attempt to accomplish this on our own and believe ourselves to be self-sufficient, we don't seek help, but Jesus invites us to count on Him, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

**It is possible to practice temperance when we allow God's grace to become a living principle within our hearts.... "Circumstances cannot work reforms. Christianity proposes a reformation in the heart. What Christ works within, will be worked out under the dictation of a converted intellect. The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed."—Counsels on Diet and Foods page 35**

On our knees is where we can win our greatest battles. Let us call upon the divine assistance, so that we can obtain a true change and our willpower be enabled. Then we will be able to change our harmful habits for other ones that promote our well-being. It is good for us to seek guidance from experts in the health field and temperance if we are new to this topic, so that the changes we accomplish be gradual and not cause complications, as well as adapted to our needs and physical requirements. Let us instruct ourselves on this important topic with various books and especially with the light that God gave us through such literature as: Temperance, Counsels on Diet and Foods, Healthy Body, among others.

"There is need now of people like Daniel—men and women who have the self-denial and the courage to be radical temperance reformers. Let every Christian see that his or her example and influence are on the side of reform. Let ministers of the gospel be faithful in instructing and warning the people. And let all remember that our happiness in two worlds depends upon the right improvement of one."—The Signs of the Times, February 11, 1886. (To Be Like Jesus, June 14)

"Thousands upon thousands know little of

the wonderful body God has given them or of the care it should receive; and they consider it of more importance to study subjects of far less consequence. The ministers have a work to do here. When they take a right position on this subject, much will be gained. In their own lives and homes they should obey the laws of life, practicing right principles and living healthfully. Then they will be able to speak correctly on this subject, leading the people higher and still higher in the work of reform. Living in the light themselves, they can bear a message of great value to those who are in need of just such a testimony." Counsels on Diet and Foods Page 452

"There are precious blessings and a rich experience to be gained if ministers will combine the presentation of the health question with all their labors in the churches. The people must have the light on health reform. This work has been neglected, and many are ready to die because they need the light which they ought to have and must have before they will give up selfish indulgence." Counsels on Diet and Foods Page 452

**"The presidents of our conferences need to realize that it is high time they were placing themselves on the rightside of this question. Ministers and teachers are to give to others the light they have received. Their work in every line is needed. God will help them; He will strengthen His servants who stand firmly, and will not be swayed from truth and righteousness in order to accommodate self-indulgence." Counsels on Diet and Foods page 452-453**

As families in ministry, may our daily prayer be: Lord, transform me, I want to live a healthy life. I want to be an example for my family, neighbors, church, and everyone who I come in contact with. Abstaining from that which harms me, being cautious and balancing the good with moderation.



**Adriana Patricia García** is a Nutritionist, pastor's wife, and mother to two children. She writes to us from the Central Mexican Union.

# I WILL SING THE *Lord's Praise*

*"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me." (Psalm 13: 5,6)*

**Dámaris de Figueroa**, Departamental for  
MIA/Women's Ministry in AVCO

One night, while reading before bed, as is our custom, I heard my husband say: "I want to have an endoscopy and colonoscopy done." With a surprised look, I exclaimed: "Why do you want to have those tests done? Do you feel bad? Are you sick?" His response was to tell me no, he only felt the need to have these analyses done.

In the 23 years we have been married I have never seen my husband sick, he's never had a cough or cold. Additionally, we had reformed our eating habits for the past several years, so it was alarming for me to hear my husband want to have these medical exams run on him, since they are uncomfortable to get done.

It was Wednesday June the 4th when we drove to the Adventist clinic in the city of Barquisimeto, Venezuela. We obtained the medical scripts for the exams, and on Friday June 6th we were at the gastroenterologist's clinic. What happened next was a complete shock. In less than 30 minutes our lives changed, I couldn't understand what I was hearing! The doctor diagnosed my husband with a cancerous tumor about 5 centimeters in diameter and with infiltrations (metastasis) in my husband's colon.

