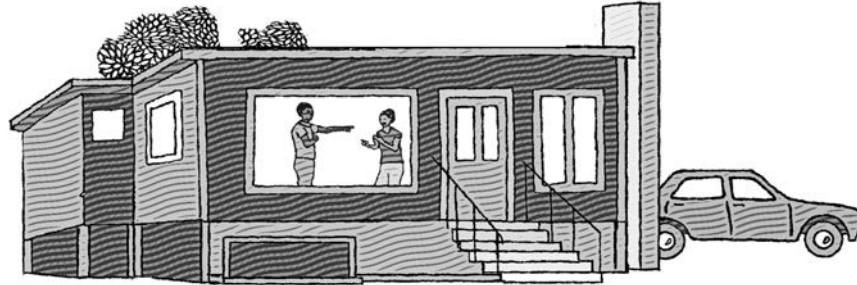


Little Times of Trouble



SABBATH—JUNE 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 7:5; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 4:26, 27; 1 John 4:7, 8; Matthew 7:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘When you are angry, don't [do not] let that anger make you sin,' [Psalm 4:4] and don't stay angry all day” (Ephesians 4:26, ERV).

ALL FAMILIES have problems. Problems are part of our lives because of sin. Some problems have easy answers. Here are some examples: Whose turn is it to take out the trash? Did your teenage daughter **really** finish her homework? Did your son do **all** his chores around the house? You can solve these problems easily, right? They do not change your family's lives very much. But other problems can destroy peace in the family. What about the mother who is jealous of her son's wife? The mother tries to break up her son's marriage. She almost destroys his wife's health doing it too! Or what about the father who hits his kids? Or the son who turns away from God and lives in sin? Or the daughter who cannot quit a bad habit?

The Bible tells us we should love each other (John 13:34; Romans 12:10). We should live in peace (Romans 15:5; Hebrews 12:14). We should be patient, kind, and caring (1 Corinthians 13:4). We should put our loved ones first (Philippians 2:3). We should help each other (Ephesians 4:2). Of course, it is much easier to say we should do these things than it is to do them. But good behavior helps us during times of trouble in the family. This week, we will look at some ways we can solve problems in the family.



Good behavior helps us during times of trouble in the family.

FIGHTS AND DISAGREEMENTS (Matthew 7:5)

Read Matthew 7:5 and Proverbs 19:11. What two important rules do these verses teach us? How can these rules help us to not argue or fight with other people?

Proverbs gives us wise advice: “The start of an argument is like [the same as] a small leak in a dam. Stop it before a big fight breaks out” (Proverbs 17:14, ERV). It can be hard for us to stop a fight after it starts. Romans 14:19 tells us that we can do two things to stop fights. (1) We can do our best to live a peaceful life. (2) We can try to do things that bring out the best in other people. We should follow these rules in our lives if we want to live in peace with other people. But it is more important that we obey these rules in our families.



Do not let fights drag on for a long time.

What else can you do to stop a fight? Ask yourself this question: Am I wrong? If you are wrong, then say it. Honesty helps soften the heart of the person who is mad at you. Step back from the argument and ask yourself: Is this fight worth my time? Proverbs also says: “A wise person is patient. He will be honored if he ignores a wrong done against him” (Proverbs 19:11, ICB). Ask yourself, “How will this fight change my life three days from now?” Or a better question to ask is, “What change will this fight make in five or ten years?” How many marriages have had hard times in the past because of problems that now seem so small and silly?

Do not let fights continue for a long time. Here is another helpful thing you can do: tell the person you are upset with what the problem is. Be clear about it. Stay on the subject. Do not say any angry words. Also, do not bring up problems from the past. Start out by telling your friend, coworker, child, husband, or wife that you care deeply about him or her. Then you can start to talk about the problem. Be careful **not** to use the word “but.” The word “but” erases everything good that you said. Share your feelings. Then listen to what the other person has to say. Take time to think about his or her words. Then together, you will be ready to solve the problem in the best way for everyone (Philippians 2:4, 5).

Think about a fight you had in the past that you think is silly now. What did you learn from this experience? How can it help you to stop the same thing from happening again?

SOME IMPORTANT RULES FOR MARRIAGE (Ephesians 1:7)

Marriage and the Sabbath are gifts from God. He gave them to us in Eden. As Seventh-day Adventists, we know what Satan did, and continues to do, to try to destroy the Sabbath and marriage. So, we also know that the best marriages, at times, are going to have problems.

That is why it is important for us to look at some Bible rules. These rules can help couples solve problems in their marriages.

Read Ephesians 1:7. What important rule do you learn from this verse? Why must this rule be part of a good marriage?

