



SEVEN KEYS
TO A
United Family



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TO A

UNITED FAMILY

**INTERNACIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, REFORM MOVEMENT
General Conference Family Department**

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INTRODUCTION

In this time when we live in isolation, we must strengthen the thinking that home is a small church to glorify God. It is in this cell where the foundations for the present and future well-being of the church and society are laid. It is here that character is built as the only treasure that will be taken to heaven.

“The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences”. MH 349.1

“God designs that the families of earth shall be a symbol of the family in heaven. Christian homes, established and conducted in accordance with God’s plan, are among His most effective agencies for the formation of Christian character and for the advancement of His work”. 6T 430.2

“One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached. Such a family gives evidence that the parents have been successful in following God’s directions, and that their children will serve Him in the church”. (AH 32.1)

Oh! How wonderful it would be to hear the Lord's words addressed to Abraham! *"And I will bless them that bless thee, ... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."* Genesis 12:3

Our life should reflect the wonders of the character of Christ. Every Christian should be a living coal for the gospel and "... *shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15). For this to happen, it is necessary that Christ our Savior lives in us abundantly and fully.

We have the opportunity this May to devote time for the family in order to know the proposals of God for our homes, bringing in love, humbleness, submission, selflessness, to our relationship, rescuing the principles God established for mutual life and having Christ as the center of our lives.

May the Lord bless our families in this month of study and devotion. Amen.

Pr. Adalício Fontes

Family Department of the General Conference

Sabbath, May 02, 2020

RESCUING THE FIRST LOVE

Yapci Trujillo Pérez, Holland

One of the most important true love stories in the Bible is found in the book of the prophet Hosea. It is a small book, which is sometimes overlooked, and might be difficult to find if one is not used to reading the Bible. Because this book is small and prophetic, it is located in a group of 12 books called the "Minor Prophets." Being in this category does not mean that the book of Hosea and the others were minor but rather that they are small books.

Despite being in our Bibles, some people do not understand the general storyline of Hosea because of the prophetic expressions that are used. Although it is good to know the historical events the prophecies refer to, it is even better to understand them.

Some may ask: What message does the book of Hosea have for my spiritual life? How does it relate to the topic of family and of first love?

The book of Hosea speaks of a problem in the family. Despite it being written around the year 722 BC, it presents a family problem that is still very current and also shows the great extent of God's love.

Hosea was a prophet of God—a good man who accepted the will of God even though he sometimes didn't even understand God's

purpose in its entirety. God entrusted Hosea the difficult task of rebuking the people of Israel because of the apostasy they were living.

Our God of love, through different messengers, always wanted to draw the attention of His people so that they would turn away from evil. During Hosea's time, one of the greater problems was the introduction of idolatry into the customs of God's chosen people.

In the historical framework, the ministry of Hosea began during the reign of Jeroboam II (783-742), and then political instability and religious decline would come.

"With the severest reproofs, God sought to arouse the impenitent nation to a realization of its imminent danger of utter destruction. Through Hosea and Amos He sent the ten tribes message after message, urging full and complete repentance, and threatening disaster as the result of continued transgression. "Ye have plowed wickedness," declared Hosea, "ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled.... In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off." Hosea 10:13-15. (Prophets and Kings, p. 279).

But on a personal level, Hosea's ministry began with a special event- his marriage. However, God asked him for something strange:

"The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and

children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD". (Hosea 1: 2)

Although God asked for something very unusual, especially for a messenger from God, Hosea obeyed and married Gomer. With the great privilege of hearing the direct voice of God, Hosea had the assurance that God had shown him the love of his life. Therefore, he decided to dedicate all his love to Gomer, not worrying about her past.

As a result of this love, their first child was born, and joy flooded their home. Yet, God asked Hosea to give his son a special name: *"And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel". (Hosea 1:4).*

The name Jezreel means: "God Soweth and God Scatters".

Through this name, God, in a very unique way, was prophesying that He was going to punish Israel and that it would be spread out. I don't think that anyone would think of giving their son a name like that, but Hosea obeyed the Lord's voice.

The Bible tells us that a new family member arrived- a girl, and God said: *" And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away". (Hosea 1: 6).* Loruhamah means "the unfortunate", "the unloved."

Through these names, God continued to send a message to His people, which was something very unusual. God was telling the people of Israel that because of their idolatry and their separation of His laws, Israel was going to be hated.

The third child that came home brought some bitterness to Hosea's life. God told him:

"Call his name Loammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*." (Hosea 1: 9) The name means "you are not my people." This name was a revelation of the worst news a father could receive. God was revealing to Hosea that this son was not his own (Hosea 2: 4). The same way that Hosea received the sad news, God wanted to show Hosea how He felt when He saw that His wife, the chosen church, had committed spiritual adultery by mixing with the beliefs of other nations.

Those days were not easy for Hosea. Shame had stained his home. How was this possible? God had asked him to marry Gomer. Hosea loved his wife with all his heart. He was a good husband, was obedient to God, and was a good father for His family.

Hosea surely wept bitterly and asked God many questions. It was a great spiritual struggle for this good man.

The Bible says that as Israel departed from God, likewise Gomer departed from her home:

"...For she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." (Hosea 2: 5).

For some reason, Gomer unfortunately ended up being a slave and was given a price in a slave market where the highest bidder would become her owner.

Gomer was no longer the beautiful woman who had left her home thinking of having a better life. Like the prodigal son, she suffered the consequences of her sin. When comparing her previous life with the terrible situation she was living in, she said:

"...I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now." (Hosea 2: 7)

But who would accept her in this condition? Would her husband want to forgive her after she had betrayed him?

Many people think that the Bible is an obsolete book, with only ancient stories, containing nothing to contribute to today's world. But dear brothers and sisters, Gomer's situation continues to be repeated throughout the 21st century. Men and women abandon their homes to go far away. When Satan plays with them and takes them to the pit of sin, he leaves them with nothing. Today many people wonder: Is there any hope for me? Will God forgive me for committing so many sins?

There are also many destroyed homes today that seek a solution for their situation. These days, it is common to hear *"If you deceive me with someone else, then I will never forgive you"* and experts recommend *"Follow your heart, the important thing is your happiness,"* but the Bible teaches us that true love goes beyond our feelings.

Hosea was separated from his wife, surely praying to find a solution in his life. He wondered if God had any plans for him. Why had he put him through all this? God then gave him a message: "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? ... O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?*" (Hosea 11: 8; 6: 4).

This is the same message that God sends us today: How can I leave you? How can I forget you? God never abandons us.

God also gave Hosea an order, "*Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.*" (Hosea 3:1). God commanded Hosea to rescue his first love just as he wants to rescue our love.

Hosea left everything to go in search of Gomer. He crossed the roads and villages and arrived at the place where Gomer was located. She was exhausted, dirty, and ashamed. She surely didn't even dare to raise his head to look at Hosea. She was waiting for Hosea's a condemnation. Humanly speaking, I think sad memories and mixed feelings came upon them. She had cheated and abandoned him. Hosea could have reacted like many today saying, "*See? This is what you deserve!*"

But God had put a thought in Hosea's heart. "How am I going to abandon you?" She was the love of his life.

Hosea immediately spoke to the seller and bought the freedom of his wife: "*So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley*" (Hosea 3: 2). This was a high price, but Hosea didn't care.

Let's think for a moment about what it meant at that time to be freed from slavery.