My world was paralyzed for a moment and so many questions came to my mind, what do I do now? What's going to happen? Why my husband? The doctor brought me back to reality by asking, "Ma'am are you comprehending what I am telling you?" As I tried to organize my thoughts, I heard the doctor tell me, "Your husband has a very aggressive form of colon cancer. He must be operated on as soon as possible, if you want him to have more time." I asked, "How much time are we talking about?" He replied very coldly, **"It's an aggressive cancer, we can't say for certain, but he might have five months."** My life felt like it was crumbling at the news of this tumor. My husband was able to hear everything, but due to the sedation from the procedures, he remained calm. We left the clinic and went home.

That Friday afternoon I cried, I only paused to ask God, "Why us?" My husband woke up from his sedated state in time to receive the Sabbath. I asked him, what were we to do now? He answered, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." "Let's pray!" We knelt down and placed my husband's life in the hands of our Creator. After praying, God led us to seek out our family doctor, Dr. Leo Acosta, who upon hearing the news, shared some words with us that renewed my sense of peace and security. "Stay calm, put this in God's hands, everything else will fall into place."

On June 24th, my husband had surgery, it lasted three hours, and served as a great testimony to the group of doctors and nurses who witnessed the evidence of our God's greatness, power, and mercy.

When the doctor's inspected his colon prior to removal of the tumor, they did not find it! After a meticulous search, the pathologist said in an astonished tone, "There is no





cancer here. There is only a millimeter-long irritation (An irritation in Oncological terms is a scar, a mark that signals that cancer was present, but no longer exists). The doctors cut 40 cm of colon as a preventative measure, and also to conduct in depth studies. That segment of colon was analyzed and examined for a month long period, resulting in the 2 mm irritation being only a scar that was located right where the cancer had been, but was no longer there. On the other hand, the infiltrations (metastasis) had disappeared. We were in the clinic for five days and on Sabbath he was discharged. We returned to our home with the orders for alternating weekly check-ups and appointments.

**They were five long months of coming and going to different doctors to get the necessary lab tests done and exams. Despite all this,** we knew that God was by our side and only He would give us the strength to move forward. Among the many treatments my husband received, the most difficult was the preventative radiation therapy, which were a total of 28 sessions of radiation. During these sessions we also exalted the name of God because my husband's immune system and skin maintained an optimal condition. The doctors and radiology technicians treating him were shocked because he was the only person that had received this prolonged and intense treatment and not developed burns on his skin or had problems with his immune system.

Once the radiation treatment was complete, he was sent to a specialist for preventative chemotherapy. The Oncologist, Carolina Gutiérrez, who ran another series of tests on him, told us, "Come prepared for the first session." We were there early so that we could be the first to receive attention, however, when the doctor arrived, instead of calling us in first, they called the second patient in, then the third, and continued to call them in this order. **We had been waiting to go in from 9:00am to 3:00pm!** We began to become concerned, since even though we had been the first in line, we still had not been called. My husband went to speak with the receptionist and asked her what was happening, why had they not called him in? The young woman told my husband that

something had come up in his test results. This brought me to tears and again I asked, "Lord, now what?" After a few minutes they called our name. Doctor Carolina was present and had a friendly expression as she began to speak to my husband, "Mr. Wilmer, your results have come back perfect. You don't need chemotherapy. **You do not have cancer, are you still on orders to rest?**" My husband replied with a yes. She then continued, "Go back to work, you don't have anything." That day was a joyous one filled with praises to our Lord. My heart wanted to burst out of my chest from happiness; my tears were now of joy and gratitude for such a great and powerful miracle to have occurred in our lives.

**Two years have passed since that crucible where we were forged and polished. My faith is now firm in God's power, in His promises, and mercy. Today, I praise the name of our Almighty God for having saved my husband from death and for the great privilege of being able to continue serving the Lord in His mission to save souls.**

Every day I give thanks to my Father for loving me with an infinite love. For this reason, Psalm 13:5 and 6 will always be present in my heart, with which I also encourage you:

"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me."





# GOD STILL SPEAKS

**Nancy Costa and her husband Robert** work at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists where she is an assistant in the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, and her husband, Robert, is associate in the Ministerial Department for Global Evangelism.

**ONE TIME IN MY LIFE STANDS OUT IN** my mind like no other. Only one phrase describes it: "It was the worst of times, it was the best of times."

