

Women's Ministries Emphasis Day

June 11, 2011

“Love Changes Everything”

Written by Carla Baker
North American Division

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SEVENTH-DAY
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My Dear Sisters:

I greet you in the joyful name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Can you believe it is Women's Emphasis Day once again? Our theme this year is "Love Changes Everything," and we who are born again Christians know that this is true for the love of God has truly changed our lives

One of God's attributes is love. God is love. Love is who God is and when we invite Him into our lives His love becomes our love.

There are two great lessons on love that we must each learn and live. The first is that God loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die to save us from death-grasp of sin (John 3:16). The second found in 1 John 4:11 reminds us that "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." Now that's love.

As you go through this packet of material, prepared by Carla Baker, North American Division Women's Ministries Director, be blessed. But more than that, be reaffirmed in the love that God has for you my dear sisters; and be motivated to share that love with all whom we meet, whether Christian, non-Christian, rich or poor, all belong to the family of God.

We, at General Conference Women's Ministries, wish to challenge each of you to enjoy the Sabbath morning program that is prepared for you but to take the Sabbath afternoon to go into your community and share the love of God with those in need, whether in the hospital, the nursing home, the women's shelter, the children's home or even door to door in your community. You are God's hands, God's feet, and God's touch of love to a world in need.

Love and joy

Heather-Dawn Small
Director

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About the Author

Carla Baker is the North American Division women's ministries director. She previously served for 11 years as women's ministries director of the South-western Union Conference and was also a local church women's ministries leader. She began her denominational career as a church school teacher and has also served as an administrative assistant, copy editor and advertising manager of a union magazine

She has been an ordained church elder since 1990 and is active in her home church in Maryland as elder.

Her special areas of interest in women's ministries include reclaiming inactive members, ministry to teens, and abuse prevention and education. Her passion is empowering women to serve the Lord

Carla especially enjoys traveling, reading, cooking, walking, and spending time with her grandchildren.

Featured Divisions

- Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
- Southern Asia Division

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Caroline Chola, *Director of Women's Ministries*

Territory: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Reunion, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Ascension, St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha Islands; comprising the Southern Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe Union Conferences; and the Angola, Botswana, Indian Ocean, Malawi, and Mozambique Union Missions.

The Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division has three major goals:

1. **Nurture** – our target is to nurture all women in our churches, through congresses, retreats, Bible studies, prayer-breakfasts and weeks of prayer. We believe that once our women are nurtured and experience spiritual growth they would be tools in God's hand.

Reaching out to our Young Women – Our division has decided that in the next five years emphasis would be put on reaching our young women. We believe they are the future of our church, and thus the future of Women's Ministries. We would like to minister to their needs, mentor them and reach them where they are.

2. **Empowerment**– This has been a blessing to our division in that our women can now take up leadership roles in the church without feeling inadequate. The GCWM Leadership Training, Level 1- 4 have now been done throughout our Division. This has made our women to be confident as they lead out because they are able to see the purpose of their spiritual gifts. Most of them can now teach and share God's message in their community.
3. **Outreach** – This has been done through evangelistic meetings and community projects that address the six critical issues. Our division has declared the Year 2011 as the year of evangelism explosion and 25% of the membership of each church are registered as evangelists. Since statistics show that 70% of our church membership is women, we see many women involved in this thrust.

On the other hand, the women are involved in many outreach projects such as day care centers, illiteracy clubs and orphanages for HIV/AIDS children, and the Abuse prevention campaign through the **editnow** project.

Even though Women's Ministries in our division was met with a sharp resistance (we still have pockets of these) the activities show that nothing can come between the women and their service to the Lord. As a division we have decided to go forward to do exploits for the Lord.

We therefore request you pray for unity among women. We pray that God will give the women strength and wisdom to forge ahead. We pray that our women may be committed to God's call despite the many odds that may assail them.

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Southern Asia Division

Hepzibah Kore, *Director of Women's Ministries*

Territory: Bhutan, India, the Maldives, and Nepal; comprising the East-Central India, Northeast India, Northern India, South-Central India, Southeast India, Southwest India, and Western India Union Sections; the Andaman and Nicobar Island Region, and the Nepal Field.

The Major religions of the Southern Asia Division are:

- India and Nepal - Hinduism
- Bhutan - Buddhism
- The Maldives - Islam

Although India is a secular state with freedom of religion, unlike Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, proclaiming the gospel is becoming more challenging. In the Maldives open practice of any religion other than Islam is forbidden, so also in Bhutan. In Nepal, in spite of the fact that Saturday is the official public holiday the preaching of the WORD is quite a challenge. In spite of the challenges God uses His daughters to share His love in their own ways, leading them to the marvelous light.