Gomer returned home with Hosea, not as a slave but as the queen of her house who was loved by her husband. Her family reunited. Hosea's first love was rescued by God in a wonderful way and together, they were able to restore their home because it was God's will.

"He who manifests the spirit of tenderness, forbearance, and love will find that the same spirit will be reflected upon him.... If Christ indeed is formed within, the hope of glory, there will be union and love in the home. Christ abiding in the heart of the wife will be at agreement with Christ abiding in the heart of the husband. They will be striving together for the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him.... Tender affection should ever be cherished between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters.... It is the duty of everyone in the family to be pleasant, to speak kindly".⁴⁹ {ML 84.4}

Hosea now deeply understood more about the love of God for His people, and, with authority, admonished the people to repent of their sins.

The story of Hosea shows us the love story between God and His people.

We continually deviate from Christ's paths, thinking that God does not understand or love us. However, God bought us with great price: "*For God so loved the world, that he **has given his only begotten Son**, so that everyone who believes in him will not get lost, but have eternal life "* (John 3:16) .

He will soon return (John 12: 1-3) to take us back to the heavenly home He has prepared for us.

Dear reader, through your life's experiences you may identify yourself with this story in some way. That is why God is calling you. He wants to conquer your heart again; He wants to reunify marriages. We will succeed if we follow the examples in the Bible.

We have seen great lessons in this story that we can apply to our spiritual and family life—the wonderful power of love and forgiveness. We see how God never grows tired of seeking us.

God wants to rescue the first love of His people, to purify it, and to prepare His people to be with Him in the heavenly mansions one day.

Although we're undeserving, we may receive His saving grace today if we only accept Christ as our Personal Savior. This is my wish and prayer for all. Amen.

Thursday, May 07, 2020

SUBMISSION AND SERVICE

Vladimir Marinov, Finland

God's plan

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Job 38:1-7

Our dear Heavenly Father has created the universe and all the visible and invisible things to accomplish His great plan. In the macrocosm as well as in the microcosm, each of His creations have the task of serving another creation. In this way, everything moves in perfect order and harmony under God's guidance. The Creator did not create any creation to serve himself. Fruit trees don't produce fruits for themselves, but for the benefit of mankind. A flower doesn't bloom for itself, but for the joy of mankind. Angels don't serve themselves. They serve God and man. Our Heavenly Father also doesn't live for himself, but for

the happiness and joy of the entire universe. God created a helper for Adam and blessed the family. God's purpose for spouses is that they may live in peace and understanding, helping one another, and letting themselves be guided by the Holy Word of God.

Why did Disharmony Appear?

We understand from the Scripture that the greatest joy for angels is to serve God. Lucifer, the highest of the angels, stopped rejoicing in his service to God because he surrendered to envy and pride. He thought that he was worthy of worship and service. This desire to be great caused him to fall. "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." Isaiah 14:13-15

The Word reveals that God does not compel anyone to serve Him but instead accepts the service of love. Lucifer, who became a devil and Satan, lost joy and love in his service to God and led other angels along the path of doom. So, God's enemy, who caused disharmony in the heaven, had to be removed along with his worshipers. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole

world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:7-9

God allowed the fall of Lucifer to happen, so that the whole universe could understand that obedience and ministering out of love for Him were for the good of every created being. The Almighty does not want His created beings to serve him out of fear or intimidation. Everyone is free to choose to serve Him out of love. This principle of serving with love also applies to the family.

What is the result when one ignores obedience and service to God out of love?

"Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." 1 Samuel 15:19-23

King Saul, in his high office, thought that he could change the command of God's prophet. But because of his disobedience, he lost his throne and his eternal salvation. Many people repeat king Saul's mistake! Ignoring God's wise counsel is nothing more than human pride, with the belief that one can serve the Lord differently. A service where one only wants to display his own greatness is not accepted by God. Service in the family must also be instigated by selfless love. The angels of the Lord will always be present in such a family and will protect them from evil.

"The history of Israel's first king presents a sad example of the power of early wrong habits. In his youth, Saul did not love and fear God; and that impetuous spirit, not early trained to submission, was ever ready to rebel against divine authority. Those who in their youth cherish a sacred regard for the will of God, and who faithfully perform the duties of their position, will be prepared for higher service in after life. But men cannot for years pervert the powers that God has given them, and then, when they choose to change, find these powers fresh and free for an entirely opposite course. —Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 622.

From this testimony, we understand that if one postpones the correction necessary to remove the negative aspects in his character, he can lose that opportunity forever. According to the Scriptures, we know that the most important thing in our service is to receive the character of Christ, which gives us entry into the city of God. In a Christian's life, personal development should not be neglected, but we often tend to correct others' mistakes

while forgetting to take care of our own. In light of God's Word, we must cultivate the ability to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

In the following testimony, we see what happens when our service to God and our neighbor is not prompted by sincere love. "God knows that if we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we would fall into Satan's lines and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore the law of God confines us to the will of One who is high and noble and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service.... A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. The service is looked upon by such a one in the light of drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance.... Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul." That I May Know Him p. 120.

Elisha

"It was no great work that was at first required of Elisha; commonplace duties still constituted his discipline. He is spoken of as pouring water on the hands of Elijah, his master. He was willing to do anything that the Lord directed, and at every step he learned lessons of humility and service. As the prophet's personal attendant, he continued to prove faithful in little things, while with daily strengthening purpose he devoted himself to the mission appointed him by God." Prophets and Kings 222.

Many people want to be entrusted with something great in order to devote themselves to service, but for Elisha simply pouring water out for him to wash to was an honor as he served Elijah the prophet. God firstly tests our faithfulness in the smallest things. God tests our humility and modesty in the most basic services we give. If we are faithful, He will also place us in positions of greater responsibility. We need to show the same diligence of performance in the small things as in positions of greater responsibility. True to his service, Elisha was ready to receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit. In the same way, if we are faithful in our service to God and our neighbor, God will send us "The Latter Rain."

"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." 2 Kings 2:9, 10

Receiving the blessings of God in the family and in the church depends on whether we are willing to fulfill all of our duties according to His Word.

The Perfect Example of Obedience and Service

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And

being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:5-11.

From these verses, we understand that Jesus was equal with God in heaven before He was born as a man on earth. Because of His love for the fallen race, Christ decided to serve humanity and bring salvation by giving up His glory and the throne in heaven. He humbled himself and devoted himself fully to the salvation of man, taking upon himself "the form of a servant."

"Jesus was the majesty of heaven, the beloved commander of the angels, who delighted to do His pleasure. He was one with God, "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18), yet He thought it not a thing to be desired to be equal with God while man was lost in sin and misery. He stepped down from His throne, He left His crown and royal scepter, and clothed His divinity with humanity. He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, that man might be exalted to a seat with Him upon His throne. In Him we have a complete offering, an infinite sacrifice, a mighty Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In love He comes to reveal the Father, to reconcile man to God, to make him a new creature renewed

after the image of Him who created him." Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 321.

Jesus came to serve the people who suffer from the burden of sin, to deliver us from evil, and to reconcile us to the Father. He said: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45. The one whom all angels worship and serve came to earth himself in order to serve man. What humility! He was rejected by the people whom He came to save, and yet didn't refuse to be "obedient unto death, even death on a cross." He wasn't always understood, even by his disciples; but in His infinite love for them, He continued to teach them valuable lessons of obedience and service. One of the last lessons of humility and service that the Heavenly Teacher wanted to keep in the minds of His disciples was given during the washing of their feet.

"After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he

had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John 13:5-17.