My husband and I had just entered the ministry. In our early 20s and newly arrived in the United States from Argentina, we were new not only to the ministry, but also to the country and the people to whom we would be ministering. Although the members of our congregation spoke our language--Spanish--their accent and their customs were as difficult to understand as those of their English-speaking counterparts. To top it off, we were on a stipend salary, with only a couple suitcases to our name.

## OUR QUESTIONS, GOD'S ANSWERS

Not a week went by that I didn't question our decision to remain in the United States. We had felt God's hand leading us. My husband, Robert, had undergone minor surgery on his leg in South America, and what had promised to be an overnight hospital stay had turned into months of hospitalization. After his release, his leg was worse than before, except that now he was in constant pain. Once athletic and active, now Robert had no mobility in his foot, which was sensitive to the slightest touch.

A doctor in the United States had hinted he might be able to help, but we didn't have the funds to get here. Then, miraculously, a doctor from France we didn't even know sent us the money. Before we knew it, Robert was in the United States undergoing corrective surgery. This was followed by lengthy physical therapy. That's when the call came to stay in the U.S.

We prayed about it. We had jobs waiting

at home. Robert had been called as boys' dean and Bible teacher in River Plate College, and I to work in the administration office. But God's answer seemed to be "Stay"; God had work for us in this country. Robert had no doubts. It had always been his dream to live in the United States, and he felt God had opened the way. I, on the other hand, missed my family, my friends, and my way of life.

One Friday evening we were driving to visit a family with whom we had been studying the Bible. I wasn't feeling well, and I asked Robert to drop me off at the church, which was nearby. I would rest there and wait for him. I sat alone in the church for what seemed like hours. Alone with God and my thoughts, I told Him everything I was feeling. We had no money, no furniture, no family, no friends--not even a piano. I had grown up with music.

Right now in my parents' home, I thought, they are probably welcoming the Sabbath. How I missed those Friday evenings! Almost always we would sing around the piano before supper.

A tiny seed of rebellion had been growing in my heart, and now I lashed out at God. We were barely making ends meet. Our only car had broken down during the week, and we had to walk three miles along a dark highway to get home. We managed to pay for the repairs, but now we had no money until the end of the month--almost two weeks away.

"Lord," I said, "if I only had the assurance that You've led us here, that You wanted us to stay, I wouldn't mind the rest." I longed to hear God's voice, to hear from His very lips that we were meant to be here. I looked at the Bible next to me on

the bench and thought how I would love to read something written just for me. I didn't want standard promises about God leading and directing our paths. I wanted something personal.

I snatched up the Bible and said, "Lord, I need something personal!" I knew all the promises in the Bible, and I didn't feel any of them could speak to my need or give me the reassurance I needed that moment. I flipped it open defiantly, and my eyes fell on Psalm 45:10: **"Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house"** (NIV).

I sat in stunned silence; I felt God had spoken to me. He had not only spoken but had called me "daughter." Later--much later--when I searched for the text (it took me a while to find it again), I read the verses before and after, and they made no sense to me at all. God had guided me to the very text in the Bible I needed.

After that, nothing mattered; not the hardships, not the difficulties, not the trials. We were where God wanted us to be. We were still poor. We still had no furniture, no family, and no piano. But that was OK.

## DID I JUST PRAY FOR THAT?

**Well, let me rephrase that.** It was OK until I heard that a local radio station was going to give away a brand-new Baldwin piano. All I needed to do, they said, was send in a 3 x 5 card with my name and address on it. There would be a Christmas drawing, and there was a chance my name might be chosen.

I had never been exposed to a sweepstakes before and was a total innocent. I thought I had a shot at it, and confidently sent in my card. By this time I had found work as receptionist in a car dealership, and when I mentioned it to my coworkers, they smiled and set me straight about sweepstakes. I became anxious then. I wanted that piano like I'd never wanted anything in my life. It represented everything Robert and I didn't have. All the hardships we'd endured, all the trials and difficulties congealed in that one prize. I thought, If only I could have that piano, Lord; please, make it happen.