Women's literacy is the major project that is going on now in India and Nepal. While we do not preach them the 'word' directly the activities, the lifestyle, the concern of the women involved in running the project has a great impact in the lives of the learners of all religious groups, including Muslims and Christians. Several new congregations have been established as a result of this project.

- Pray for the donors and the women who run the project.
- Pray that the women will be empowered by the Holy Spirit and step out in faith to touch the lives of those that come in contact with them.
- Pray for the revival and reformation of each woman and the churches as a whole.
- Pray for the Women's Ministries directors at each level.

Love Changes Everything
Sermon
By Carla Baker

Scripture: Romans 8:38-39

“I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love--not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!”

All Scripture texts quoted are from the Contemporary English Version unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

This morning we are going to examine a story that took place long ago in the village of Bethany. It's a story you may have heard many times, but it is full of meaning for us in the 21st century. Something profound took place that day in Bethany. Luke tells the story in his gospel, chapter 10, verses 38-42.

The Setting

It felt as if the night would never end. Why? Her mind was whirling a thousand miles a second as mentally she rehearsed all she had planned for the following day. Finally she must have drifted off to sleep because her alarm, the neighbor's rooster, announced in his lusty voice that it was time to get up.

Rolling out of bed and onto her knees, she offered a prayer of thankfulness and a request for guidance for the day's activities. Then, with energy and anticipation, she prepared to face the day. Today was special; company was coming.

Her plans from the night propelled her into action. She knew exactly what she would do and the sequence in which her responsibilities would be performed. To make things even better, her sister Mary had promised to help her.

With a flurry Martha and Mary shifted into high gear—peeling, slicing, stirring, tasting, making sure that the food was just perfect. After all, the meal had to be fit for a king because Jesus and His entourage were coming to dinner.

“They're here!” shouted brother Lazarus. Warmly he welcomed the guests and saw that they were comfortably seated.

It was exciting to have Jesus and His disciples visit. No doubt Jesus enjoyed being in this home. He had visited before and seemed to appreciate the comfort and hospitality as well as Martha's home cooking.

Adrenalin flowed as Martha put the final touches on the meal. With a smile of satisfaction she picked up a basket of choice fruits and announced to her sister, “We're ready to serve. Can you take . . .” Her words trailed off into silence as she realized that Mary was not in the kitchen.

Her smile quickly faded as she muttered, “Where could she be?” Still holding the basket, she hurried to the room where the guests were seated. Her face registered shock as she quickly took in the scene. There was Mary in the room full of men, sitting center stage in front of Jesus, taking in His every word.

Martha’s shock quickly turned to anger. “How could she!” Her thoughts began to race: “My sister is making herself cheap. It just isn’t right. A woman is forbidden to be in a room with men except her brother or father. And Mary agreed to help me, but look where she has planted herself!”

Luke 10:40 tells us what happened next: “But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to [Jesus] and asked, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’”

We might expect Jesus to respond by affirming Martha for what she was doing and reminding Mary of her responsibilities. Yet everyone present must have been puzzled by His response, which is recorded in verses 41 and 42: “The Lord answered, ‘Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her.’”

Lessons

This morning let’s dig a little deeper into this story to discover lessons that may be hidden, lessons that will help each of us as we build a relationship with Jesus and continue to travel the Christian journey. As we look at ourselves and try to discover how much of Martha is in us, we also want to understand how Jesus’ response to Martha applies to our own lives.

Martha was experiencing a time of intense pressure and frustration. There was a lot of work to do and a small window of time in which to get it done. She had deadlines to meet and expectations to fulfill. She felt she desperately needed help here and now. All these pressures contributed to her anxiety.

And what about our own experiences? Have you ever found yourself in a tight situation like Martha’s? Have you been overwhelmed with your work load, at home, at work, at church, or elsewhere? Others may not see the load you are carrying, yet it may seem overwhelming, unmanageable. You definitely need help, but it is not forthcoming.

How frustrating! How many times have you cried out to God, wondering if He cares, if He understands? How many times have you told Him how to help you? How many times have you waited for help, yet at the end of the day you still feel all alone with no one to help, not even God?

Martha had a reputation to live up to. She was noted for her ability to take good care of her guests, and she wanted so much to maintain that status. When Martha experienced affirmation for her gift of hospitality, it built her self-esteem. She felt loved and valued because of what others said to her and about her. Her self-worth depended on how others saw her and what they thought of her. If the meal was not served on time, if the food was not tasty, if her home was not clean and tidy, Martha

believed it would be a direct reflection on who she was. This was too great a price for Martha to pay. She had to preserve her image. She did not want others to think less of her.

As we take a closer look at this scenario, the picture becomes clearer—it was all about Martha! It was *her* reputation, *her* self-esteem, *her* well-being that she was focusing on. In fact, she was so focused on her own needs that she dared to scold Jesus, God’s Son. “Lord, doesn’t it bother you?” Next she demanded of the miracle-working Savior, the one who by a word or thought could make an entire feast appear, “Tell her to come and help me.” That must have been a tense moment!

