

connection.

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 34 No. 2 – February 2010

*Friendship is always a sweet responsibility,
never an opportunity.*

—Kahlil Gibran



Love

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is an organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries. SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

SUPPORT KINSHIP

Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
 or visit SDA Kinship's
 website at:
 www.sdakinship.org.





From the Editor

There is a story from Exodus that describes an incident at the time the children of Israel were camped at Mt. Sinai. God planned for them to begin to build a sanctuary "that I may dwell among you." Through Moses He made a list of needed supplies and asked the encampment to bring from that list only those things their hearts were willing to give. The children of Israel filled their arms, stocked their wagons, loaded their donkeys, and lined up. At the end of the day, Moses had to tell them to stop. The gifts had overflowed. The coffers were bulging.

There was more than enough. Developing this issue has constantly reminded me of that story. Because a holiday often designated to encourage us to think thoughts of love occurs in February, I thought it would be nice to have our pages filled with Kinship thoughts or experiences of different kinds of eros, philios, and agape. I sent out requests. We received so many beautifully written responses that we need to take all other news items and move them over to the March issue. I am absolutely certain the Holy Spirit was at work. I don't know where Ruud found room to put pictures. This said, welcome to our issue on Love. In it you will find thoughts on the nature of love, stories of sibling love, remembrances of care-taking love, a demand for denominational love, much wisdom on healthy ways to build relationships, and a short note from the One who created Love. I hope you enjoy and learn from these pages. Even more, I hope you will love yourself a little more, enough to take care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine



Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor... Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.



Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.

— Mother Teresa



Transforming Love

Keisha McKenzie



Each year I get emailed a word-game where each person forms a new word by changing one letter per turn. If my friend sends me "wind," I change "wind" to "wand," and the next person changes "wand" to "wane." These transforming games continue for months and cross continents several times before readers get stuck or start

different games with their e-friends.

For word-lovers, these games are fun on their own terms. But they also remind us of something larger. Whatever changes we make in our lives, one constant is our context: we live in the context of each other. We're as connected as the words in our games.



"Your life and my life flow into each other as wave flows into wave, and unless there is peace and joy and freedom for you, there can be no real peace or joy or freedom for me. To see reality—not as we expect it to be but as it is—is to see that unless we live for each other and in and through each other, we do not really live very satisfactorily... there can really be life only where there really is, in just this sense, love." – Frederick Buechner

For Buechner, "life" transforms into "live," and active living transforms into "love." They're connected and can't be pulled apart.

But the relationship between life and love is challenged each February when our cultures publicize a fickle, blinkered thing and name it "love." This love overcomes those who've been shot by an arrow-happy trickster, and transforms them into maddened puppets that see and know only their beloveds!

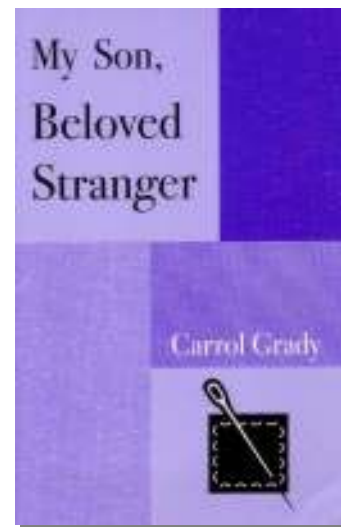
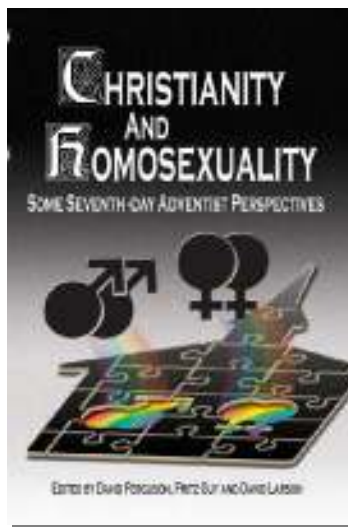
Yes, that sort of thing is attractive to some people. But it doesn't ground us, fill us, or help us to grow. We're designed to be conscious, social crea-

tures, living in a powerful, creative network of relationships—and a narrow love can't sustain our full nature.

Cupid's devotion might recognize one friend, one lover, but the love that Buechner speaks of throws the gates wide open. Seeing in love, we recognize more than our mates or tribes. Others become friends to draw close, not strangers to push away. They are our peers in a world that runs or stalls on the quality of our connections, and as we open to affirm them, our lives become larger and brighter. We thrive.