I made it a subject of prayer every day. I argued with God about the merits of my getting it over someone else who might not use it for His glory. "As a pastor's wife I need one, Lord!" I said. I knew that otherwise we wouldn't be able to afford a piano for years.

One night as I was praying--begging is a better word--the thought came to me. How was I planning to return tithe on such a valuable gift? I'd totally forgotten about that. The value of the piano was \$4,000. In the eighties that was a lot of money. For us, \$400 might just as well have been \$40,000. And there was our second tithe. We had pledged an additional 10 percent to God for several reasons. There were so many needs in the church we felt compelled to go the extra mile. Eight hundred dollars was out of the question. We wouldn't be able to do it.

My prayers changed. I no longer begged God. Instead, I told Him that if He wanted us to have that piano, He would have to provide the funds for the tithe. I felt peace then; the peace that had eluded me when I'd begged and pleaded. I still prayed about it every night, but I now left it in His hands, whatever the outcome.

## AN UNEXPECTED ANSWER

The day of the drawing, I took a small radio to work (I had to hear my name being called in order to win). My coworkers smiled indulgently and reminded me they'd been entering sweepstakes for years and had never won anything. Nevertheless, I was confident that God would perform a miracle.

As it turned out, many prizes were being given out that day, including a satellite dish, an electronic keyboard, and other small items. The odds that my name would be drawn were slim, less so for the grand prize--the piano. Every time a name was called, I'd hold my breath until I knew it wasn't my name.

Finally, around noon, the deejay announced that the mayor of the city had arrived to draw the name for the grand prize. There was a pause, and then he read a name. It wasn't mine. I sat there totally deflated. I'd

been so sure. Then I felt ashamed. What right had I had to ask God for such a gift? Weren't there more pressing needs in the world? There were hungry children in Somalia, wars, disease--and here I was, asking for a piano! What presumption! "Lord, forgive me," I said. "Forgive my presumption."

I reached over to turn off the radio, and stopped. "The winner has failed to call in," said the announcer, "so we'll draw another name." After a brief pause he said, "The person who lives in 420D North Main is our new winner."

That's my address! I thought. Could someone else possibly have the same address? "Nancy Costa, you have five minutes to call the radio station," he continued.

I had written the number down, but I was having difficulty dialing it. My hand shook so much I couldn't make my finger land on the right numbers. After what seemed an eternity--in reality, just a few seconds--I finally got through and was able to confirm that I had won.

A few days later a brand-new piano arrived at our tiny apartment. Now, besides the rented couch and mattress, we had a shiny new piano! Everyone was amazed; my coworkers, our church family, our family overseas. And I was filled with an overwhelming sense of awe and gratitude for what God had done.

One More Thing, Lord There was still that small matter of tithe. "Lord, remember the condition," I told Him a few nights later. "I still don't have money for Your tithe."

The next morning the owner of the dealership called me into his office. He and his wife were an older couple, and every year each employee got a frozen turkey as a Christmas bonus. I had no idea what I was going to do with mine--maybe give it to one of the needy families in our community.

When I entered Mr. Clark's office, his wife was there, and they both looked quite pleased. They congratulated me on my prize, and asked whether it had actually been delivered (they probably thought

I might have fallen for a hoax). When I confirmed that it had, they told me they wanted to do something for me. They figured I would probably owe taxes on it, and they wanted to help me. They gave me a check for \$450--enough to return tithe on the piano and their gift, and have \$5 to spare!

I was ecstatic. Still, I boldly told the Lord, "You still have to find me the funds for the second tithe." And He did. Starting that January, I received a pay raise of \$50 per month, which I used to pay off my pledge of the second tithe.

Lessons Learned I learned some important lessons through these experiences. I learned that God is a personal God; that my prayers are not taken in the context of the whole world's needs. Each prayer is received and answered as if it were the only prayer, the only need.

I learned that God not only gives us what we need, He also gives us the "desires of our heart."

I learned that God is merciful. Despite our imperfections, despite our misguidedness and our lack of understanding, He is patient--even indulgent--with His children. And that piano has provided me with so many opportunities to testify about what God has done for me.