Do you sometimes find yourself with an attitude like Martha’s? Are you dependent on others’ opinions to believe that you are a worthwhile person? Do you value yourself based on the world’s standards of physical beauty, talents, accomplishments, or status? Could you be so focused on self that you are unable to see the bigger picture, so that even in the very presence of Jesus you cry out in frustration, “Lord, don’t you see that I am a Christian? Doesn’t it bother you that I am overburdened working for you?” In other words, “Lord, if you really love me, if you value what I am doing, if you want to see me succeed, tell Mary to help me.”

Love misunderstood!

Martha’s story is an example of how it is possible to misunderstand God’s love. It is common for children to misunderstand love. They generally measure love by what is given to them. Ask young children how they know their parents love them, and the typical answer may be, “I know my mom loves me because she gave me a new doll,” or “I know Dad loves me because he bought me a bicycle.”

Martha misunderstood Jesus’ love—and His mission to show humanity what God is like, to show that “God is love.” The question for us today is, Have we misunderstood God’s love for us as individuals? Have we—like Martha—been so bold as to tell God specifically what we are convinced is essential for our needs or wellbeing? And when God in His mercy does not answer our prayer the way we want, do we feel that He does not care for us?

Let’s look again at Jesus’ response to Martha’s demand: “Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her.”

“The ‘one thing’ that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the graces necessary for spiritual advancement. She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever.” (*Conflict and Courage*, p. 304)

What does it mean to choose what is “best”? It means that when we look at all our options, to choose the best is to choose the most excellent, the greatest, the finest, the supreme, the optimum. Jesus commended Mary for making the most excellent choice—something of lasting value, something that would never be taken away from her.

Could it be that Mary’s choice to sit at Jesus’ feet, listening to and absorbing every word, was a signal that she understood that it was not about her, not about her performance, not about her self-

esteem? Mary understood that it was all about Jesus. She knew and reveled in His unconditional love for her.

Understanding His unconditional love for us as individuals is the foundation upon which we can experience complete joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness—the fruits of the spirit listed in Galatians 5:22.

What is unconditional love? We often think of a parent’s love for a child as a beautiful example of unconditional love.

Warren Buffett, American investor, industrialist, and philanthropist, is one of the most successful investors in the world. He is consistently ranked among the world’s wealthiest people. In an interview with *The Huffington Post*, July 8, 2010, Buffett, asked about the most profound advice he had ever received, stated, “The biggest lesson I got is the power of unconditional love. If you offer that to your child, you’re 90 percent of the way home. If every parent out here who can extend that to their child at a very young age—it’s going to make for a better human being.”

If human parents realize how crucial it is for our children to be given unconditional love, then how much more our heavenly Parent? In God’s loveletter to us in 1 John 4:10, we are told, “Real love isn’t *our* love for God, but *His* love for us.” (Italics supplied.)

Mary caught a glimpse of this great truth. God’s love for each of us is unconditional. It does not matter to God what we look like, whether we are male or female, illiterate or Ph.D., rich or poor, where we come from, what we do for a living, or whether others consider us “good” or “bad.” He loves each of us unconditionally. He does not love one more than the other. Young, middle age or old, lawyer or janitor, Christian, Muslim, or agnostic, each of us is loved by God in the very same way—unconditionally.

And the good news is, He is the one who first loves us—just as we are. When we truly understand this concept, we are well on our way to spiritual growth and development. We will, as Mary did, love to spend time with Him.

Because God loves us unconditionally, He will never let go of us. As our Scripture reading in Romans 8:38-39 tells us, “I am sure that nothing can separate us from God’s love—not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God’s love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!”

But God’s unconditional love doesn’t stop there. In Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) He made us a promise: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Friends, what does this unconditional love mean to us? To Mary, it mean dignity, worth, acceptance. It means that you can rejoice in His love and acceptance, regardless of who you are, where you have been, what you have done. He loves YOU just the way you are.

What, then, is our response to His love?

Philippians 2:1 tells us that even in our response to His love, we have His full support: “Christ encourages you, and His love comforts you. God’s Spirit unites you, and you are concerned for others.”

So you see, when we respond to God’s love by loving Him in return, His Spirit also changes our hearts toward others. We become much more loving to those around us, even though they may still have the same irritating habits or unpleasant personalities. Love begets love. God loves us as we are and enables us, in turn, to love others as they are.

When we realize God’s unconditional love for each of us and how valuable we are to Him, we will, in turn, love, respect, value, and protect every human being in our sphere of influence. We will ask God to end prejudice, hate, and anger in our own hearts. We will treat every child, teenager, young adult, woman, and man with the same dignity, love and respect that we want for ourselves. We will model tolerance and acceptance.