I don't see this love as an ideal but as a practice—an orientation, even—a stable lens we can choose in each situation and moment. It changes both ourselves and our world, and we can't lose any good thing by sharing it with others.

We hunger not just to be loved but to love, not just to be forgiven but to forgive. Not just to be known and understood, but to know and understand each other... In the last analysis we all have the same good times, the same bad times, and for that very reason there is no such thing in the world as anyone who is really a stranger. – Frederick Buechner ▼



These books can be ordered online at www.sdagayperspectives.com.

Valentine's Day

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth – for your love is more delightful than wine. More pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out..."

Song of Songs 1:2-3

Stephanie Spencer



It was Valentine's Day, the day of "Love," and I was not still sure what I wanted to do for Joy. Joy had a migraine, and I was bummed. I had wanted to take her out for a nice dinner and a

movie. Ideas flew around my head. I decided to grab three red heart balloons. At another store I picked up two roses. One was red signifying love. One was white signifying purity and eternity. (This tradition started when Joy and I first got serious.) I went to my local extended market and picked up two velour place mats, two black napkins, and one "true" red hand towel. Next I headed to another store and picked up some fruit and ingredients for chocolate fondue. I could not decide on a main course.

When I arrived home I sneaked into our bedroom. Because of Joy's migraine all the lights were out. I handed her two roses all wrapped up. Tear welled in her eyes. I asked her why she was crying, "Because I ruined Valentine's Day!" I assured her she had not ruined anything. We were just going to celebrate a little differently than I had originally planned. She gave me a few kisses, and I told her she needed to stay in the bedroom and no peeking! She is very hard to surprise.

I began to transform the kitchen and dining room into "Valentine's Wonderland." I quickly went into action; got the fondue pot out, started melting chocolates, washed fruit, and prepared the other items. I tied two red balloons onto her chair and one onto mine. On the table sat the placemats and napkins with our finest red plastic disposable plates. For our wedding we had received two Edinburgh Crystal champagne glasses from a friend in England. I thought this was the perfect time to use them. In the glasses I poured the finest root beer money can buy (the store brand). There was a knock at the door. The pizza man arrived with our main course. As I placed the pizza in the middle of the table, I could hear from the bedroom "What are you doing?" I smiled and replied, 'You'll see, and NO peaking!'

I lit a candle and placed it on the table. I guided Joy, with her eyes closed, to the table and then told her she could open them. Her mouth dropped and her eyes filled with tears. I asked her what was wrong, "How did you do all this?" I told her I had my ways, that I am a "hopeless romantic," and yes, she was worth it. We prayed and then I asked her to start eating. I returned with the red towel I had purchased over my arm, like a waitress.

The rest of the night we cuddled and watched television. It was our first Valentine's Day as a married couple and a sweet reminder that we didn't need anything fancy. A little imagination goes a long way in this house. ▽



Stenhouse Family Values

Elena Davis-Stenhouse

Erin and I can't believe that Tegan turned two years old in October and Chloe turned four years old on Christmas Day! Life is busier than ever, yet we try to take time regularly to slow down and really savor the moments. Watching Chloe beam and prance at ballet class warms our hearts. Hearing Tegan's infectious giggle is music to our ears. We talk a lot about ensuring that we are creating the family traditions and customs that embrace our values, especially for laughter and fun!

After years of searching, we've finally found a wonderful, open-and-affirming church that feels like the perfect place to raise our girls. Although it's not an Adventist church, it does have two other lesbian families as members which feels quite amazing in our fairly conservative Denver suburb! Life continues to be an amazing adventure, and we count our blessings each and every day. ▽



Caregiving Love

Ruud Kieboom

I always had a pretty close relationship with my mother, probably closer than she had with most of my nine brothers and sisters. Because we had such a large family (the first two got married when the youngest was 4 years old) my mother had to work in the house from morning to evening. My father had two jobs and was often gone. My personality and interests were more like my mother than my father. That's probably one of the reasons I cared for her, especially when the first signs of Alzheimer's disease were obvious.

The symptoms developed at a very slow pace. My mother was quite sad to see the changes in herself. I was sad too. It was hard to see this happen to someone with whom I was so close. It was so sad to see her sitting on the couch, feeling desperate, knowing she wasn't all right anymore and looking at us taking things over from her. This was hurtful to watch. Many times I fought the tears and wanted to hold her in my arms and tell her we would make sure nothing bad would happen to her. It was painful when my mother did not recognize her granddaughter or her own daughter.