I've never felt impressed to pray for sweepstakes again. I've wanted to from time to time (who doesn't want a million dollars?), but I never felt right about it. I believe the Holy Spirit impressed me to pray for that specific gift to teach me about God and His mercy, and to be able to share with others what God has done for me.

More than 20 years have passed, but whenever I face a valley of trial, I still draw encouragement from that mountaintop experience. Yes, it was the worst of times, but it was also the best of times. God can best show us His glory in our darkest hour.



# GOD IS Faithful

David Vélez-Sepúlveda; Doctor of Arts, Specialized in Hispanic American Literature, and vocational professor.

(This is the continuation of a story about a woman who found God's forgiveness despite her many mistakes)

The time had come and Hannah's pregnancy was nearing full term. Her neighbors admired her courage and continually blessed her because she would become a mother again, and this time in her older years. The great matriarchs of the people who had come before Hannah had set an example, such as Sarah, the legitimate wife of the great patriarch and the father of their nation. Ana, mother of a promised son, a leader, educator, and prophet, Samuel. More recently Bathsheba, the mother of the third king of their country, prior to the great division, whose fabulous riches and wisdom became legendary. The fruit of Hannah's womb, according to her neighbors, would also occupy a seat in history and become a legend; and would also be renowned, of importance, and transcendent among the people. However, **Hannah had kept a precious secret within her heart for several months: The intimate assurance that YHWH, praise be His Name, had answered her prayer.** She was certain that she was carrying the daughter she had asked Him for.

On his part, Diblaim did not contradict Hannah, but also didn't share in her enthusiasm, nor her strong confidence in YHWH, praise be His Name, who would send a daughter. A daughter meant a dowry, marriage arrangements, and an endless amount of details that he had not expected to deal with. He was very happy with his five sons, and if another son came along to fill his old age with joy, he would be welcome. But a girl, at this point in his life, without having had any previous experience...was not a topic with which he enjoyed entertaining at the city gates with friends. It wasn't his favorite conversation going and coming from the town square, or when a family member or friend visited him. All the more, when he felt attacked and needed to speak to someone about this topic, besides his wife, he felt overwhelmed, exhausted, nervous, and cornered. He would quickly look to change the subject or leave the group or person that insisted and persisted in stating that his wife was pregnant with a girl. These were considered mere speculations, ideas that made no sense and had no real basis. Hannah said they were a lack of faith and irreverent ideas on his behalf, but he did not doubt or have any guilt concerning his views.

The last days of Hannah's pregnancy were filled with expectations and apprehension. It cost Hannah double or triple the effort needed to perform her daily tasks, although she did so almost automatically, but due to her pregnant state found them to be close to impossible. **Her legs, hands, and face became so swollen she was almost unrecognizable. Despite all of this, she still tried to have everything prepared for when her family came from an arduous day of labor in the field.** The midwife was ready, waiting for the moment she would come to assist Hannah in the difficult task.

Hannah's sister, Abigail, had come from a neighboring town where she lived with her husband who had inherited their home, to help with household duties, leaving behind her daughter to care for her own and the rest of the immediate family. The day crept closer, and the preparations were all being organized to perfection.

That day, Hannah woke up feeling slightly unwell. She woke up very early, as was her custom, but after her husband and sons left to work in the field, Hannah had to go lay down in her room again due to a sudden rush of fatigue. **Hannah, already lying in bed began to sweat. She felt a sudden emptiness, and like she had lost control of her bladder.** An unmistakable sign that her water had just broke, but it was too early in the pregnancy. She began to feel slight contractions in her uterus.

Abigail did not want to take any chances. She asked the neighbor's child to go get the midwife immediately. The midwife did not take long to arrive at Hannah's home. Abigail had put some water to boil and had made sure Hannah was as comfortable as possible, because the labor pains had already begun to come at an accelerated rhythm, becoming more intense as the minutes passed.

Upon Atara the midwife's arrival, Abigail had already managed to roll up a small piece of linen so that Hannah could bite on to deviate her attention from the waves of pain that the contractions produced as they intensified. **Atara had barely entered through the home's threshold and was already taking action.** Atara noticed a large cauldron with water boiling to use to sanitize the mother's perineum in preparation of the baby's arrival, as well as pieces of cloth that would be used to clean the baby and mother.

