

Family Seasons

Little Times of Trouble

Lesson #10 for June 8, 2019

Scriptures: Matthew 7:5,12; Ephesians 1:7; 4:26-27; Philippians 2:4-8; James 1:19-20; Colossians 3:19.

1. This lesson is about the small and sometimes not so small troubles that arise in homes and families that can lead to serious consequences. They range from minor conflicts over things such as who is going to take out the trash all the way to child abuse.

Repeatedly in the New Testament we are told to love one another (*John 13:34, Rom. 12:10*), to live in peace and harmony with one another (*Rom. 15:5, Heb. 12:14*), to be patient, kind, and tenderhearted toward one another (*1 Cor. 13:4*), to consider others before ourselves (*Phil. 2:3*), and to bear one another's burdens (*Eph. 4:2*). Of course, all this is easier said than done, even with our own family members. In this lesson, we will look at some ways to help mollify little times of trouble, especially in the family.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, June 1. [Italic type is in the source.]

2. If we truly love each other and have respect for each other with patience and encouragement trying to be at peace with everyone and are not motivated by selfish ambition but are humble towards others, virtually all our interpersonal problems would disappear. Do you believe that?

Matthew 7:5: “You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 7:5). New York: American Bible Society.

Proverbs 19:11: If you are sensible, you will control your temper. When someone wrongs you, it is a great virtue to ignore it.—*Good News Bible.**

The writer of Proverbs makes a very astute observation: “**The start of an argument is like a water leak—so stop it before real trouble breaks out**” (*Prov. 17:14, CEV*). Once begun, a conflict can become incredibly hard to shut down. According to Romans 14:19, we can prevent conflict by following after two things: that which makes for peace and that with which one may edify another. How much more so are these principles crucial to harmony in the family?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, June 2. [Bold type is added; italic type is in the source.]

3. What is the best way to avoid getting into those love-destroying and home-destroying arguments?

Romans 14:19: So then, we must always aim at those things that bring peace and that help to strengthen one another.—*Good News Bible.**

4. What kind of lives would we live if we always aimed at those things that bring peace and that help to strengthen one another?

5. **When we are tempted to go to battle over some problem, we need to stop and ask ourselves if this will really matter three days from now? Will it matter at all? Or, will**

we even remember it five or ten years from now?

6. There are so many reasons why conflicts erupt. And if the conflict is between you and a spouse, a friend, or coworker, it is so easy to bring up what you regard as past offenses; then, things just multiply. So, how should we avoid that kind of disaster?

One way to have a better and softer start to the discussion is to affirm your relationship. Let the other person know that you care deeply about them and about your relationship. Once you have stated your positive feelings, you can move to the issue at hand; however, be careful not to use the word *but*. Stating a positive thought and then saying “but” negates what you just stated. Once you share your feelings, listen to the other person’s perspective, reflect on what he or she has said, and only then propose a solution that keeps everyone’s best interests in mind (*Phil. 2:4, 5*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, June 2. [Italic type is in the source.]

7. Sometimes, it is helpful to think about foolish and inconsequential things that have led to arguments. Remember who it is you are dealing with. Think before you speak!
8. There is no way that two people coming from different backgrounds can get married and not end up having some differences of opinion, even some conflicts.
9. Read Ephesians 1:7. We must learn what *real forgiveness* means, especially for those who are closest to us, our spouses. Forgiveness must be offered even when that person does not seem to deserve it. Real forgiveness involves forgiving those who maybe do not deserve it. Remember that God forgives us even though we go on sinning! (Luke 23:34)
10. We always need to remember Romans 3:23.

Romans 3:23: Everyone has sinned and is far away from God’s saving presence.—*Good News Bible*.*

11. None of us is perfect; we are all sinners. And that includes our spouses. We must learn to accept our spouse’s faults. We must pray over them; but, we do not have to let them upset us every day. The only example that it is always safe to follow is the example of Christ.

Philippians 2:4-8: ⁴And look out for one another’s interests, not just for your own.

⁵The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶ He always had the nature of God,

but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.

⁷ Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had,

and took the nature of a servant.

He became like a human being

and appeared in human likeness.

⁸ He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross.—*Good News Bible*.*

12. Unfortunately, there are times when something happens that for many of us causes anger. Anger can burn like a fire within us. It is like a poison. Read Ephesians 4:26-27 and Ecclesiastes 7:9. So, when is anger not sin? What about God’s anger or wrath? What can

we learn from that? We must learn to keep our tempers under control. If we do not, those tempers and those internal feelings will eat us alive.