As the signs of Alzheimer's became increasingly obvious my mother needed more care. She forgot to turn off the kettle. She would buy things she already had in the house, repeatedly. She went out onto the street in her pajamas and my father's coat. One of my memories of this time is actually very funny. My mother kept losing the house keys; she could not

remember where she put them. When my parents moved to another place my father found about twenty keys in the most peculiar places! Once, when my sister met her leaving the supermarket my mother was so excited about her bargains that she spread them out on the street to show my sister! I never understood why she did that; maybe a psychologist could.

In the early stages my sister and I helped my mother keep up her house. When I was still living at home I got up first in the morning to warm the house in winter. I went on holidays with her when she couldn't go alone anymore. I protected her from my father when he was drunk. (I think he fled to liquor to avoid my mother's condition). After I moved out of the house, my partner Kees and I would have dinner with her a few times each week. We would bring her the supplies she needed. We often took her to our place. She liked this very much. When my father's drinking became a real problem we took her away from him.

I was in my forties when my mother needed the most help. I don't know if being gay made me more likely to be part of her care. Many gay people work in nursing homes. I believe we often tend to be part of caring professions. I felt strongly attached to my mother. On the other hand friends who have seen me approach or help older people have often told me I would be a good nurse. I have always had older people in my life. I visit them frequently. It could be that, yes, being gay made me more likely to be the one who helped my mother.

By that time most of my siblings had their own families. Kees and I had no children so it was easier for me to help. One of my sisters was able to spend even more time with her. That sister was really a blessing. I couldn't read their minds but it was painful to see that some of my siblings did not seem to care much for our mother. However, when we took her away from our father most were willing to let her stay in their homes for a couple of weeks in turn. I am glad they were able to be part of her care in that way. Looking back, I see this was a difficult time for our mother. The changes confused her but we could not think of any other options at the time. Finally we found a place for



In Florence, Italy

her in a home for elderly people.

My mother was so grateful when we could spend even one hour with her that she would say, "Thank you for this lovely day." She kept her humor and her lovely character. When we were young, before the illness began to steal her, my mother was a funny, gentle person. She could play nice tricks on people, really funny and not at all mean. Even as she got older my mother would have fun with her sisters. She was very good at making *Sinterklaas* presents. Evening after evening she would work to make the most impossible and hilarious things: dolls, peanut butter filled boxes with gifts in them! She was the one who enjoyed it most when the children were having difficulties in finding present.

There are things I learned while caring for my mother. I understand people with Alzheimer's better and can communicate with them well. I remember when we visited Andrew and Samuel in Boston and met Andrew's mother in the morning during breakfast. We had a really nice conversation in which she talked about how she met her husband in Germany. I like those conversations. If we are able to go with Alzheimer's patients in their thoughts they feel happy and secure. If we try to keep them to the present time, they get insecure because they don't remember what happened yesterday or an hour ago. I have learned to be patient and to tell the same thing again and again and again, without getting stressed myself.

The employees of the nursing home were a gift. They liked her for her humor and willingness to help. My mother would make funny remarks that would have them laughing. I am glad for the times I could be there for her. I wish they could have been more.

It was a gift that we, her children, could be with her in the final weeks of her life. We spent twenty-four hours a day stroking her face, wetting her lips in the final hours. My mother died in the hands of her children. We were able to say good-bye and close her coffin. This was the most beautiful good-bye I have ever experienced: no strange hands, just the ones to whom she had given life. For the funeral I made a special flower arrangement. Out of the arrangement came ten ribbons connected to ten roses. Each child cut the ribbon and took the rose home. The ribbon was the tie of life, to be broken with the words, "She taught you to love and to live. Now, pass this on to your children and the ones you love." ▽

In Sympathy

We would like to offer our condolences to Andrew and Samuel Pang on the death of Andrew's mother on January 17. Our thoughts and our prayers are with you.