As she removed her cloak, she closed the door. No visitors were expected, and if any arrived, they would soon notice that Hannah was not in condition to receive them. She rushed to the room, and began calculating the time of each contraction. She asked Abigail to bring her a pot of warm water, as she noticed the small linen cloths folded next to Hannah's bed.

As Atara knelt down beside her, Hannah



thanked and recognized her with the look in her eyes and a slight nod, but as the pain began to increase with another contraction of her uterus, her eyes shut tightly. Among the screams that turned into groans coming from her mouth that still had the cloth between her teeth, she pushed with all her might, bending her body in the process. Without saying anything, Atara took a moist cloth and wiped Hannah's sweaty forehead, face, and neck, whose body relaxed for a moment on top of her pillow once the contraction had subsided to regain some strength.

"Thank you for getting here so quickly, Atara." Hannah managed to say, while attempting to control her agitation.

"You don't have to thank me for anything. You know I am here for you. I helped you deliver your other sons, why not this one too?"

"This girl." Hannah corrected her with a smile that changed into a grin as soon as another contraction was starting.

"Good. Hold on to my hands, that's it. With strength!"

Hannah replied with another deep grunt, attacking the cloth rolled between her teeth again. Atara was now in front of Hannah, she served as a physical support for Hannah to push on with more force. The steaming water was within Atara's reach, once Hannah had stopped pushing, Atara began meticulously cleaning her perineum and vaginal area with patience.

"You are truly strong Hannah. Thanks to your excellent health and strong constitution, we don't foresee any complications. Your female neighbors of the same age are not willing to give birth."

"I know." Hannah limited her response as she attempted to gasp for air.

"Hannah has been praying for a girl for so many years, that I've lost count." Abigail interjected.

"But...how are you both so certain it will be a girl?"

"That's Hannah's conviction, and I share in it, because we believe YHWH, praise be His Name, has finally rewarded Hannah a girl."

"I will be sure in a few minutes."

Hannah contorted her body again in pain. Atara grabbed Hannah's hands so that she could comfortably push again, and at the same time signaled Abigail, who began applying pressure to Hannah's bulging stomach with the palms of her hands. This subtle pressure, increased the degree of Hannah's screams, that were obstructed by the linen cloth in her mouth.

"You are about to crown! Push again...now!"

Abigail's empathetic rictus was very similar to that of her sister, whose face was newly soaked with sweat, and now accompanied by tears. But her firm decision and the previous experience she had with her other five sons, told Hannah that although it was a bitter one, it was fleeting. Close to her midwife sat a cup filled with a special potion of herbs, sweet vinegar and myrrh, but Hannah had not tried it. Abigail had prepared it for her despite Hannah being against it, and had placed it within her reach, but it remained untouched. Hannah had never wanted to cushion her labor pains with those potions, but Abigail reminded her that these were different times, more modern, comfortable, civilized, and if these advances were available, why not use them and save herself from some of the horrible pain?

The contractions were now coming almost without pauses. Exerting a supreme amount of force, **Hannah felt the characteristic tearing of her skin.** She felt her pelvis slowly dislocate, and almost break apart due to the intense pain. She pulled her knees towards her stomach, attempting to help Atara, she placed all her concentration on trying to push out and down. Her body incredibly curved could not move another millimeter. Without straightening her body, and very quickly, with a loud puff, she filled her lungs with air, and with sheer will she pushed again with all her might. That mighty force of strength ended with an incredible cry that shook the walls of that room, the home, and continued resounding from wall to wall in every direction of the neighborhood.

The neighbors, young people, adults, and elderly, vigorous, strong, and weak; idle, resting, and occupied with their daily tasks, empathetically paused in honor of Hannah's great courage, who at her age had accomplished the sublime task of every young Israelite woman. She had brought another life into this world. **Within their hearts, a private celebration had begun, anticipating the public ones, that soon Hannah and Diblaim would have in their home.**

Atara, surprised, confirmed that Hannah and Abigail were right. **It was a girl; the most precious girl she had helped deliver in a long time.** Even with the swelling that results from the passage through the tight vaginal canal, there were no indications of malformation, infection, or visible physical irregularities. Abigail had the lemon ready. One drop on each eye before they were to open, a few drops on the vulva, and a few more near the umbilical cord stub, very close to where it would close. They would serve to help avoid possible infections from the new environment the baby girl would now be a part of. Hannah's beautiful baby girl.