Martha’s self-worth seemed founded on what others thought of her. But healthy self-worth comes about as we understand how precious we are to God. He would have died if YOU were the only one to accept His gift of salvation. That makes you very special. As we internalize this eternal truth—that even though we are sinful and undeserving, Jesus died for us anyway—it will transform not only the way we view ourselves, but also how we view others—and how we treat them.

Romans 13:9-10 reminds us: “In the Law there are many commands, such as ‘Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not want what belongs to others.’ But all of these are summed up in the command that says, ‘Love others as much as you love yourself.’ No one who loves others will harm them. So love is all that the Law demands.”

1 John 5:1 reinforces this concept: “If we believe that Jesus is truly Christ, we are God’s children. Everyone who loves the Father will also love His children.”

When we, like Mary, begin to understand the full extent of His unconditional love, we will in turn respect, love and cherish others. We will do all in our power to end violence, abuse, and hatred toward any of God’s children. Love will be the guiding light, the rule that we live by. We will not hurt our brothers or sisters, our family members, or our neighbors—by gossip or any other way. Instead, we will love each person as we want to be loved. We will respect each person’s differences and refrain from judging their motives and actions. We will be walking, living examples of God’s love because our one purpose will be to serve God by reflecting His love to all around regardless of gender, race, educational or economic status.

If this sounds like more than is humanly possible, remember the promise we read earlier in Philippians 2:1 that it is the Holy Spirit who will unite us and cause us to care about others. It is by loving Him first that we allow Him to change our hearts toward others.

Just as He welcomed Mary, Jesus invites each of us to choose the best, to make it a priority to sit at His feet with an open heart, studying His word every day.

His arms are open wide with the invitation to worship Him in reverent prayer. He is pleading for us to allow our hearts to be softened by His Holy Spirit to receive and truly understand His unconditional love. Then we will be so filled with His Spirit that nothing can keep us from reflecting that love.

Will you accept His invitation? Will you commit with me today, like Mary, to make the best choice, choosing to sit at His feet in worship and praise. If that is your desire, will you stand with me?

Prayer:

Father, here are your children. We have many responsibilities and cares. We often feel frazzled. We love to work for You, to bless others, and to do our daily tasks as unto You. But sometimes we are, like Martha, overwhelmed. We pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit in each of our lives. We pray for Your strength and courage to carry out our commitment to sit at Your feet every day. Thank You for your gift of unconditional love that enables us to love each other as You have loved us.

Thank You for the gifts of the Spirit that You have lavishly poured out on us. Thank You for loving us unconditionally. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[E G White quote to insert if needed]

Jesus would teach His children to seize every opportunity of gaining that knowledge which will make them wise unto salvation. The cause of Christ needs careful, energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in active religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good. (*Conflict and Courage*, 304)

Children's Story
by Phyllis Washington
NAD Children's Ministries Director

Theme: God's Great Love

Scripture: John 3:16

Props Recommended: Globe or world map, picture of the night sky,
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, # 321, "My Jesus, I Love Thee"

Good morning, Children!

How many of you had a good sleep last night? Isn't it wonderful that God has given us nighttime so that we can rest our bodies and wake up ready for a new day?

Have you ever looked at the night sky? What do you see? (Show picture of night sky) That's right, the moon and hundreds, maybe even thousands of stars to light the darkness. They remind us that our Earth is just a small part of God's big universe.

There is a story in the Bible (Matthew 2: 1-12) about three men who followed a bright star. They had a hunch that it would lead them to someone special, so they decided to follow it. Their journey took them over many miles and through many lands until one night they found themselves at the feet of a little boy named Jesus.

That's right, Jesus, God's Son, who was sent to save the people of our world. You see, the people of earth were getting pretty dirty. Their minds and hearts were full of naughty thoughts, and they did naughty things. This was because they had forgotten about God and did not know him anymore. But even though this made God very sad, He still loved the people of Earth. So He thought of a way to make things right.

Have you ever done something that was naughty? Did your mommy or daddy punish you for this? Well, God decided that He would send his son Jesus to Earth to take the punishment for all of those bad things that the people were doing. All He wants is for us to love Him as much as He loves us, and He wants us to come and live with Him in a great place that He is fixing up for us. The Bible tells us that it will be a wonderful city where no more bad things will happen.

There was a young man born in Montreal, Canada, in 1846—over a hundred years ago. His name was William Featherston. When William was 16 years old he gave his heart to God and fell in love with Jesus. He was so excited he wanted others to know about Jesus too. One day William wrote a poem and sent it to his aunt who lived in the California. (Show children the distance on the map and continue to show them the distance to each point following) Somehow that poem made its way across the ocean to London, England, where it was put in a songbook. A few years later that songbook ended up back in the United States. A pastor named Adoniram Gordon composed a different tune for the poem and it became a part of the Hymnbook that we use in churches today. It is here in our hymnbook on page 321. The title is "My Jesus, I Love Thee." (Show song in hymnal)

Imagine that! The light from the poem of the young boy William, just like the stars in the sky, traveled thousands of miles around the earth and is now seen by thousands of people.