Jesus taught this lesson of humility and service by beginning to wash the feet of His traitor. Through this act, He longed to deliver Judas from His pernicious plan and to show Him the true path to the kingdom of God. But unfortunately, Judas did not want to accept the lesson of humility and ministry on which his salvation (and our salvation as well) depended. This lesson greatly hurt the pride of Judas, who thought in his heart; "If the Master is humble enough to wash the feet of his disciples, I do not want to have such a Master". Thus, he interrupted the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart and lost his earthly and eternal life. What a pity!

"Christ would have His disciples understand that although He had washed their feet, this did not in the least detract from His dignity. "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." And being so infinitely superior, He imparted grace and significance to the service. No one was so exalted as Christ, and yet He stooped to the humblest duty. That His people might not be misled by the selfishness which dwells in the natural heart,

and which strengthens by self-serving, Christ Himself set the example of humility. He would not leave this great subject in man's charge. Of so much consequence did He regard it, that He Himself, One equal with God, acted as servant to His disciples. While they were contending for the highest place, He to whom every knee shall bow, He whom the angels of glory count it honor to serve, bowed down to wash the feet of those who called Him Lord. He washed the feet of His betrayer." The Desire Ages p. 649.

By following Jesus' example it will be a pleasure for us to serve one another in the family and in the church. That is how we grow in our connection with God. If the believer is not fully devoted to the service of the glory of God, then it is very easy to give in to the temptation or the dream of having the best and first place. This was the problem Jesus' disciples had, before they learned about the valuable lessons of humility and service. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the fate of the fallen human race was in danger of being left to bear the consequences of sin, our Savior submitted His will to the will of the Father.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Lukas 22:42 We cannot personally cultivate true humility and a willingness to serve and sacrifice unless we submit our will to the will of the Father. May the Lord help us with this.

"The Lord disciplines His workers, that they may be prepared to fill the places appointed them. He desires to fit them to do more acceptable service. There are those who wish to be a ruling

power, and who need the sanctification of submission. God brings about a change in their lives. Perhaps He places before them duties that they would not choose. If they are willing to be guided by Him, He will give them grace and strength to perform these duties in a spirit of submission and helpfulness. Thus they are being qualified to fill places where their disciplined abilities will make them of great service." Gospel Workers pg. 269.

We are living in the last days, when God's instructions regarding the family are not taken into account. If every family follows the example of Jesus in obedience and service, there will be much understanding, and many difficulties will be avoided.

A Service for the Salvation of Others

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:18-20.

The service of the salvation for man, which Jesus began before His ascension, was handed down to His disciples. In studying the Acts of the Apostles and their letters, we see that the disciples fulfilled this important mission of their Master with dignity. We cannot say that we are followers of Jesus if we do not work for the salvation of souls.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And *that* he died for

all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15

The Apostle Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us ..." This love urges us not to be idle, but to devote ourselves to service for the salvation of souls. This is the noblest deed a person can do in this world for God's glory. The apostle says: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them..." If we die with Jesus and were resurrect with Him, then will we not live for ourselves, but for Him. If we work for the salvation of others, we are working for our own salvation too. The first missionary field is the home—the work of saving your loved ones.

May God bless each family, and may He help us fulfill our duties with dignity so that we may one day receive the eternal reward. Amen.

Sabbath, May 09, 2020

I PROMISE TO LOVE YOU

Lisbeth Hunger, USA

The Promise of Love

Have you made a promise of love? Maybe you made one when you were dating. If you were engaged to your partner, but didn't marry that person and only accepted them as your life's companion, then you don't know what a promise of love means.

Standing at the marriage altar and having the power to promise love, a couple's deep desire for something beyond feelings and expectations is confirmed. This means that God gives the couple great esteem, appreciation, and Divine admiration when they make the commitment before God. The wife sees the greatest thing she can have in her life, and unites with the one who loves her, who protects her, who can give her refuge, and whom she can serve throughout the rest of her life. The husband sees the grandest beauty and greatest support he'll ever have in his wife. He sees someone who gives him courage and nobility, and someone who respects him. He sees great value and enrichment in her. Without even noticing, they take on the most tender responsibility. Our society, now more than ever, needs men and women who take marriage and family as a responsibility.

Have you ever considered that you don't choose your spouse alone, but that God gives them to us? God gives us the privilege of choosing our spouse, but He wants to be a part of this selection process too. Children and parents do not choose each other. God gives them to us. Deep bonds form, becoming so strong that only death can separate them. It is so important to keep the promises of love in these bonds of marriage and family! It is not worth it to get angry when provoked, and thus lose the narrow bonds of love. It is not worth it to stop speaking to our siblings because of a misunderstanding, or to reject our parents because of the mistakes they made during our childhood. Having a family is a gift from God, and no matter how imperfect the members of this family may be, God's love unites them all and has the power of salvation and restoration.

Love becomes Actions

Whoever has promised to love, knows that this promise is a value that turns into actions; the affection given to a daughter when she couldn't understand math, the forgiveness given to children when they broke a phone, the patience when listening to your parents express how they want the house to be organized, the understanding when a partner has a different point of view and wants to express himself, hugs when we have asked for forgiveness for the inappropriate words that were expressed, and a gesture of kindness when a family member is frustrated. Where there is love, happy moments become more joyful and gratefulness to God blossoms. Difficult moments, by means of a joint struggle to find solutions, are transformed into

an opportunity to seek God. Thus, love is created in different ways: amongst spouses, amongst fathers and sons, amongst siblings, and amongst the larger family; but most importantly between God and me!

Unselfish Love

Jonathan, David's friend, is an example of this love. He loved David as himself. He showed his love through actions. He gave everything to David: his goods, his honor, his title....everything! "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." 1 Samuel 18:1-5

Jonathan, heir to the throne by birth, yet knowing himself set aside by the divine decree' to his rival the most tender and faithful of friends, shielding David's life at the peril of his own; steadfast at his father's side through the dark days of his declining power, and at his side falling at the last—the name of Jonathan is treasured in heaven, and it stands on earth a witness

to the existence and the power of unselfish love. Education, p. 157.1 (Ellen G. White).

I recall hearing a story about a surgeon who worked in the emergency room. On different occasions, he worked on patients that had been involved in fatal accidents. He tried to save their lives, but inevitably lost some to death. Many of these patients were children, and the surgeon describes how deep the love of a parent is during those 20 minutes when their child is facing death. They don't care how badly their child behaved in life when they see them so close to death. With one last hope, they turn to the doctor, pleading him to do something so that their child doesn't die. Some are willing to give their blood, some volunteer to donate their own organs, and others promise to give the surgeon all the money and goods they have saved. It is during these moments that you see the highest expression of love parents have for their children. God taught us this fatherly love. He is the source of this love! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. His blood, his organs, all his goods were given so that you and I could be saved. This is the love that Jesus poured out, so that we may love our loved ones and everyone else with unconditional love. This is living love- love in practice! We find solutions, inspiration, life, and victory in Jesus! This love is divine love—agape love—a love that is not selfish and that pours out all the love it can. We really need this love that doesn't think of its own benefits, but rather seeks the benefits of others!

The Promise Requires more than Words

Many promises have been expressed which lacked the actions, faith, and faithfulness necessary to fulfill the promise.

Homes have suffered many consequences because they have lost sight of the promise and have forgotten the actions of love. They have become cold, allowed trust to be robbed, and permitted pain and suffering to enter the home.