13. If you are really upset by someone, take the “God approach” and pray for them. Even if s/he has abused you, pray for her/him. It is not going to be easy at first; but, if you stick with it, God will take care of you and it.
14. Unfortunately, in many cases one’s temper and the anger that goes with it have come to us from the examples of our parents. Parents naturally are our role models. But, when it comes to things like anger, we need to get past it. No matter how angry we are or for whatever reason, we must not let anger defeat us and destroy us. (See Romans 12:21.)
15. Unfortunately, conflict, abuse, power, and control cause issues in families that can be very disruptive. As we have already noted, abuse can come in a number of different types: Physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual, even neglect of certain kinds. But, abuse has no place in the kingdom of God or those who want to be a part of it.
16. We need to remember that: (1) God is love; (2) His kingdom is based on love; and (3) If we want to be a part of that kingdom, we must learn to live with love. (1 John 4:7-8; Colossians 3:19)
17. Read 1 Corinthians 13. If we really believe this describes the kingdom of God, then any kind of abuse would be out of the question. Love protects and cares for the one loved.

A healthy relationship is one in which both partners feel protected and safe, in which anger is managed in a healthy way, and in which serving one another is the norm. Often victims of abuse feel guilty, as if they were responsible for provoking their abuser or that perhaps they somehow deserve the abuse they receive. **Abusers can be quite controlling and often skillful at making their victims feel responsible. The truth is that no one deserves to be abused by another, and abusers are responsible for their own choices and actions.** The good news is that the Bible offers comfort, not guilt, for the victims of abuse. In some situations, in which the problem gets unmanageable, people should not be afraid to seek outside help.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, June 5. [Bold type is added.]

Not even the Devil can ***make you do it!***

Matthew 7:12: “Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.”—*Good News Bible.**

18. Are we prepared to take that approach? Compare: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”—Hebrews 12:14, *NKJV.**
19. Forgiveness is absolutely essential in our relationships with others. It is an important part of conflict resolution, especially with those who are closest to us. Satan will do everything he possibly can to separate us from God. We must never allow that to happen.

We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own. Wherefore Christ says, “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what

measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Matthew 7:2.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons** 251.4. [Italic type is in the source.]

Matthew 7:2: “For God will judge you in the same way as you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others.”—*Good News Bible*.*

20. So, what should we do when things get out of control and we later realize that, honestly, we were the ones at fault? Are we Christian enough to go and tell that person we are sorry? What is the best way to ask for forgiveness? Remember the words of Jesus.

Matthew 5:23-24: ²³ “So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God.”—*Good News Bible*.*

21. Was Jesus trying to tell us that we should not even go to church if we are holding a grudge against a brother? What if they have a grudge against us?
22. One of the challenges in parenting is to be consistent in administering discipline. This is especially difficult when the father is gone much of the time.

Too often the parents are not united in their family government. The father, who is with his children but little, and is ignorant of their peculiarities of disposition and temperament, is harsh and severe. He does not control his temper, but corrects in passion. The child knows this, and instead of being subdued, the punishment fills him with anger. The mother allows misdemeanors to pass at one time for which she will severely punish at another. The children never know just what to expect, and are tempted to see how far they can transgress with impunity. Thus are sown seeds of evil that spring up and bear fruit.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* March 11, 1886, par. 11; *The Adventist Home** 314.5-315.0; compare *ST*,* February 9, 1882, par. 15.

Home is to be the center of the purest and most elevated affection. Peace, harmony, affection, and happiness should be perseveringly cherished every day, until these precious things abide in the hearts of those who compose the family. The plant of love must be carefully nourished, else it will die. Every good principle must be cherished if we would have it thrive in the soul. That which Satan plants in the heart—envy, jealousy, evil surmising, evil speaking, impatience, prejudice, selfishness, covetousness, and vanity,—must be uprooted. If these evil things are allowed to remain in the soul, they will bear fruit by which many shall be defiled. Oh, how many cultivate the poisonous plants that kill out the precious fruits of love and defile the soul!—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* November 14, 1892, par. 4; compare *AH** 195.4-196.0.

23. One of the greatest skills that a married person can develop is the ability to see matters from their spouse’s perspective.

“ ‘For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin’ (Heb. 4:15). Just as Christ put Himself in our situation, to best relate to us,

we should do the same with our marriage partner. **Try to view any given situation or crisis not just from your own perspective but from your spouse's. See how he or she views the situation, how it has an impact on him or her, and why he or she would feel about it the way he or she does.** This principle can go a long way in alleviating tough situations.”—Clifford Goldstein, *The Mules That Angels Ride* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2005), p. 25.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, June 7]. [Bold type is added; italic type is in the source.]

24. Let us be bluntly honest; real Christianity is not based on the fact that we attend church once a week but on how we relate to the members of our own family on a daily basis.