Children, God gave us a promise in John 3:16. Can someone read it for me? If we believe God loves us and that Jesus came to take our punishment for the naughtiness we sometimes do, then He would like us to share this promise with others just as William shared his poem.

Can you share a little light with others this week? I would like to give you this wordless book so that it will be easy to tell everyone you meet of God's love and what Jesus did for them. Each page has a star on it to remind you of how great God is and that even though we are very tiny in this big universe, He still loves us.

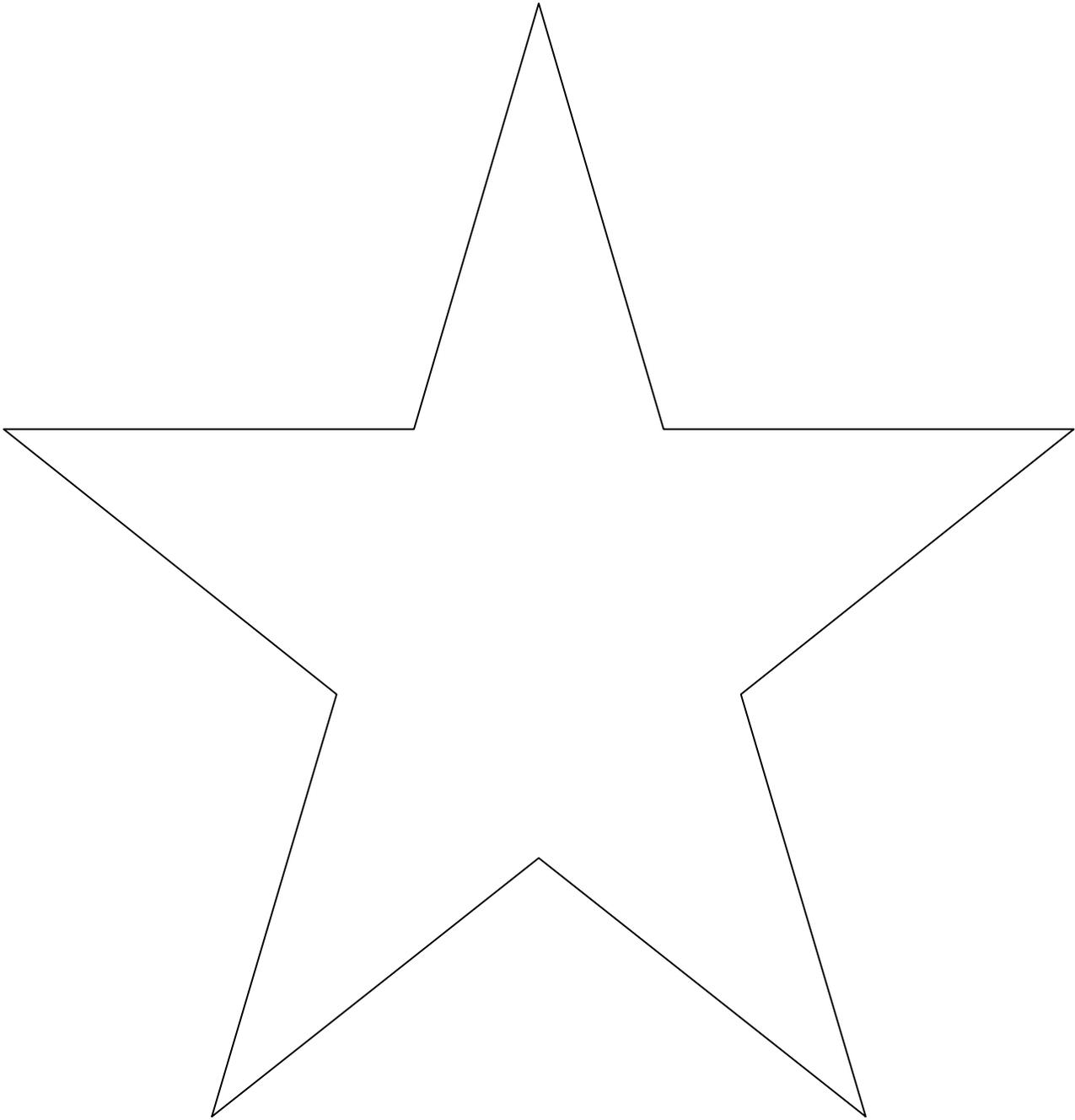
- The **gray** is for the naughty things we do when we don't listen to God.
- The **red** is for the punishment of Jesus when he shed his blood for us.
- The **blue** is for our belief and faith in him.
- The **white** is how we become as he cleans us up from all the naughtiness.
- The **green** is how we continue to grow close to him by studying God's word and praying every day.
- The **gold** is for the place in heaven where we will live with him one day.