I am reminded of what a Christian lady who was married to a doctor said, "I thought that marriage would be much prettier, and I expected much more than what it is. I imagined it differently." After about 15 years, this marriage suffered from infidelity. But the Lord intervened at the right time and allowed the marriage to be healed and restored.

The woman imagined marriage to be like a castle, where husbands were served, and where a gentleman would exalt her and serve her. But she had forgotten that sacrifice and acts of love are what bring out positive reactions in couples, stimulating the bonds of love. There are expectations when you enter marriage—expectations that are met, and others that are not met. We will never be happy if we build our marriage on the expectations we imagine. Happiness is not found in marrying, having beautiful and healthy children, or in having a house and property. It is found in the simplicity of living with Christ in every aspect of life, in listening to His voice at every moment, and in following Him humbly. Where are your eyes looking? At your husband, your children, or to Christ?

A lady once told me, "My husband never takes me for a day out." If you expect your husband to take you out, then you are wrong. Of course, it's nice if a husband has this habit, but if he has not taken you out, then you should be the one to make plans to go out with him. Figure out a time and place where you want to spend time together. He's going to enjoy it just as much as you will. Jonathan loved David as himself. Do you love your husband as you love yourself? Perhaps he has a different mindset than yours. Maybe he wants to give you a good home or spend precious time with your children so that you may rest. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8.

Don't the circumstances of marriages happen to parents with their children in a similar way? Sometimes there are different thoughts, desires, feelings, and views, yet when we examine them, we often find that the thoughts of others are higher than our own. We must learn to listen, to humble ourselves, and to adapt to the paths God offers us. We learn from each other: the husband from the wife, the wife from the husband, the children from their parents, and the parents from their children. There are different ideas, many things to learn, much to share and appreciate, and many actions of love that are ready to be put into action. Yet, the most important thing is that we learn more about God! God puts contrast in every marriage and family. He often brings together opposites in the characters and

personalities so that we can complement each other, learn more, and unify the ideals of every family member.

My husband and I dated for more than 3 years. I didn't know him well enough to know all the details about the one I was going to marry. One always takes a step of faith, and the other step based on what one sees and observes. My husband didn't know exactly who he was marrying either. He didn't know how this union would be, but he asked God for advice and asked his parents for advice. Today I know that I married the person whom I prayed for—the one God chose for me, and the blessings from our marriage are immense. As I married my husband, I found out that he is way more than anything I ever imagined or hoped for. His love and tenderness, his faith, and his noble goals rained upon me and continue to pour on me steadily. My husband is from another continent, and from a different culture, but we are of the same faith. We have never doubted our love, although we had to greatly grow in it. We have identified our shortcomings, but our focus is to learn from God, learn from the Bible, express our love in actions, bring our weaknesses to God through prayer, and allow ourselves to be changed. God is the author of love and directs the hearts He has united and added to the home.

Examples of Love

"What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8. He requires three actions: DO, LOVE and WALK. There are also three attributes: JUSTICE, MERCY and HUMILITY.

If you want more success for your home or marriage, then hold on to this teaching God gave. We all need to be more active in actions of love, but we also need to have more justice, mercy, and humility. Every attribute is extremely important! Let us ask God to give them to us.

Let's look at some examples of love in families described in the Bible.

1. Jochebed's Love

Intensify your creativity and take action.

" And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink." Exodus 2:3. Jochebed did not get discouraged when she heard the news that soldiers were going to come at any moment to kill her baby. She invented a basket or "crib" that had probably never existed for this use and involved her whole family in its creation. In the end, Jochebed was crowned with success. We can learn a lot from Jochebed, but I want to emphasize on the point that she didn't let fear or timidity overcome her. She didn't even let criticism affect her. She had initiative, creativity, patience, and perseverance to save her son. Don't think about what others say. It doesn't matter if you're different. Let yourself be inspired by God and give importance to what you have decided to do. Have you thought about how you can make your home more beautiful? Maybe you've thought about it but

haven't taken the initiative. It's the details that make everything different.

I remember a certain occasion when my husband returned home from a trip. I had the idea of taking him to a beautiful place that we had seen with the church, but which he had missed because of his trip. I encouraged my children to surprise him. We prepared the picnic baskets, putting delicious foods in it, and on that morning, we woke him up early in the morning and took him to the car. Our children blindfolded him so that he wouldn't see where we were going. He wondered what was going to happen. Where am I being taken? We arrived at the beautiful location. It was a little canyon with gorgeous sights. We took a walk, had nice moments together, and created unforgettable family memories. Don't stay with ideas and desires, but rather turn them into actions. You'll then see that your home will be filled with love and wonderful memories. The Bible shows us how we can have this love: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12. Love is expressed in ACTIONS.

2. The Love of Isaac and Rebecca

Ask the Lord.

After 20 years of expecting to have a child, they took a decision. "And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." Genesis 25:21 If a marriage has a condition that the

couple cannot change and suffers from, then God is compassionate and offers His help. Let us not forget God when we have problems. We should plead with Him to give us a solution when the weight becomes unbearable. God will intervene. You can ask for God for anything! Your children, their characters, their difficulties, your partner, your finances, your work, your feelings, and your health! God hears it all, but don't wait for 20 years before you tell Him. God is good. He listens to you and will respond in His time.

3. The Love of Ruth and Naomi

Accept the circumstances.

Don't regret what you have not achieved or what was lost. Stay strong in faith. "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Ruth 1:16-17.

Ruth and Naomi had great reason to mourn because of what had happened in their lives. They had suffered the unimaginable—losing the lives of your loved ones and all your goods. But Ruth and Naomi clung to God. There may be losses in the family, maybe of a loved one, health, possessions, finances, or perhaps the loss of a position or goals that you once had but for some reason has vanished. But we can never lose our faith in God. He's

going to take us out of all circumstances and will continue to bring us forward, giving us way more than we ever asked for. Let us unite in love with our loved ones and let us unite in love with our Savior. Ruth came to be an ancestor of Jesus.

I feel very happy when I see pictures our family shares with me on WhatsApp. Even though we are scattered in different parts of the world I see that the few relatives who live on the same continent visit each other, take pictures together, and spend time together with their sons and nephews. They feed the bonds of love when they can. But I'm also glad to see the pictures of the youth and families of the church who propose to do something together. Positive moments of coexistence together are those that unite us and strengthen us in God's love.

4. The Love of JOSEPH

Stay unified and love when they don't love you. Genesis 45:3-5.

Joseph was satisfied. He had seen in his brothers the fruits of true repentance. Upon hearing Judah's noble offer, he gave orders that all but these men should withdraw; then, weeping aloud, he cried, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" PP, 233.1

... "I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Feeling that they had already suffered enough from their cruelty toward him, he nobly sought to banish their fears and lessen the bitterness of their self-reproach.

"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him." his brother threw himself upon the neck of Benjamin, and wept; and benjamin also wept on his neck. And he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them: and then his brethren spoke to him." They humbly confessed their sin and entreated his forgiveness. They had long suffered anxiety and remorse, and now they rejoiced that he was still alive. PP, 233.3, 4.

Time hasn't changed. There is also jealousy today. Injustice, hatred, anger, evil intentions, and lying are still prevalent and often occur within the family circle. Even if your act of love is not accepted, it continues to sow the seed of love and shows the fruit of forgiveness. Our God of love is doing the work in the hearts of every home. Stay firm in love, courage, and faithfulness to God. There's power in it. It is so nice to see your children when they grow older and come to you and say, "Do you forgive me for when I was mad at you? I feel that I love God and that He loves me. I feel the need to read more about God and the counsels in the testimonies." Here you see that your prayers and hard work for your family has not been in vain. However, it is not your power. This result is the power and work that comes from God, and He promises to do it in every heart!