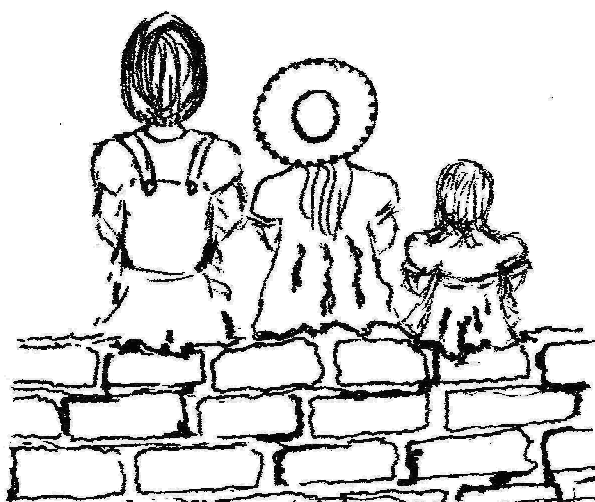
A String too Short to Save

Rom Wilder

All of my remembered life I'd wanted a sibling: a baby to play with, to dress up, to read to. I knew it would be fun; and I even signed the very formal contract my father drew up, promising to help my mother with the care of my new sibling, a contract I still have! I was so happy my parents already trusted me to be a helpful big sister, even though I'd only be nine when she was born.

What I did not know was how many things she would bring to me that had never even entered my mind – a joy I hadn't imagined, a sense of fierce protection I had no idea was inside of me, and a warmth that made the world good – love.

When our other sister came along 21 months later, I found out you can love two as easily and deeply as one. Wow! You don't even have to take any of the love away from the first child. It's as if they each come with their own little parcel of love which they place in your heart the day you meet them. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for the best gifts in the universe, my little sisters, my loves.



Local Wisdom



By Roy Raetzer

When Catherine asked me to write about important qualities for building a long-term relationship, I immediately thought, "Why me? My relationship of ten years failed!" But, thinking back to it, it might have failed because we didn't have much in common and we worked too many hours, worrying about the job instead of the relationship.

Today, I am nearly two years into a new relationship with Ben. We come from very different cultural backgrounds. I'm German - he is Chinese from Malaysia. I am thirteen years older than he is. However, we can trust each other. We are faithful to each other. We each help care for the other one. We have made our relationship a priority with family and friends coming after. We are able to do this even though we both work hard. My priorities have changed. I would rather risk a job than our relationship. We spend as much time as possible together. Sometimes this means sitting in the same room at our computers and occasionally looking at and smiling at each other. We both have experienced failed relationship. This time we seem to be doing better. We have only had minor arguments, not major fights. I think the trust, honesty, faithfulness, and common interests are very important.



By Stephanie Spencer and Joy Ellis

It is very important to Joy and me that we make a decision to be completely committed

to each other in body, mind, and spirit. We put Christ first and our spouse second. Relying on Christ will ultimately help us make the right decisions, large and small.

We both find that similar religious views, commitment, honesty, and loyalty are essential to our relationship. We are constantly molding and shaping how we want our relationship to grow. Our advice to others would be to do things you did when you were dating. Go on weekly or bi-monthly dates, just the two of you. Although it is important to cultivate the other family ties in your immediate family and with your children, it is extremely important that you

keep working out your friendship and relationship with each other. We both do things periodically that show a small token of our love to the other person. Joy knows I love key lime pie and might surprise me with it for dessert out of the blue. Or I know that Joy has always wanted to stay in a cabin, so I planned that location for our honeymoon. There never has to be an occasion to send her a card in the mail from work or my local post office, or leave next to her pillow when she is sleeping. Well, with Joy I have to tape it to the computer screen, or she won't see it.

Most of all when times are tough rely on each other and pull together. Count your blessings and focus on the things you can do something about, not on the things that are only going to spin your wheels more. Rely on God and have daily spiritual time together.



By Ruud Kieboom

Unconditional love is one of the most important things you need to make a relationship last a long time. If you are able to love your partner no

matter what happens, your relationship is likely to last a lifetime. Trust and honesty naturally accompany unconditional love.

Same-sex relationships, particularly those between men are often threatened by adultery. Many men (but not all of us!) tend to separate love and sex, unlike most women (but not all of you!). When one member of a couple learns that their partner has committed adultery they often lose their trust that their partner still loves them. To avoid a separation or break-up the adulterous party will be dishonest: keep her/his misstep a secret.

Having secrets between partners threatens a relationship because members of the couple can no longer be open with each other. Over time the secrets lead to a separation of minds and more misunderstandings. This process leads to them becoming strangers to each other.

Unconditional love can overcome even these crises in a relationship. To love somebody despite their shortcomings and failures (not only adultery) is the one thing that lasts a lifetime. The trust this kind of love brings gives peace to a relationship and the possibility to be open about all things, all thoughts, all mistakes, and open to the capability to forgive. At the end of the day we are all human and far from perfect.