Instructions for Wordless Book

- Cut star shapes for each color – gray, red, blue, white, green and gold.
- Paste one star on each page of black paper or cardstock to represent the night sky. You will have six pages.
- On the back cover page of the book put the scripture John 3: 16
- Hook pages of book together with a brad fastener



Star Pattern →



Experiencing God's Love

By Living in His Presence Every Second, Every Day

By Jean Parchment

It is very human for us to feel good or bad about ourselves. Have we ever examined our thoughts to discover if our thinking pattern about ourselves and others is healthy? Do we live our everyday lives by how we feel? It is obvious that our thoughts plus our feelings make us who we are, how we think, how we act and how we behave.

Self-esteem focus is when we focus on self. Our self-esteem can be high or low. Our self-esteem can be considered high if we think we are better than others, more beautiful, smarter, etc. Low self-esteem is if we feel that we are not good enough, not smart enough, not beautiful enough, not talented enough, etc. Whether someone has a high self-esteem or a low self-esteem the focus is on SELF - how we feel about our self.

As a result of how we feel about self, we place a value on our self. Most people with high self-esteem feel that others owe them. They believe they deserve the best in everything and when they are not given what they expect or treated how they expect, they are hurt or offended. On the other hand some people with low self-esteem may feel they are not worth anything. Many young people who make themselves cheap may feel that they are not attractive, or they are not worthwhile, therefore, to be loved they may choose to get into relationships or situations that are destructive in order to "fit in" with their peers.

To determine our self-esteem we tend to evaluate ourselves by:

- Our accomplishments: Our education, our job, our title
- Our possessions: What we own, our financial status
- Our Appearances: What we look like, our size, our height, are we deemed beautiful and attractive by others or do we see ourselves as unattractive and homely?

When we evaluate ourselves by these standards, we are using the world's standard to determine our self-esteem.

What we are doing is comparing ourselves with others as Paul states in 2 Corinthians 10:12: "We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise." *2 Corinthians 10:12*

In the Book "Desire of Ages" we are told how valuable we are to God. "The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them." *Desire of Ages, p. 668*

Friends, our worth to God is the life of His Son. He loves each of us to such an extent that He willingly gave His Son Jesus as the sacrifice that each of us can have the assurance of eternal life. Let us stop right now and in prayer acknowledge this incredible gift of love. May we resolve not to let this be in vain. Let us right now accept this gift of love in thankful prayer to our Heavenly Father. Prayer a prayer of thankfulness for this gift of love. "For God so loved the world that he

gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
John 3:16

If you want to remember something very quickly, what is the best place to write it? Yes, in the palm of your hand. Well, God tells us in Isaiah 49:11 that He has no plans to forget us, He wants to always remember each of us so He has written our name in the palms of His hands, not just on one hand but on both hands. Then He continues to say that our walls are never out of His sight. Could He be talking about what our physical frame looks like, or our photograph? How many of us keep our children’s or grandchildren’s photograph, anxious to show it to anyone who is interested. It seems as if God also keeps a “brag book” about each of His children. “See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.” *Isaiah 49:16*

Now, this is incredible. God not only writes our name in His hands, keeps a brag book about us, He thinks about us with such deep emotions that He joyfully sings over us. Awesome! Isn't it, God, the maker of the universe sings over each of us! “The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” *Zephaniah 3:17*

When we recognize how much God loves us, I encourage you; look in your mirror one more time. Focus on how delicate and intricate He has made your eyes and when you are doing that, thank God out loud for making you, for giving you life and for loving you so much.

We may question, “How can we be special to God when we behave so badly or feel negative feelings toward ourselves or toward others?”

The answer: We are not our behavior although we are the ones who behave. We behave because of how we feel about ourselves. When we understand our worth to God our negative behavior and feelings can be changed. God can change them if we choose for Him to do so.

Isaiah 55:69 is God’s invitation for us to change. You are invited to: “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” *Isaiah 55:6-7*

The negative emotions have a toxic effect on the immune system and on health in general. **Daniel Goleman** is an author, psychologist, and science journalist. For twelve years, he wrote for *The New York Times*, specializing in psychology and brain sciences. In a Nov. 7, 1990, presentation on emotional state and health he reported:

This has been found true for depression, hostility and anger, and for anxiety, as well as for negative outlooks including pessimism and cynicism, guilt, hopelessness and helplessness. Repression, the denial of negative feelings is also unhealthy.

The adverse effect on health ranges from raising blood pressure to increasing the risk of heart disease, cancer and viruses.