It is my prayer that the Lord may fulfill the promise of His love in your life and in your home!

Amen.

Sunday, May 10, 2020

TWO BECOMING ONE WITH GOD

Felipe and Laura Acuña, Costa Rica

Gen 2:18. “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”

When God created man, He realized that man needed a partner and that in all creation there was no help meet for him. Man had not been created to live in solitude, for he had a sociable nature.

Without company he would not fully have enjoyed all the beauty of God's creation.

Marriage was one of God's first gifts to man. “He provided “an help meet for him”—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy.

Eve was created from a rib taken from Adam's side, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal; to be loved and protected by him. A part of man- bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.” PP. p.46.

Marriage is a blessing for the human being- it contributes to a sense of fulfillment and joy in people, but this develops in its fullness when communion with the Creator takes the first place at home.

Just as Christ and the angels lived together in communion with God and shared valuable moments with the first couple- Adam and Eve, the Christian home of our days must find joy in living precious moments where the word of God is diligently studied. In addition, both the wife and the husband have the responsibility of being a positive influence for their spouse and their children. Home must be a place of prayer, where the Lord is always given the first place.

“Fathers and mothers who make God first in their households, who teach their children that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, glorify God before angels and before men by presenting to the world a well-ordered, well-disciplined family—a family that love and obey God instead of rebelling against Him. Christ is not a stranger in their homes; His name is a household name, revered and glorified. Angels delight in a home where God reigns supreme and the children are taught to reverence religion, the Bible, and their Creator. Such families can claim the promise, “Them that honour Me I will honour.” From such a home the father goes forth to his daily duties with a spirit softened and subdued by a living relationship with God.

The presence of Christ alone can make men and women happy. Christ can turn all the common waters of life into the wine of

heaven. The home then becomes as an Eden of bliss and the family a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven.” AH. p.27

In the home there must be harmony in each of its members. The father and mother must be united in one purpose, but above all, they must daily be united with God.

The word of God tells us in Ephesians 5:30 " For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The christian's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ must be so intimate that one can say "we are members of his body." "The Christian cannot do anything for himself; if he separates from his Lord, he will die spiritually and even physically." (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p.1036).

As Christians, we are commanded to bear fruit, and we can only achieve this with the help of the Lord. In John 15: 5 we read: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Just as the branches depend on the connection with the trunk to be able to have life, so the Christian depends on the connection with Christ to bear fruit for heaven and to reach eternal life.

We must be more and more united with Christ in purposes such as carrying the message to all people, and being examples of faith, love, and hope in order to reach the fullness of unity with Jesus.

“Resolve that you will be fruit-bearing members of the living Vine. The scion can flourish only as it receives life and strength from the parent stock. Improve, then, every opportunity to connect yourselves more closely with Christ. It is by believing him, loving him, copying him, and depending wholly upon him, that you are to become one with him; and through you his life and character will be revealed to the world. (RH, 11-9-1883)

Dear brethren, what is the state of our relationship with Christ? How often do we interact with Him? How much of our time do we dedicate to speaking with our Lord?

May the Lord guide us every day so that we may be able to reach the unity God intends us to have with our Creator.

May the Lord bless you! Amen.

Sabbath, May 16, 2020

ABNEGATION OR SELFISHNESS?

Morris Lowe, Canada

As we approach the final minutes of earth's sad history of sin and woe, as Satan and his forces of hell escalate and extend their wicked campaign against Mankind, and against our loving Creator - our only refuge, our only hope is God. For six thousand years the wicked one and his demons have waged their unholy war against God and everything that is holy, just, and good. Everything that our loving Creator has given to us human beings for our health, happiness and security have endured the onslaught of the kingdom of darkness. And nothing is so more under satanic assault than the Law of God and the family!

Why is the family institution under attack by the adversary? Because, "The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities." (AH, 18.5). Unfortunately, the forces of evil have succeeded in their efforts to undermine, destabilize, and corrupt the marriage institution and the family. "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have *transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance*, broken the everlasting covenant. (Isaiah 24:5).

Lucifer introduced Selfishness and Disunity into the Universe

“Before the entrance of evil, there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator’s will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the Eternal Father, - one in nature, in character, and in purpose, - the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God...and to Christ, equally with the Father, all Heaven gave allegiance.” (GC88, p. 493.1)

But, unfortunately, the love and harmony that existed in heaven was shattered by one whose pride and selfish, wicked, ambition for power and self-glory led him to invent lies and rebellion against God. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled – full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. But, inflated with pride and corrupted by his beauty and abilities - he aspired to receive the allegiance and worship of angels, and conspired to overthrow the government of God. Lucifer wanted to be like God (in authority and power), but he became Satan instead: the inventor of evil, lies, selfishness and murder.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like

the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the north” (Ish.14: 12-15)

War and Separation

Satan was envious and jealous of Jesus Christ: and through his delusive sophistries one-third of the angels of God were deceived to join him in his selfish, self-destructive, rebellion against the government of God. He and his supporters rebelled against the authority of the Son of God.

“Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile this mighty, rebellious angel to the will of his Creator.... They clearly set forth that Jesus was the Son of God, existing with him before the angels were created; and that he had ever stood at the right hand of God, and his mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned; and that he had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute.” (1SP 19.1)

“The angels wept. They anxiously sought to move Satan to renounce his wicked design and yield submission to their Creator; for all had heretofore been peace and harmony...” (1SP 19.1). But, *“Satan refused to listen.* And then he turned from the loyal and true angels, denouncing them as slaves. These angels, true to God, stood in amazement as they saw that Satan was successful in his effort to excite rebellion.” (1SP.p.20.1)

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent,

called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (Rev. 12:7-9).

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6). Satan and his supporters’ rebellion brought great sorrow in heaven and resulted in their banishment and eternal separation from God.

Man – Created to Glorify God

Selfishness, pride, and the lust for power had led Lucifer to defy God and to denounce the government of Heaven as unjust and arbitrary. The Creator was accused of injustice and self-exaltation by the rebels, and in order to vindicate His holy law, His government, and His Holy Name – God created Man in His own image, after His likeness; male and female created He them. (Gen. 1:26, 27). “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”- (Gen.1.:28). We were created to glorify our Maker and to be His witnesses in His controversy against Satan. “Even every one that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” (Isaiah 43:7). “Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me.” (Isaiah 43:10)

God's designed the Human Family

The Bible records the establishment of the first marriage and the first family upon the earth:

“And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. *Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* And they were both naked, *the man and his wife*, and were not ashamed.” (Gen.2:18, 21-25)

The human family that God established is comprised of a *man* and his *wife*, and, eventually – children. “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...” (Gen.1:28). The family that God established consisted of a married man and his wife; and later, through the miracle of human reproduction, children were added to the family.

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus, the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. “Marriage is honorable”; it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the fall, Adam brought with

him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.³ {AH 25.4}. The family is the cornerstone of the home, the church, society, and the nation.

To summarize: marriage and the family were established for the following reasons: to provide companionship; to provide support and encouragement to one another; to have and nurture children in a loving home and nurturing environment; and most importantly - to glorify God, the Creator and Father of Mankind.