We must learn to forgive each other. We must forgive our husbands and wives before they fully understand how much they hurt us. It is easy to forgive someone who did something to earn our forgiveness. But is that true forgiveness? No. True forgiveness means we forgive people who did not do anything to earn our forgiveness. That is how God forgives us in Jesus. So, we must forgive others as God forgives us. If we do not, our marriages will feel the same as a very bad dream we have every night.

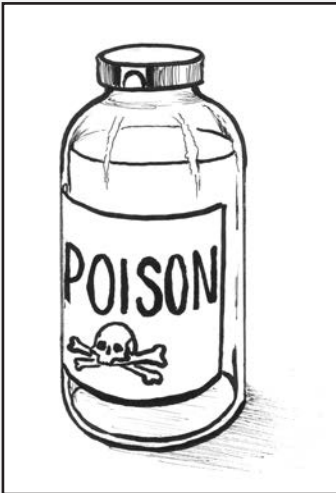
Read Romans 3:23. What important rule does this verse teach us?

You must accept some bad news: you are married to a sinner. Get used to it. His or her heart, mind, body, and spirit has been hurt by sin. So, accept your loved one's weaknesses and mistakes. You may have to live with his or her weaknesses. But you do not have to think about their weak side all the time, day and night. If you do, these thoughts will bring you much pain and suffering. A holy and perfect God accepts us just as we are. You are in no way holy and perfect. So, you must accept your husband or wife the same way that God in Jesus accepts you.

Read Philippians 2:4–8. What important rule do these verses teach us? How can this rule help us in our marriages? How can it help us in our friendships with other people too?



True forgiveness means we forgive people who did nothing to earn our forgiveness.

ANGER AND ARGUMENTS (Ephesians 4:26, 27)

Our not forgiving someone can feel the same as drinking poison. Anger makes us feel the same way too.

We all have been angry at someone in our lives. It does not feel very good, right? But it feels worse when the person we are mad at is a member of our own family. What happens when we refuse to forgive him or her? We feel bad. It can feel the same as drinking poison. Anger makes us feel the same way too. Anger also can cause deep pain and suffering in our homes and in our families.

Read Ephesians 4:26, 27 and Ecclesiastes 7:9. These verses teach us that anger is a strong feeling. At the same time, anger can become a sin. So, when is anger a sin? And when is anger not a sin? What is the difference?

What does James say in James 1:19, 20? Why should we follow this important rule at all times? How can it help us solve problems with family members who make us mad?

What should you do when you are angry about something? Do not let your anger float as a dark cloud above your life. Turn your anger into something good. Pray for the people who hurt you and are mean to you. Forgive them. Be a blessing to their lives. It will not be easy at first. You can make the decision to be kind and forgiving. Then stick to your decision. God will take care of the rest.

Sometimes, as adults, we feel angry because our parents were not kind to us when we were kids. Angry people come from angry families. Children learn how to behave from their families. They continue this same behavior when they grow up. They pass this behavior on to their kids. At times, people feel angry because no one in life gave them what they needed most. In the example of Cain, his anger came because he was jealous of Abel, his brother. Cain's jealousy made him so angry. It caused him to kill Abel.

Maybe you have a very good reason to feel angry. Do not use your reason as an excuse to stay mad. Do not act as if you are not angry. Do not try to show why you are right and why the other person is wrong. Ask God to help you to turn your anger into something good. Paul gives us good advice: "Do not let evil defeat [beat; overcome] you. Defeat evil by doing good" (Romans 12:21, ICB).

How can God help us control our anger?

FIGHTS, INSULTS, POWER, AND CONTROL (1 John 4:7, 8)

Sometimes we cannot solve our problems and disagreements with other people. Then our anger can turn into something very dangerous. Anger can cause us to hurt other people and insult them in awful ways. Here are a few ways that people can insult and hurt other people. They can yell or scream at them. They can say mean words. They can touch someone's body in the wrong way. They can force someone to have sex. They can hit or slap a person. This bad behavior has a name: abuse. Abuse in any shape or form is against the law of God's kingdom: love.

What important rules do you learn in 1 John 4:7, 8 and Colossians 3:19? What do these rules teach us that we must do to help our marriages and friendships stay healthy?

“Husbands, love your wives. Do not hold hard feelings against them” (Colossians 3:19, NLV). Do you see the word “hard”? In Greek, the word “hard” means “being mad at someone.” It also means “causing someone to feel pain all the time” and “showing someone you hate him or her.” Paul is very clear: we must love our husbands and wives. We must not hurt them with our words or actions. Abuse is never right behavior for a Christian. But love is. Paul says that love is patient and kind. Love does not get jealous. Love does not brag. Love is not filled with pride. Love is not rude. It does not put itself first. A loving person does not get mad fast. He or she does not remember the wrong things other people do. A loving person does not feel happy when bad things happen. No, a loving person feels joy when truth wins. Love always causes us to protect others. Love fills us with trust and hope. Love never gives up. Love is fully different from abuse (read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8).