By Carol Grady

Put your partner's wishes ahead of yours sometimes, in the name of love; compromise; stick it out through the hard times; work at keeping love alive; and make lots of good memories. Worked for us for over 53 years!

By Terre Price

What does it take to make a long term relationship work? When Marshall and I were asked this question the first thing we agreed on is there is no answer. One thing that may help is view-



ing our relationship as a journey and not a destination. We have some ideas, stories, about what has worked for us so far. If you ask each of us you will wonder if we are telling the same story since we come at things from such different places. We are both right.

Most of the things that have helped us get this far seem pretty standard and simple. I have learned where people trip: thinking that because something seems obvious and simple, it is easy. I have learned from the couples who have made their relationships work and I have learned from the couples who have not.

I learned two of my best lessons from my Adventist grandfather. The first was *don't get distracted by things that don't matter*. During a time when there was a lot of discussion about whether the Bible was infallible or inconsistent this wise man decided the entire discussion was a waste of time. He chose to continue to read his Bible and pray to be a better husband, father, grandfather, farmer, and neighbor. The discussion, as he saw it, made no difference to any of the things that were truly important. He refused to get caught up in the debate. He read his Bible and prayed, seeking to be a better Christian and in those areas important to him.

The second profound lesson he taught me is, *if you make a mess clean it up*. My grandfather didn't use those succinct words; he lived them. One day the tractor I was driving up a hill and back to the barn for him died. My grandfather really fussed at me. Upon investigation we discovered it had run out of gas. That evening, sitting on the porch, my grandfather apologized for fussing at me. Even now, I don't find it easy; but having my grandfather teach me this lesson was the best way to learn it. Be honest; we all make messes. Say *I am sorry* and

mean it.

A lesson I learned from the camp of people who have made their relationships work is to understand that there is enormous power in words. Make what you say positive. People have a tendency to live up to our expectations of them; focus on the best. Marshall and I took part in some programs during the early part of our relationship that emphasized the power of words and suggested that we have a large role in creating the life we live.

Those of you who know me well will not be surprised that I have a reading list and delve through it. Much to Marshall's credit, he is open to reading and discussing just about anything. I find that much of what we read reinforces beliefs that we have held all along; it is just useful to have ideas clearly articulated and reinforced. Two of my favorites are *How Full is your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey.

How Full is your Bucket? came to me in the last few years when I needed it to reinforce some changes I was working on with the team I supervised. It does a good job articulating the power of words. It does a great job capturing an approach that has been around and improving my life as long as I can remember, another way to look at the power of words. Both of my parents were experts at seeing the good in us and encouraging those behaviors. Friends have told me that Marshall basically says only nice things about me. It is a great thing to get this positive reinforcement both first and second hand.

The beauty of *What's So Amazing About Grace?* is the different perspective it gives those of us who were exposed to the topic in Adventist schools. As a person brought up in the south I knew *grace notes* as the niceties that grease the wheels of social interaction. The message in this book is a religious take on *grace notes* and the power of a truly spiritual application. If we are going to give or receive grace what better place to start than with those who are nearest and dearest and sharing life's adventure? This can be difficult for those of us brought up in a tight religious community that lead us to believe that there is **right** and **wrong** where the "answers are clear and universal and there is no room for ambiguity or uncertainty," Yancy's book shares the wonderful perspective of the power of true grace in our families.

OK, so what have I learned not to do? Basically the reverse of what I have written above. Do not spend time telling your friends and family about how right you are when you hit a bump in your relationship. Your goal should be to help these people to love your partner. Because they love you, when you work out the difficulties in your relationship, it won't be just you they will have to forgive and move on. ➤

Local Wisdom

Why pollute the world you will want to share? Don't be a drama queen about every little thing. Be kind.

Since our relationships are a trip and not a destination, there is never a last story but; for now, I will close with an insight Marshall and I learned early. Being together is a choice. Every day you chose to stay in relationship or to leave. Friends ask if we think it is important to get married to have legal and moral supports for our relationship. It would be nice if we could marry and Marshall could have the benefits my company provides. But the world it full of people who get married and chose to not stay married or stay married in name only. We know getting married would not guarantee the quality of our relationship. The quality of the journey is a choice we get to make every day.



By Noel Thorpe

These are the things I have found to be most important in my twenty-eight-year relationship that has withstood the tests of time.