Selfishness – the destroyer of the Family

To a great extent, the moral fabric of the family will determine the moral health of the home, the church, society and ultimately, the nation. The family where the love of Christ reigns supreme in the hearts of its members, and love and respect for one another is the active principle that motivates and governs the conduct of each member – is a blessing to the family, the church, and to society. Conversely, dysfunctional families where selfishness and ungodliness dominate and Christ and His Words are excluded or neglected - are incubators for a dysfunctional, ungodly society and nation. Satan and his demons know that if they can destabilize or destroy the family unit, immeasurably harm will result, and the Lord will be dishonored.

The family is destabilized through infidelity, divorce, domestic abuse, spousal neglect, parental neglect, sibling rivalry, financial problems, covetousness, and societal and environmental stressors. Many times, families are torn apart by bitter divorce and custody battles over access to children, and bitter disputes over financial and material assets. And jealousy and revenge often culminate in violence and murder. Incompatibility, unrealistic expectations, marrying too young, and unpreparedness for marriage also often cause marriages to fail. Regardless of the reasons why marriages and families disintegrate, **selfishness** is underlying force that destroys family relationships.

Selfishness and Marital Intimacy

Selfishness manifests itself in many different ways in the family relationship when it comes to money, sexual intimacy, household or family duties, food, materialism, entertainment, and religious activity, et cetera. In many marriage arguments, disagreements, bitterness and resentment often develop between husbands and wives over money and sexual incompatibility or deprivation. And some husbands and wives will selfishly refrain from marital intimacy as a weapon to exact “revenge”, or to exercise “power” or “control” in their marriage. Others will selfishly seek - and even demand – marital intimacy while ignoring and disrespecting the feelings and the physical and emotional state of their spouse. Sadly, even professed Christians are guilty of this unwise and selfish practice which the Bible specifically warns against.

The Apostle Paul addressed this matter in 1 Corinthians 7: 1-5:

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. *Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*”

Many marriages and families – including those of professed Christians – have been destroyed because of neglect or disobedience to the inspired counsels outlined in the Word of God concerning marital intimacy and temperance.

Selfishness and Money

Perhaps one of the most common areas of disagreement and conflict in marriage and family relationships is the issue of *money*.

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. *For the love of money is the root of all evil:* which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1Timothy 6:9-10).

Having enough money to support one's family, and the wise management of one's financial resources is essential to having a stable family. Selfishly squandering money on unnecessary items to selfishly gratify one's appetite for *non-essential* items or services is inviting financial and emotional stress that will precipitate conflicts and unpleasant arguments and disagreements between family members. Also, when a husband or wife keeps "secret" bank accounts and regard his /her money (income) as their own money, this may lead to conflict in the family. But even worse than this is a man who is lazy and does not want to work - but is content to have his wife or children work to provide the financial means for his family. Such a man is not a Christian! He may *claim* to be a Christian, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1Timothy 5:8).

Another selfish practice that often threatens the peace and security of a family is the practice of using money as a tool to dominate or control our family member(s) who may be financially dependent on us. Some husbands exercise *total* control or monopoly over the family's finances – obligating the wife to come to him for money *every* time she need to purchase an item or service. If the wife does not have her own source of income, she is treated like a beggar, and must give a strict account of every penny, dime, or pesos she spends for the household, or on herself. This tends to rob the wife of her dignity and self-independence; and some women will resort to sinful means to gain a measure of financial independence. Some

women will even go to the extreme and get out of the marriage because of the ill-advised *selfishness* of their husbands. (Some women will also use *money* as tool to selfishly dominate and humiliate their husbands who are financially dependent on them, or who earns significantly less than their wives).

The Evil practice of *Nagging*

There is another evil practice that can seriously ruin a marital relationship and damage the family unit. It is called “nagging”. The dictionary defines naggings as: “continual fault-finding, complaining or petulant (bad-tempered).” It is not an easy thing to enjoy living in a family with a woman or a man or a child who continually nags – finds fault, complains, and is bad-tempered! The wise man Solomon woefully declares: “A *continual dropping* in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.” (Prov. 27:15-16).

“It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a *contentious* and an angry woman.” (Prov.21:19). And, “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.” (Prov.21:9). The opposite is also true: some men are *naggers* who make the lives of their spouses and children so unhappy. Nagging is a selfish, toxic habit that can destroy family relationships.

The Antidote for Selfishness

Selfishness is a disease of the human heart. It is a deadly virus with which Satan has infected the entire human family.

Selfishness is a sin, and the wages of sin is eternal death. But praise and thanksgiving to God! – there is a cure, an antidote that will eradicate selfishness from the soul and from the family. This antidote is *Agape* – divine love! Self-sacrificing love. This love comes *from* God. This love *is* God.

“Beloved, let us love one another: for *love* is *of* God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸He that loveth not knoweth not God; for *God is love*. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to *love* one another.

(1John 4: 7, 8, 10-11). The indwelling Christ and the impartation of His love, His character, is the cure for *selfishness* and every other satanic trait.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”(Phil. 2:4-8)

When the holy principle of love is practiced by husband and wife, and Christ is truly abiding in the hearts of the husband and wife, and their children - Christ becomes the Center and Protector of

the family, making the family unit strong, resilient, harmonious, and enduring.

“Human beings belong to one great family, —the family of God. The Creator designed that they should respect and love one another, ever manifesting a pure, unselfish interest in one another's welfare.” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 24)

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. - (1Cort.13:4-7 NIV). The secret for a successful, happy, marriage and family is Love – unselfishness. And true, genuine, love comes only from Christ.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” (Ephes.5: 25-28).

And, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the

wives be to their own husbands in everything.” (Ephesians 5: 22-24).

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is the Restorer and Redeemer of the family, the Cure for all our spiritual and physical diseases. He came to destroy all the works of the devil –to eradicate selfishness and iniquity from our hearts, our homes and our families; and to sanctify us for entrance into the Kingdom of God.

“The presence of Christ alone can make men and women happy. All the common waters of life Christ can turn into the wine of heaven. The home then becomes as an Eden of bliss; the family, a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven.” – (AH 28.1). The way back to Eden is difficult, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”! - (1Cort.15:57). Amen!

Sabbath, May 23, 2020

HUMILITY AND LOVE

Orlando Ortiz González, El Salvador

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” Philippians 2:3-4

Marriage was God’s idea, and in order to experience true joy, we need to follow His guidelines. This institution must be based on a foundation of humility and love for it to be joyous and enduring, heaven desires it to be.

The Devil knows this well, and that is why he has fiercely attacked marriages and families during his time left on earth. He knows that he can thus destroy homes, society, the world, and most seriously, the church.

If a marriage is not founded on a foundation of love and humility, it will be a failure. The apostle Paul says: “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth

all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things..." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

The Power of Love

The servant of the Lord says: Love is power. This principle contains an intellectual and moral force that cannot be separated from Him. The power of wealth tends to corrupt and destroy. The power of strength is great to do damage; but the excellence and value of pure love consist of its efficiency in doing good, and only good.

Anything that is done out of pure love, no matter how small or unappreciated it may be in the sight of men, is completely fruitful; because God prefers to see the love that was put into the job instead of how much was achieved. Love comes from God. An unconverted heart cannot produce this heavenly nourished plant, because it only lives and flourishes where Christ reigns.

Love cannot live without action. Each act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will achieve victory where argument and authority are powerless. Love does not work for profit or reward; however, God has manifested that all works of love will surely result in great profits.