“On the other hand, positive emotions strengthen immune function and bring good health. This

has been shown for states of happiness, calm and relaxation, compassion as well as attitudes such as hope optimism, trust and being in control.” This statement was made by *Daniel Goldman, PhD. Nov. 7, 1990, in a presentation on emotional state and health.* Our worth to God is so precious that He wants us healthy physically as well as spiritually. He has outlined steps for each of us to realize our worth to Him.

We will now go through some simple steps that will help us to overcome our low self-worth and that will enable us to focus on how God sees us.

We need to recognize that no one can make the choice for me, I must choose to change any negative thought patterns.

STEP 1

- I must be intentional about change, change is not natural.
- We need to pray for the willingness to evaluate our own thoughts, our feelings, our words and our actions.
- As we evaluate ourselves, taking an honest look at ourselves and praying about this, God will give us the desire to change.
- When we earnestly ask God for the courage to admit that we need to change. It is important to make a plan on how we will intentionally change and to follow that plan. The plan may be as simple as committing not to react negatively to our spouse or children or to other people’s criticism. Sometimes we may need to seek help, it could be from a spouse, a sibling, a trusted friend or from professional help. It’s OK to admit to someone we trust that we need help. Even if it is someone who will be willing to pray with us, that would be a great help.

God is the author of change; we must believe that He loves us so much He will help us change. “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” *Hebrews 11:1*

STEP 2

God invites us to identify the specific thought patterns that are unhealthy. “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin.” *Psalms 32:5*

Jesus sets us an example. He identified specific thought patterns.

Mark 7:20-23 tells us “He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” *Mark 7:20-23*

Examples:

- Evil thoughts
- Sexual sins
- Murder
- Greed

- Cheating
- Telling Lies
- Being Proud
- Being Foolish
- Stealing
- Adultery
- Hate
- Impure Desires
- Wanting what belongs to others

We need to pray for God to show us our thought pattern: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” *Psalms 139:23-24*

Nobody but you and God knows how you think or feel:

“I the LORD search the heart
and examine the mind,
to reward each person according to their conduct,
according to what their deeds deserve.” *Jeremiah 17:10*

STEP 3

When God shows us our thought patterns, it’s important to ask Him to forgive us of entertaining these negative thoughts. Surrender each of these negative thoughts to God; ask Him to take them from you.

When we find that our thoughts are centered on things that are not healthy, it is our responsibility to capture that thought as 2 Corinthians 10:5 instructs us: “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” *2 Corinthians 10:5*

How do we capture our thoughts?

- As the thought comes to our consciousness, evaluate it now, not later.
- Then give that thought to God as we are thinking it.
- Ask Him to fill our mind with the thoughts He wants us to have now! Not later. We don’t need any time out to do this; we can capture these thoughts in just a few seconds, privately. No other human being needs to know what is going on between me and my God.

Have we ever been tempted to feel that “I have a right to think or feel this way?” Many times we feel that we must justify our negative thoughts. An example is saying to yourself or someone else, “I have a right to think or feel this way.” Or, we sometimes deny how we are feeling. These are unhealthy thought patterns.

Remember, we cannot hide our thoughts and feelings from God. It is futile not to be honest with ourselves and with our God. “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” *Hebrews 4:12*

STEP 4

Making New Thought Patterns

Now the fun part, how to make new thought patterns

Physical Structure – Thought Patterns

- Like the old time records that had grooves in it, thought patterns have made physical paths in our brains. These paths are permanent, never to be erased. In order to make new thought patterns new paths must be intentionally made. These new paths will crowd out the old ones.
- A practical example is if we are training to learn a new skill like driving a car. The more we practice, the more it becomes natural and the better we get at it. We make new thought patterns in our brain.

Is it any wonder 1 Timothy 4:7 -8 tells us to train ourselves. Positive thought patterns are for eternity. Let's start here. "...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, **but godliness has value for all things**, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." *1 Timothy 4:7, 8*

God invites us in Colossians 3:12-13 to train ourselves. Train our thoughts and actions to be gentle, kind humble, meek and patient. Train ourselves to put up with each other and forgive anyone who does us wrong.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." *Col. 3:12-13*

The more we train ourselves, the more we practice these attributes, the easier and more natural it will become and we will be more beautiful in our attitudes, our temperament and our ability to love others. Those in our circle of influence will see these attributes in us and be drawn to us. This is how we reflect God's value for us.

And the key to success is prayer. Jesus prayed, His example is for us to follow: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, **He offered up prayers** and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." *Hebrews 5:7*

This need is not just a physical need, it's for us when we are in spiritual, social and psychological need. How awesome, just imagine Our Heavenly Father is inviting us to come not just to come to Him, He is inviting us to come bravely to the most awesome and holy room, the room where He lives, to come into His presence and open our hearts to Him. What an invitation!