One couple shared how their forgiveness had to deepen once they got married: “Our character flaws spilled all over the place once we married. We had to go from learning to just forgive one another for isolated mistakes to learning how to forgive *who* the other person was.” In order to forgive like that and manifest Christlike forgiveness toward our family, God’s forgiveness for us through Christ needs to be kept front and center (*Eph. 1:7*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 132. [Italic type is in the source.]

25. What does it mean *to forgive someone for who they are*? Read Matthew 7:5. What does it mean to have a “log” in your own eye? At the beginning of the paragraph which includes that expression, we see the words: “Judge not, that you be not judged.” But, we must be careful how we apply that rule. Often, it is used to stop any kind of criticism, even constructive criticism. To the person who immediately invokes the expression “judge not,” it is virtually impossible even to discuss right or wrong, good or bad, loving or unloving, helpful or hurtful. Read the chapters in *The Desire of Ages* regarding Jesus’s childhood.
26. Unfortunately, there are people who try to prevent discussing their problems by pointing out the problems of others even though those problems are minor compared to their own problems.
27. If we want to have a truly constructive relationship with our spouses, we should consider this approach.

Here, then, is the posture of prevention and resolve when conflict threatens relationships: (1) Before one addresses another’s problems, one should come with an attitude that his or her own problems are *greater* than those they are addressing. (2) Ask the other person to point out blind spots (logs) that have gone unaddressed or denied. (3) Ask for forgiveness for one’s own sins, which, if they are logs, have been doing a lot more damage in the relationship than the specks he or she hoped to address. (4) If things go well, one can ask (*Matt. 7:7*) if *now* is a good time to share concerns he or she has with their partner for the growth and preservation of the relationship. Christ’s counsel, the presence of His Spirit, and a humble, teachable attitude will go a long way in conflict prevention and resolve. The judgmental, hypocritical attack of another’s faults will be ineffective at resolving anything and will possibly only invite the same response. Jesus knew this and

therefore warned, “ ‘Judge not, that you be not judged’ ” (*Matt. 7:1, ESV*).—*Ibid.** 133-134. [Italic type is in the source.]

28. Read Matthew 18:23-35. This is the well-known parable of Jesus about the two debtors. It is hard to imagine how someone could have been so foolish as to abuse someone who owed him a pittance when he himself had just been forgiven millions of dollars.
29. Some have suggested that Christians should be “living forgiven” every day of their lives. Notice this comment from a counselor. Remember that God is Forgiveness Personified.

“Jesus challenges us to forgive everyone we know. . . . Right now someone exists who has disappointed and offended us, someone with whom we are continually displeased and with whom we are more impatient, irritated, unforgiving, and spiteful than we would dare be with anyone else. That person is ourselves. We are so often fed up with ourselves. We’re sick of our own mediocrity, revolted by our own inconsistency, bored by our own monotony. We would never judge any other of God’s children with the savage self-condemnation with which we crush ourselves. Jesus said we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We must be patient, gentle, and compassionate with ourselves in the same way we try to love our neighbor.”—*The Signature of Jesus* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Books, 1996), p. 162. Or as Francis MacNutt [another counselor] famously quipped: “If the Lord Jesus Christ has washed you in His own blood and forgiven you all your sins, how dare you refuse to forgive yourself?”—*The Signature of Jesus*, p. 101.—*Ibid.** 134-135. [Content in brackets is added.]

30. Do you know anyone who does not need to be forgiven by God? Every human being in heaven will be so thankful that s/he has been forgiven and changed. How should that notion be applied in our day? It is so easy to be critical of another. There is an ancient parable that highlights this point.

Two monks (an older and younger), on their way to a monastery high in the mountains, came across a woman who was having difficulty crossing a swift running creek. Given that the monks kept strict vows not to touch women, the younger assumed they would pass her by. But the older monk hoisted the woman on his back, carried her across the creek, and let her down on the other side. The younger monk was offended, but he repressed his objections for hours until they reached the summit of the mountain, upon which he exploded with “How could you violate our vows and carry that woman on your back?” The older monk replied, “It is true; I carried her across the creek, but you carried her all the way up the mountain.” Christians have no need to carry the burden of resentment or unforgiveness. The Lord is well able to bear the sins of the world; He doesn’t need our help.—*Ibid.** 135.

31. Are any of us carrying grudges, anger, or hate for others? Isn’t it time for us to consider how we can get rid of those roadblocks to the kingdom of heaven?

© 2019, **Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH**. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged.

*Electronic version.

Info@theox.org

Last Modified: April 20, 2019

Z:\My Documents\WPISSTG-Hart\Family\SS-10-Seasons.2019_06_08-Fin+.wpd