Love's nature is to spread, and to work calmly, although its purpose is powerful enough to overcome great evils. Its influence softens and transforms, and by overtaking a sinner's life, it affects the heart even when no other means have been successful.

Whenever the power of intellect, authority, or force is employed, and the presence of love, affections, and the will of those we desire to reach is not manifested, then a defensive and rebellious attitude is projected, and resistance is reinforced. Jesus was the Prince of Peace.

He came into the world to subject resistance and bring back Divine authority to the world. He could have used power and strength, but the means he used to overcome evil, were the wisdom and strength of love.

Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...” Mathew 7:12.

Through these words, we understand that there is a law, the law of action and the law of reaction—if we, as spouses, treat each other well, then we will receive good things in return. As a result of such behavior, blessed results will be seen. “...For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Luke 6:38

These are the powerful reasons that must constrain us to love one another with a pure heart and with fervor. Christ is our example. He went about doing good deeds. He lived to benefit others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions.

We are not commanded to do to ourselves what we would like others to do to us. We must do unto others what we would like them to do to us under the same circumstances. The measurement with which we measure is always applied back to us again.

“Pure love is simple in its operations, and is distinct from any other principle of action. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life and frequently a blameless conversation. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil.

A selfish heart may perform generous actions, acknowledge the present truth, and express humility and affection in an outward manner, yet the motives may be deceptive and impure; the actions that flow from such a heart may be destitute of the savor of life and the fruits of true holiness, being destitute of the principles of pure love. Love should be cherished and cultivated, for its influence is divine.” LYL 33.2-33.3

Heaven is to begin on this earth. When the children of the Lord overflow with meekness and tenderness, they will understand that the banner extending over them is love, and its fruit will be sweet to their palate. They will make a heaven here on earth in which they can prepare for heaven.

The Meaning of Humility

Humility is a trait that consists of being aware of our strengths and weaknesses, and to act accordingly. It is the opposite of pride and arrogance and is an essential trait needed to live harmoniously in society.

People who act with humility are modest and simple. They don't have superiority issues and deeply respect the people around

them. We will therefore discuss some examples of humility below.

Ask for Help When We Need It

We cannot do everything on our own. Many times, we need the help, support, or guidance of our wife or husband. Humility also implies recognizing the qualities we lack.

Know How to Win and Lose

You don't always win, but you don't always lose either. You have to practice balance and modesty. Success brings joy, but it doesn't have to result in arrogance. Getting defeated can sometimes be frustrating, but we should not allow ourselves to be carried away by anger. Both situations teach us the value of humility: respect your spouse and value their efforts as well as your own.

Always be Open to Learning Without Fear of Making Mistakes

The permanent desire to learn speaks highly of us. We cannot know everything, so sometimes we need to read, inquire, or ask, to seek answers and research certain things. We all make errors. In fact, we all make mistakes all the time. Mistakes are teachers in life—they teach us important lessons and help us improve.

The True Meaning of Humility in a Relationship

In today's world, hedonism and materialism are prevalent and set the standards of life for many people, including, of course, couples who are married and those who are not. The couple's

relationship, therefore, has in many cases entered a state in which one is and must constantly manifest the selfishness that governs him.

This unfortunate and selfish state has distorted what really should be the foundation of the relationship between two people- not the accumulation of narcissistic, frivolous and self-centered attitudes that are often seen.

Humility in Marriage

Humility is a very important factor that brings happiness to a family. Many times, we dwell in a home where love exists, but unhappiness abounds because there are ties of pride amongst its member. Although they love each other, there is, unfortunately, no one amongst them who tries to yield themselves from time to time so that everyone may be happy. Pride between two eventually ends up humiliating the other, causing injuries which are often very difficult to heal.

It is vital and crucial to learn to be humble in everything in life. We must have humility to allow other people to give us counsels regarding our mistakes, we must have humility to acknowledge our own mistakes, and we must also have humility to effectively encourage others to overcome their weaknesses. If we aren't humble in these simple things in life, we end up doing things that are very painful to our family—things that can sometimes become very difficult to forgive.

Humility is often a balm that gladdens the heart. Even when you are reproofing, humility makes it gentler and more easily

understood. Sometimes people don't accept corrections, advice, or opinions. This is not because they don't want them or value them, but is because many times, the person who does it, is a highly hurtful person, and does not know how to correct others without hurting them.

Humility is also required to live happily as a family—respecting the individuality of each one, without using competitions among the members or trying to be better than the others, but rather appreciating the good things in each person. Although we are different, we must learn to live together despite our differences and learn to be humble.

Many times, it is also necessary to have humility when actions need to be taken. There are often crucial conflicts between humans, because there are people who always believe they have the solution, the correct answer, or the best option. In short, they always want to stand out from the rest. This always affects the family. Above all, when a spouse lacks humility in many aspects of his life, then the marriage is negatively affected.

Family coexistence becomes remarkably difficult when you have to live next to someone who is not humble, who always wants to be right, who does not accept advice, who does not acknowledge his mistakes, who does not know how to correct someone without hurting them, or who falls into any of these conceived actions because a lack of humility.

The risk of having an unhappy marriage is doubled and gets worse, if both spouses lack the humility necessary to live together.

How can Humility be Practiced in a Marriage?

Sincerity and good will are the first virtues that strengthen and sustain the virtue of humility in a marriage.

First of all, spouses should be very dedicated to each other, without offending one another. In addition, they must agree on everything related to the education of their children. What often happens in families, is that the father loves his children in a certain way, respecting all their tastes and letting them make mischief. The mother, however, wants to teach them to pray, to fast, and not to say offensive words. The child obeys, is very intelligent and attentive, accepts and observes everything around him, but the inconsistency between his parents cause disaster for him. Thus, humility firstly consists in the good will and mutual respect between spouses—that is to fight against the presence of pride. This should be transmitted to the family and, if possible, also to the children. Children are easily influenced—what they see at home is what they will do in their own life.

In addition, we also have nieces, nephews, and other relatives, who also need this divine virtue. This also consists in behaving well with them and not say anything that tries to humiliate them or embarrass them. Instead, say something that really helps your family members. If you tell them something with sincerity, they

will listen to you and respect you. But if you speak to them in an authoritative tone, they will listen to you, but will not respect what you say.

Therefore, sincerity and good will are the first virtues that strengthen and sustain the virtue of humility in a marriage.

Humility Between Spouses

A marriage counselor named Verónica Rodas said the following:

“One of the characteristics that is greatly manifested in society today is the constant and excessive amount of self-love, which is, undoubtedly, an absolute cause of marital failure. Perhaps you have not been aware of the damage that pride causes in your marital relationship. That is why it is so necessary to know what God’s perfect plan is, so that we may apply it in our lives by reflecting it in our behavior.”

If God holds the first place in your life, then you will work to please Him and, as a result, will see this desire reflected in fruit or actions. His Word says that:

1. God gives grace to the humble: James 4:6: "...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."
2. You are wrong every time you give place to pride: Proverbs 21: 4: " An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin."
3. Don't cause your marriage to fail, but act in love: The servant of God says: Ephesians 4: 2: " With all lowliness

and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Do you long for a marriage like the one God designed? Stop waiting for your spouse to become who you would like them to be and begin to be who God wants you to be.

The first step is to start ripping out every inch of pride in you. In every conversation, every thought, and before each decision, seek humility. Pray for your marriage in a humble way and with a broken heart. Then act the same way you pray. You will then see the grace of God in your partner:

Psalm 138:6, "Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off."