Once the placenta was removed, Atara proceeded to fold the umbilical cord near her torso, once it stopped beating, she tied it, and severed it clean, separating the girl from the placenta. The first bath was given with warm water, and the baby was wrapped in diapers. Abigail had finished cleaning Hannah and picking up the bloody sheets and skins that covered the mat to be washed. **In a matter of hours, they had overcome the crisis and the birth had been without complications.**

Upon reaching her three months, the girl was presented in the temple at the distant capital City of the South, along with a one-year-old lamb as a burnt offering and a pigeon to be offered as an atonement. **In this ceremony, they named the baby, and Hannah and Diblaim had already agreed that the girl would be Gomer, "God is Faithful." Because YHWH, praise be His Name, had fulfilled His promise to Hannah, her prayers had been heard and answered.**

# LOOKING IN THE **RIGHT** DIRECTION

**Florencio Suárez,** , Associate Treasurer  
of the Inter-American Division Mexico City  
Headquarters.

I was only 8 years old when I happily attended an Adventist school. My home life was complicated: My father was a pastor for the Assembly of God, and would take us every Sunday to church with him. My mother was an Adventist from birth and oversaw a small group in our home, and always prepared everything for the Sabbath to worship alongside her Adventist brothers and neighbors on Friday night's. **Ultimately, my parent's divorce was a relief for me; thanks to this I was able to study in an Adventist institution.** The first year was a critical one for us economically. We hadn't heard from my father at all, until one day when a telegram arrived at our home with money in it. My mother had just finished spending the last 20 pesos on a breakfast that we would share with visiting family. That money arrived just in time! But like always, in a short amount of time was gone. Shortly afterwards my Grandmother took my brothers and I in to care for us while my mother went to the United States to work to try to resolve our household expenses. My brothers and I also worked to pay for our studies. **Times of crisis and times of peace, that's life for us all.**

## **WHY DOES CRISIS HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES?**

There are crises that are foreseeable and others that aren't. The first are part of our growth and maturation. We make plans based off of them and predict strategies that will end in our success. The unforeseeable crises arise from unexpected situations that may be accidents or conflicts. We should confront them the moment they present themselves. It's almost impossible to plan for when they happen, since they are characteristically unexpected.

**However, crisis provide an opportunity for change.** Although they are accompanied by anguish, and in some cases catastrophe, they aren't necessarily bad for us, but in reality help us mature.



Hence the importance of adequately solving them. Dr. Mario Pereyra mentions the following: **“Each person possesses the potential to mature by assuming their commitments and responsibilities and overcoming the crises at each stage.”** God uses them with the purpose to transmit a message to us. It's necessary that our view changes as opportunities to advance the completion of God's divine purpose for our life.

## JACOB'S CRISIS

In Genesis chapter 27, we find Jacob obtaining the blessing from his father Isaac, the one that belonged to his brother Esau. This act of deceit unleashed feelings of vengeance in Esau's heart and provoked a crisis in Jacob's life; who ran to Haran looking to save himself. He lived through moments of deep pain. After a long day of travel, nightfall found him alone far from his father's tents, and he began to prepare for bed, but where? On the bare ground. He chose a rock and reclined his head upon it. A rock for a pillow! At that moment he received a glorious vision. He saw the heavens open and a flashing stairway that linked heaven to the earth, where angels of God ascended and descended. But most importantly, God was at the top of that stairway, willing to make a promise that would benefit all of humanity. His promise to bless all families on earth includes us. Satan will do everything possible to distract us with what is happening, using everything that is pleasing to us as bait to separate us from God, but those things have no eternal value. Colossians 3:2 reminds us: “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