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." *Hebrews 4:16*

One of the most effective ways of coming boldly into the Throne room is to discover the value of praising God. Discovering how to praise God is similar to discovering a room full of the most beautiful lights, or finding a garden with beautiful flowers. Praise lifts our spirits and moves us

from any negative situation in which we find ourselves to focus on the beauty and kindness of our Heavenly Father.

Praise is a confession of God's goodness. Instead of focusing on the negative thought, practice praising God for His blessings. Why, praise lifts our spirits, it takes us from our self focus to God focus. It's a confession. The moment the first negative thought enters the mind is the moment we consciously turn our minds to God and begin praising Him. It may be in a song that inspires you, a favorite chorus or just words. Whatever way we choose to praise, just practice praise.

If we follow these four steps to changing our thought patterns we have absolutely no fear of the Judgment as 1 Corinthians 11:31 declares. Why, we will consistently be asking God to judge us on a minutely basis. "But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment." *1 Cor. 11:31*

Our worth to God is so great He wants us to be ready to meet Him with a clean, clear conscience. He encourages us in 1 John 2:28: "And now dear children, **continue in Him**, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming."
1 John 2:28

And here is God's wish for each of us. He wants us healthy and happy emotionally, spiritually, physically: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." *1 Thess. 5:23, 24*

Philippians 4:8 outlines the thought pattern God wants for each of us. Let us commit to study His word to cement in our minds and our thoughts His love for us, our worth to Him and to allow Him to change whatever negative and destructive thought patterns we have about ourselves and others. The only way we can love ourselves healthily is to recognize these principles, then we will be able to also love others healthily. In conclusion, let's read Philippians 4:8 together as a commitment to allow God to help us focus on our worth to Him.

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable**—if anything is excellent or **praiseworthy**—think about such things." *Philippians 4:8*

Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise.

Quotations About Women
From the writings of Ellen G. White

“When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to this work, and it will see the loss if the talents of both are not combined.” *Evangelism*, p. 469

“We may do a noble work for God if we will. Woman does not know her power for God... There is a higher purpose for woman, a grander destiny. She should develop and cultivate her powers, for God can employ them in the great work of saving souls from eternal ruin.” *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 642, and *Evangelism*, p. 465.

“There never was a time when more workers were needed than at the present. There are brethren and sisters throughout all our ranks who should discipline themselves to engage in this work, in all our churches something should be done to spread the truth. It is the duty of all to study the various points of our faith.” *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1880.

“If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this Holy Mission [one-to-one ministry] their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth.” *Evangelism*, p. 471.

“There certainly should be a larger number of women engaged in the work of ministering to suffering humanity... When believing women shall feel the burden for souls... they will be working as Christ worked. They will consider no sacrifice too great to make to win souls to Christ.” *Evangelism*, p. 465.

“Intelligent Christian women may use their talents to the very highest account... Wives and mothers should in no case neglect their husbands and their children, but they can do much without neglecting home duties.” *Welfare Ministry*, p. 164.

Women's Ministries—How You Can Be Involved

Women are an influential force in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When women are ministering to others, the family, church, and community receive the benefits of their spiritual strength and their ministry.

Invitation: You are invited to become involved. There are many opportunities to serve.

- Through prayer and encouragement
- By insuring that there is an active Women's Ministries program in your church, conference/field, union and division
- By volunteering your talents and leadership abilities to serve in the special programs suited to your gifts.
- Through your financial support

Programs: Women's Ministries sponsors and develops varied programs and activities, such as:

Special Days

- International Women's Day of Prayer (First Sabbath in March)
- Women's Ministries Day (Second Sabbath in June)
- Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day (Fourth Sabbath in August)

Special Programs

- “I Married a Possibility”
- Literacy programs
- “Prayer and Love Save”
- Global Mission projects
- Area-wide retreats, rallies and congresses
- Prayer groups and prayer chains
- Small group ministries/Bible studies
- Church hospitality
- Mentoring young girls and women
- “The Widow’s Mite”
- Leadership training

Six critical issues

There are six critical issues that particularly impact women around the world.

1. Illiteracy
2. Abuse
3. Poverty
4. Health risks
5. Work loads
6. Lack of mentoring and leadership training

As Christians, seeking to follow the example of Jesus, we believe it is important to do what we can to meet the needs of all people, developing trust and helping them find answers to their needs.

For this reason, Women's Ministries has chosen to focus much of its attention on these six challenge issues.

These challenges provide opportunities for service for everyone in the church. Women's Ministries invites all to join together to share the Good News of the Gospel!

Although these six critical issues affect all members directly or indirectly, they impact women most strongly. For this reason, Women's Ministries encourages all members to find ways they can help address these concerns. To address these needs is to serve as Christ served, loving and valuing humanity.

Adapted from *GC Women's Ministries Handbook*.