First, find a partner!!
Avoid getting stuck in

either the *non-scene* or *scene-queen* extremes. Don't disregard places or events. Mix and match different kinds of scenes to make your own. Say yes to invitations. Join a community group. Join a sporting or social club. Take a class. Stay connected with the gay and lesbian community via our excellent print and online media. Think positively and set realistic expectations. Go to venues and events to have a good time with your friends, not just to pick up a "soul mate." Be open-minded about who you are willing to meet. Realize finding a partner is the easy part!

Then there's the small matter of keeping them. Keeping a partner or soul mate is not an easy task in the gay or straight world. Most relationships break up in the first 12 months. You must ask yourself what you see in a potential partner that makes them the one for you. You have to think past the sex. Yes, s/he may be good in bed, but do you want to spend the rest of your life with her/him?

Be honest about what you want from this relationship. Does your potential mate have clean habits or do they leave the toilet seat up when you want it down. Should the toilet paper go over or under on the roll? These are small things, but can you live with them for the next twenty years?

Does your potential partner have similar interests in the areas that are most important to you? Can you live with them if their taste is different from yours?

Can you live without each other for a few weeks? It is important not to smother each other. You have to have some freedom in the relationship for it to survive (and by freedom I am not talking about one-night-stands or other partners).

You must lay down ground rules if you want success in a long-term relationship.

Most of all, love each other for what each other brings to the relationship, good or bad.



By Bruce Tichenor and Eddie Acosta

You ask what we think are secrets for a lasting relationship. Maybe it is easier to make a sort of list but not necessarily in order of importance. Here it goes...

1. Hopefully, both individuals involved have attained a good sense of who they are as a person.
2. Ideally, the choice of a possible partner is arrived at after careful and prayerful consideration.
3. Something truly unique should be sensed by the individuals either from the start or soon thereafter. There should be a special spark!
4. Interest should be at least complementary to ease the path of a spiritual journey together. We love the concept of growing together, becoming more than just the individual selves while preserving one's own identity.
5. A sense of mutual trust should be strived for from the beginning. It should deepen with the passing of time.
6. The expression of affection in both words and deeds is important in communicating love to one another.
7. The ability to admit mistakes and make amends will make for a smoother ride.
8. Strive to be fair in everything done both individually and as a couple.
9. Maintain a sense of humor towards life in general.
10. Cultivate a grateful heart!

There's no magic wand to produce a long-lasting relationship. We've always felt that once an interest seems to be going in a serious direction, a very good idea is to plan and take at least a week (or two) road trip together. Inevitably, it will reveal many aspects of character that won't show up on casual dating. Among other things, you might discover similarities and differences in moral and social attitudes. These might include things such as the handling of money, reactions to unexpected events, the ability to communicate differences, and habits of personal hygiene.

It is likely to bring out the best and the worst in our personalities, and we highly recommend it as an early test of probable compatibility for the long haul.

(Editor's Note: Eddie and Bruce will celebrate their 50th anniversary this year.)



**By Melanie de Weger
and Ivan van Putten**

- Appreciate, show interest, praise what your partner likes or does.
- Love each other; share love and respect.
- Say "I love you" and mean it.
- Show your love in daily

"little" things or rituals.

- Ongoing open and honest communication; express your wishes and expectations and how you feel; listen to each other. Try to understand and validate how the other feels even if you don't feel the same way or have another opinion. Express empathy.

- Ask for and give (positive) feedback.
- Share some common interests or do something together on a regular basis like a sport, hobby, going to church, etc.
- Spend quality time together rather than quantity time.
- Be sure you have time and space for yourself; don't do everything together; you're a unique individual with your own interests, hobbies, work, sometimes friends, etc. (now you have something to tell about ;-))
- Invest in your relationship; it's hard work and takes time; don't take things for granted.
- If there are severe problems you can't solve together, don't hesitate to get some professional help; your relationship is worth it!
- Battle crises together.



Rosalie Marques

- A good relationship between two people takes time. It's impossible to know a person overnight. We need time to observe, to exchange, to talk, to love,

to agree, to disagree. We need to go through something called "routine." Only in these situations can we know actions and reactions, likes and dislikes, character and lack of character. When we wake up without makeup next to each other, when we split the money, when we have to face many different situations, bad or good, then we can really can really

see this person who is living at our side. Only real love can keep two people united among their differences and divergences. A long relationship shows that, in spite of knowing and dealing with a partner often so different from ourselves, we see more quality than defects, we admire and love what we see and even more over the years, we recognize that is impossible to live without that person. At the end of the day, because of the exchange and enrichment between us, we end up looking alike in our own different ways.