## GOD FULFILLS HIS PROMISES

Despite the hardships that we faced at the University of Montemorelos, my brothers and I learned from my mother and grandmother to pray at all times, read God's word, and not to worry about our financial situation. Also to give God

what was his and remain faithful in our tithes and offerings. **It has been almost 40 years since I left my home, went to study at an Adventist school, accepted Jesus as my personal Savior, and met the woman who today is my wife. These experiences were the greatest gifts I could have ever imagined, all of them from my Heavenly Father.**

In Genesis 28:15 we read God's words that state a commitment with Jacob: encontramos las palabras del Señor que manifiestan un compromiso con Jacob (this is in Spanish; delete?): “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 31:3; 33:17, 18; 35:3). Only that at the time Jacob had used God's word as a guarantee; which was more than enough for him to respond, “...“If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

**Few are the times we have dared to make a commitment with God like Jacob!** Sometimes we may have shortcomings in the midst of a catastrophe and yet we refuse to look in the right direction. In the book, Patriarchs and Prophets, we find the reason behind Jacob's words: “Jacob was not trying to write the conditions with God. God had already promised him prosperity, and that promise was the expression of a heart filled with gratitude for the assurance of God's love and mercy.” God is ready to help us at any time, regardless of the crisis that we are facing, He will be there with us from start to finish to later celebrate with us our achievement of overcoming and moving forward to another phase of our lives. Open your heart, He will help you make the best decisions. Ellen White encourages us to do the following: “A

Christian should frequently look back on their lives, and remember with gratitude the many deliverances in which God worked in their favor, sustaining them in midst of temptation, opening doors amid darkness and obstacles, and providing new strength when on the brink of giving up. These situations are proof of the heavenly angels protection.”

## HOW TO IMPROVE OUR HABIT OF LOOKING UP

We have proven God's faithfulness to us through comforting evidence of the fulfillment of His promises. Now, how do we respond to this faithfulness? We can do so by adding some small steps to our daily lives that will help us concentrate our attention on the things from above:

- **Make it a priority to speak with God through a special prayer each morning, where you lift up one motive for which you are thankful, and one for which you need His wisdom for.**
- **Read a Bible verse that strengthens the reassurance of His presence in your life.**
- **Help someone with something that is important or urgent for them to accomplish.**

God's promise for us today is: “13 The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.” (Deuteronomy 28:13). God wants to connect His vision with yours.





# DO WHAT YOU THINK YOU SHOULD

My husband and a co-worker were traveling in a car, in route to their post-graduate classes.

His friend suddenly screamed, "Stop, stop!" My husband slammed on his breaks. His companion quickly got out of the vehicle to help a woman whose husband had hit her on the street. He went and separated the man from his wife, rebuking him. He was surprised to hear the woman say, "Hey, what do you care!?" (While punching him in the face, \*I'm not sure what is trying to be said here\* punching who?) "If my husband wants to hit me, let him hit me, don't get involved." My husband was in the car, waiting for his friend with a smile on his face from such a comical event. His friend continued to repeat, "I don't understand, I don't understand." They soon continued on their way, dying of laughter every time they recalled the incident.

**Meriviana Marín** Administrative Assistant of the  
Inter-American Division



# ACTIVITIES WITHIN OUR TERRITORY

## Central Mexican Union



September 6th through the 8th a retreat took place for the pastor's wives of the Metropolitana region, with the theme, **"Bloom Wherever you Are."** With special guest speakers, the Iglesia family, husband and wife, who strongly encouraged each participant during the presented lectures in their seminars, strongly. The retreat was a blessing.

## Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union



From the **15th to the 17th of May, 2016**, a spiritual retreat took place in the city of Huatulco, Oax., Mexico.

Pastor Pedro Iglesias and his wife, sister Cecilia, were the special guest speakers invited for this occasion. They presented the seminar titled, **"How to Prevent Infidelity?"** in ministers and their wives.

A seminar for teen-aged pastor's kids was also presented. The topic was, **"Keeping your identity as Adventists,"** in which they were reminded of the importance they carry in helping their parents; as well as how to get involved and be part of the pastor's ministry, including them creating a ministry of their own, whether it be singing, preaching, evangelizing, or any other area. They were encouraged to look at the positive aspects of being a pastor's child.