It is my wish that the love of Jesus, His grace and humility, may reach all the couples of God's church around the world. Amen.

Sabbath, May 30, 2020

CHRIST, THE CENTER OF THE HOME

Adalício Fontes, Portugal

"And there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." Deuteronomy 12: 7

The family, as the apple of God's eye, is the objective of divine grace, the foundation of the church, the center of character building, a little piece of heaven, and our safe refuge. All this and more should make our home the best place in the world.

Home is a holy place—it is the place of refuge for the family. That is why it's so special. As parents, it is a duty and privilege to fulfill the holy mission of keeping the home focused on Christ's teachings.

When the early Christian church arose, it was the fruit of perseverance and prayer. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common." Acts 2: 42-44. Isn't it time to go back to those origins as a family and as a church?

Many, instead of praying and fasting, complain that the family is not what they expect, and yet, they don't even want to spend time or effort to persevere and maintain family bonds. You may be thinking: "My house is very far from this reality" or "I would like to live the family peace I yearn for..." or "I can't find a solution for my family because we are undergoing intense conflicts". Remember David's words "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." 2 Samuel 23: 5.

The Lord changed the destiny of a man who, through prayer, never stopped believing and testifying that God cared for his family. Job 42:10, "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

God exists! Although everything seems to be contrary, He reaches out to help families. All He needs is to find someone who is before Him, and who is willing to dwell under the cloud of protection to make his home a tabernacle—even if we are going through the desert. Our duty is to help our family realize and believe that although everything may seem lost, and even if we have to go through the heat of the desert, the Lord- the Almighty God, reserves some cooling shade to protect the most precious thing we have in this world—the family.

DAILY FOOD

For the Christian home, where Christ and His teachings are the center and foundation, daily Scripture readings and study are needed individually and should be applied to the family. Try to analyze and learn something from each passage and try to apply these teachings practically.

Let us remember that the practice of daily studies as a time of worship and devotion is Biblical, and is worthy of our attention and practice. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 says: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

“The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice. The wife and children should be encouraged to unite in this offering and also to engage in the song of praise. Morning and evening the father, as priest of the household, should confess to God the sins committed by himself and his children through the day. Those sins which have come to his knowledge, and also those which are secret, of which God’s eye alone has taken cognizance, should be confessed. This rule of action, zealously carried out by

the father when he is present, or by the mother when he is absent, will result in blessings to the family.” 2T 701.1

Children can also participate. Teach them about the stories in the Scriptures and create pictures about those stories together. They will surely remember these stories for many years. Don't underestimate them. They will learn if their parents teach them.

“And yet, in this time of fearful peril, some who profess to be Christians have no family worship. They do not honor God in the home; they do not teach their children to love and fear Him. Many have separated themselves so far from Him that they feel under condemnation in approaching Him. They cannot “come boldly unto the throne of grace,” “lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” Hebrews 4:16; 1 Timothy 2:8. They have not a living connection with God. Theirs is a form of godliness without the power.” CCh 152.2

The world needs to learn from God's representatives on earth—the families. The family must reveal this world's true moral values, which are becoming worse and worse every day. What have we been teaching? Is my family a fragrance of life? Any family that ignores the divine principles has a tendency of spiritual decline because of a failed home.

Pray with your family every day and acknowledge the countless individual and family blessings you have received. The home must be God's fortress to rule the earth and not the trench of Satan's destruction.

REFLECTING THE IMAGE OF GOD

Both the husband and wife must show the world that, despite their differences, imperfections, and weaknesses, it is possible to live together harmoniously. Marriage does not mean the union of two perfect people but is rather the commitment to live together with the love of God, perfecting their relationship through mutual understanding and through forgiveness.

Relationships are reinforced by mutual discipline and obedience to God. God's purpose is accomplished when a husband and wife seek to develop holy principles. The more they yield to each other, the happier they will become. Success begins at home, because a couple is only happy when they do their best for their companion, and both do their best for God.

If we are here to reflect the image of Christ, how would we act if we were in His place? How would you treat other people? How would you speak? How careful would you be? And even more importantly- What does he expect you to do within your home and family? Our house must be a school where all of us are students and teachers at the same time. God wants His holy character to be reflected through the harmonious experience between a husband and wife, and parents and children, in an atmosphere where love is experienced. This is the essence of God's character.

HOME REFORM

Don't allow things that displease God to come into your home. Don't forget that Christ is your constant companion, and that He

knows everything about you and your family. Try not to disappoint Him.

“The right culture and use of the power of speech has to do with every line of Christian work; it enters into the home life, and into all our intercourse with one another. We should accustom ourselves to speak in pleasant tones, to use pure and correct language, and words that are kind and courteous. Sweet, kind words are as dew and gentle showers to the soul. The Scripture says of Christ that grace was poured into His lips that He might “know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Psalm 45:2; Isaiah 50:4). And the Lord bids us, “Let your speech be always with grace” (Colossians 4:6), “that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29).” (RC 282.6)

“The husband and father who is morose, selfish, and overbearing is not only unhappy himself, but he casts gloom upon all the inmates of his home. He will reap the result in seeing his wife dispirited and sickly and his children marred with his own unlovely temper.” (AH 227.1)

“Brother B should soften; he should cultivate refinement and courtesy. He should be very tender and gentle toward his wife, who is his equal in every respect; he should not utter a word that would cast a shadow upon her heart. He should begin the work of reformation at home; he should cultivate affection and overcome the coarse, harsh, unfeeling, and ungenerous traits of his disposition.” (AH 227.1)

Be a true priest in your home. Love your family. Take care of, protect, and fulfill what is written in 1 Timothy 5:8. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. "

Ask God to intercede for your family and keep the family covenant firm in Him, and thus, you will bring the glory of the Lord to those you love. As a priest in your home, you need to close the breaches.

Let your family have a constant communion with God so that your attitude may prove that you have been born again beyond simply words. Be a multiplier of the blessings that God has entrusted in your hands and, therefore, the Lord of your family will keep your home firm in Him and He will establish the blessing promised to the faithful priests. God wants your child to be His child, that your grandson may be a child of God, that your descendants may be blessed and perpetuated in His posterity. This is how the Word of God describes it: "... Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed." Psalms 112: 1,2 "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth." Psalms 127: 3,4

CONCLUSION

I conclude saying: The closer we are to Christ, the closer we are to each other. To draw near to Christ is to draw near to one another.

“The presence of Christ alone can make men and women happy. All the common waters of life Christ can turn into the wine of heaven. The home then becomes as an Eden of bliss; the family, a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven.” (AH 28.1)

Jesus has control over the elements. He can calm the storms of our lives. In a symbol of joy, if we have faith in Christ, He will turn water into wine.

As the inspired pen says: “The family whose members love God and one another, who do not get provoked, who are longsuffering, forbearing, kind, is a symbol of the family above. The members realize that they are a part of the great firm of heaven. They are taught by the laws of mutual dependence to rely upon the great Head of the church.” (UL 33.4).

In each and every circumstance, we must only look at Jesus, Who intercedes for us in heaven, and acts as the healing balm for our moral, emotional, spiritual wounds, and also physical wounds according to His plan. We will be cleansed of our sins when we look at Him. We will be enlightened and transformed when we turn our eyes to the Lord.

SEVEN KEYS
TO A
United Family

The Sweetest Type of Heaven—Home should be made all that the word implies. It should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another.³ {AH 15.3}

The sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides. If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence.⁴ {AH 15.4}



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