**David Ferguson
and Peter Massey**

In relationships, as in life, it seems like you need to check your expectations, regularly, and adjust them to reality. You might start out with a particular

image of what your life together will look like over several years, but it's very likely God has other plans; so learn to be flexible. Most important, be sensitive to what your spouse is dreaming about, what your spouse wants out of life, and be ready to support it as best you can. Hopefully, God is speaking to us both through those dreams.



**Reino Korhonen and
Ingemar Fagerland**

We think our relationship has lasted for 37 years because both of us committed to work to build a long-term relationship. We have lived openly as a

gay couple among our friends, our work, and our church. We share similar values, interests, and hobbies. Each of us has given the other encouragement to develop in his own direction. We have developed ways for the practical tasks of the household such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and gardening to be done without much conflict. We have the support of close common friends. Together, we struggled to help the Swedish State and Church support relationships for gays and lesbians. As of January 1, 2010, we can marry in the Swedish Church just the same as everyone else! ▽





Confession:

Life-giving God: We confess to you and to each other that we often use the Bible and our traditions as waters of purification that divide who is in and who is out. Forgive us, O God, for we ourselves are only “in” because of your grace and not through the merits of our own superiority. Convert the waters of purification within us to the wine that brings relatives, friends, and strangers all together in the unending celebration of the wedding of you and humanity. 1/17/2010 Hiddenwood Presbyterian Church.

◀ The Daughters of Zelophehad (illustration from the 1908 Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons) Wikipedia

Whose Daughters ???

Mike Lewis

Now if you're like me, you've probably never read through the book of Numbers. When I looked at it, I saw lots of statistics and genealogies. I didn't think they were terribly interesting or relevant to living in the 21st century. I was surprised when last quarter's Sabbath School study guide took me there. (That's one of things I love about Sabbath School – it takes me to places I wouldn't normally choose to go.)

In a few brief verses in Numbers 27 there is the story of Zelophehad's daughters. Who on earth was Zelophehad? We are not told very much and it's not particularly relevant to the story. But we are told that he had five daughters (*poor fella! – imagine the queue for the bathroom...*) and no sons.

In the patriarchal society of the early Old Testament he must have had a bad time. *What sort of man are you – can't you produce a male heir? What is wrong with your wife – can't she bear a son? What sins have you committed to bring this curse of God on you?* Thank God for the enlightened views of modern society (and

please, God, continue to enlighten those who continue to hold such views today, for there seem still to be many.)

These daughters grow up, find a life, play their part in the wanderings in the wilderness. But they are unusual. They will not kowtow and submit to the unfair and unjust tradition that seems always to have always been in place. Sons get to inherit, daughters do not. End of story? Not for Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah (Num 27:1). When their father dies and they stand to lose everything he had, they go straight to the top, to Moses, the CEO. “Why should the name of our father disappear just because he had no sons? Give us property along with the rest of our relatives” (Num. 27:4).

We are not told what Moses thought about them. We are told what he did. There's a lot that Moses DIDN'T say. He didn't say, “Women have no rights in this society.” He didn't say, “You and your father sinned and therefore you have no place here.” He didn't say, “Go and get married and take on the inheritance of your new husbands.” He didn't say, “We'll

form a committee to investigate and report back in five years' time.” He didn't ask, “What do the academics think about it?”

“Moses brought their case before the Lord.” No *ifs* and *buts*; just an immediate and direct course of action. The Lord replies, immediately and directly. “The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You must give them an inheritance along with their father's relatives.... the Israelites must observe this as a legal requirement, just as the Lord commanded Moses” (Num. 4:5-11).

So it was that the daughters of Zelophehad received their inheritance: their property rights. Justice was done and was seen to be done. All Israel from that day to this has the example of these women to learn from and also the lesson of Moses' response and action.

“Moses brought their case before the Lord.”

Now I am aware that it can be dangerous to draw too many close parallels. It can be wrong to stretch the interpretation of Scripture. But I can't help wondering what we LGBTI Seventh-day

Adventists and the leadership of the Church could learn from this story, tucked away in an obscure book in the writings of Moses. (It begs the question of why Moses thought fit to include it in the first place.)