In a healthy marriage, both partners feel safe and protected. They control their anger in healthy ways too. But people who get slapped or yelled at often think they did something to earn this abuse. Not true! People who hurt other people want to control the ones they hurt. They make you feel that it is your fault that they hurt you. But these attackers are responsible for their choices and bad behavior. The good news is that the Bible offers comfort to people who have been hurt.



Abuse is never right behavior for a Christian. But love is.

FORGIVENESS AND PEACE (Matthew 7:12)

“ ‘Do for other people the same things you want them to do for you. This is the meaning of the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets [special messengers from God]’ ” (Matthew 7:12, ICB). In what ways do you need to show this rule in your life? How can you do that?

Paul says: “Try to live in peace with everyone. And try to keep your lives free from sin. Anyone whose life is not holy will never see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14, ERV). We may do everything we can to make peace with someone. But what if this person will not listen to us or change? What do we do then? We must forgive this person anyway.

Forgiveness is an important part of helping you solve your disagreements. What happens when someone sins against you? Satan puts a wall between that person and you. This wall stops you from loving the person who hurt you. Forgiveness is a choice you make that helps you pull down that wall.

“God does not forgive us because we forgive other people. God forgives us when we forgive them. All forgiveness starts with God’s love. We cannot earn this love. Our behavior shows other people the love that is in our hearts. ‘ “You will be judged in the same way that you judge others [people]. And the forgiveness you give to others will be given to you.” ’ Matthew 7:2 [, ICB].”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 251, adapted.

At the same time, when we make a mistake, we must do everything we can to heal the broken connection between us and another person. We will need to tell him or her we are sorry. Then we must ask for his or her forgiveness. That is what Jesus told us to do: “ ‘Suppose [what if] you are offering your gift at the altar. And you remember that your brother or sister has something against you. Leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and make peace with them. Then come back and offer your gift’ ” (Matthew 5:23, 24, NIV). It is nice when the person who hurt us says, “I am sorry,” and asks for our forgiveness. It also is nice when we do the same thing for other people.

Think about the wrong things you did against God and other people. You know you need them to forgive you. How does that thought help you to forgive other people?



What happens when someone sins against you? Satan puts a wall between that person and you. Forgiveness is a choice that helps you get around that wall.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Many times parents do not agree about how to raise their children. The father does not spend much time with his kids. He does not know how they behave. He does not understand their weaknesses. The father corrects his children when he is angry. He does not control his temper. The children see this weakness in their father. So, when he punishes them, it does not correct their evil behavior. It only makes the children angry. Then they turn against doing what is right. Sometimes the mother punishes the children when they are bad. Other times, she does not punish their bad behavior at all. The children never know what to expect. So, what do the children do? They try to see how much sin they can get away with doing and not be punished. In this way, the parents plant seeds of evil in the children’s heart. These seeds grow into plants full of rotten fruit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, pages 314, 315, adapted.

“Our homes should be centers of love. We should welcome peace, love, and joy into our homes every day. Then these precious gifts will live in the hearts of all our family members. Love is a plant. We must care for it every day. Or it will die. In the same way, we must obey every Bible truth so that it will live inside us. Satan plants evil weeds in our hearts. These weeds are bad thoughts and feelings. They make us feel jealous, impatient, selfish, and greedy. They make us think evil thoughts about people and say evil things about them. They make us think we are something special when we are not. We must pull these weeds out of our hearts. If we let them stay, they will grow fruit. This fruit will be rotten. It will spoil our spirits. Too many people grow these weeds. They are poison. These plants kill the precious fruits of love. They make our spirits ugly and dirty!”—Pages 195, 196, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

① “Jesus, our high priest [religious leader], is able to understand our weaknesses. When Jesus lived on earth, he was tempted [tested; felt the desire to do wrong] in every way. He was tempted in the same ways we are tempted, but he never sinned” (Hebrews 4:15, ERV). Jesus came to us and put Himself in our place so that He could understand us better. We should do the same thing with our husbands or wives. Try to look at things from your partner’s view. How does he or she feel about your problems? Why does he or she feel this way? When you see things from his or her eyes, you can solve hard problems more easily. How else can this important rule help you with other problems in your life?



Love is a plant. We must care for it every day. Or it will die.