Many LGBTI Adventists have been and continue to be disallowed their inheritance. They are being disfellowshipped from the churches in which they have grown up. They are being forced to sit on the back row, tolerated at best, and ignored, ridiculed, slandered, and abused – or worse. They are being silenced in their faith communities. They are being made spiritually homeless, left to wander the streets like beggars, desperate for the “cup of cold water offered in My name.” They are being told that they are sinners who can never be forgiven, that they are cursed, that they are filthy, unloved, unwanted.

I can relate to being a daughter of Zelophehad. Maybe you can, too.

Just as Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah went to Moses and asked him for their property rights, so I ask the leadership of the Church – the Adventist Church and all other Churches: **GIVE ME MY INHERITANCE along with the rest of my relatives!**

And with that I ask, just as Moses did, “Will you also have the courage to bring my case before the Lord?” Don’t discuss it in committee for years. Don’t have academic conferences that will be agenda-based, biased at worst and inconclusive at best. Don’t tell me about the traditions of our forefathers. **BRING MY CASE BEFORE THE LORD.** If you will do that openly, transparently, fairly, and honestly, then I will wait for the Lord’s answer. (And yes, I know from innumerable sermons on prayer that the Lord can say Yes or No or Wait.) But until you, as leaders of the Church, do bring my case before the Lord, then my LGBTI sisters



- the need to connect with other LGBTI Adventists

You can change this
by starting a
Kinship Chapter
in your area

Contact the Kinship Office
for more information
at office@sdakinship.org.

Start a Kinship Chapter in Your Area

Nearly all LGBTI Adventists have
one thing in common



**If you yourself are at peace,
then there is at least some peace in the world.**
-Thomas Merton

and brothers and I will continue, like the importunate widow (Lk. 18:1-7), to hammer on your doors, demand your attention, and plead our case.

We ask for your ears, your prayers on our behalf, and your courageous action that will deliver our inheritance. That is our right. That is your duty. ▽

kinship_uk@scotmagic.co.uk



**This DVD
contains stories of three
supportive Seventh-day
Adventist parents of gay and
lesbian children. This DVD can
be ordered online at
www.sdagayperspectives.com**

Health Tip of the Month

5 Habits That Stop Strokes

To slash your stroke risk by 80 percent, there are just five simple health habits to keep in mind:

Walk every day, maintain a healthy weight, avoid cigarette smoke, enjoy alcohol only in moderation, and eat as nutritiously as you can. Some of these you probably already do. But tack on the missing items and your stroke risk drops dramatically.

The Golden Health Rules

In a large study of men and women in their fifties, those who most adhered to these five basic health habits were 80 percent less likely to have an ischemic stroke -- the most common type of stroke. Specifically, these study participants exercised about 30 minutes a day and had BMIs below 25, and their diet mainstays were fruit, veggies, whole grains, and lean protein. Also, the women had no more than one alcoholic drink a day; the men, no more than two.



Why It Works

These five health habits reduce your risk of a whole host of diseases and conditions, including diseases that up your odds of a stroke -- like high blood pressure and diabetes. And cigarette smoke, heavy alcohol consumption, and obesity are known stroke risk factors. So who says you can't do it all? We've got some advice on how to make these "sounds good" suggestions into real-life habits. ▼



I Love You

Jahweh, El Shaddai, Adoni, Elohim,
Jesus, The Lamb, The Bread, the Dove.

I can speak in every language of every being on any planet in any galaxy ever created, but if I don't love you I would be hypocritical and the loud form of evil itself. I have always known the future. I created the mysteries of the universe and the knowledge to understand them. I have the power to build and demolish mountains. Even so, if I did not love you, my power would mean nothing. I poured out the riches of eternity and gave the Best Gift of Heaven to die on a cross for humanity; but if I didn't love you as I did it, that gift would mean nothing.

I want you to know that I am patient with you as you learn of me and

of my wishes for you. I am patient with your mistakes. I am patient with you even as it takes you time to realize how much I love you, as you are, in the orientation I created in you. I glory in your successes. I wait each day to speak with you, want to hear what you have to say, consider it important. I value your individual



Jesus (Rembrandt van Rijn)

differences and know that each of you has unique gifts that you bring to your life. I don't wait for you to make mistakes and eagerly list them as fodder for some pagan lightning bolt. I lean through Heaven's gates, watching for your successes. I have borne the evil of the world, I have endured the rage of my enemies, and I still hold eternal and infinite hope. My love for you will never end. As you come to see Me more clearly, face to face as it were, I will paint that love in the colors of the rainbow that surrounds my throne.

Know this. Know it forever.

Based on I Corinthians 13

connection

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You  are  my  Valentine

