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Adventist®
Family Ministries

2026 RESOURCE BOOK

FAMILY, FAITH, AND FOCUS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



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DELBERT AND SUSAN BAKER • HEATHER BEESON • BRYAN CAFFERKY • ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL
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- Revival and Reformation: Families Reaching Out
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PREFACE

Let's be honest—our phones buzz more than our doorbells these days. Our kids know their way around TikTok better than they know their way to meaningful conversation. And somewhere between managing screen time and monitoring online activity, many of us wonder if we're losing the battle for our families' hearts and minds.

If you've picked up this book, you're probably asking some tough questions: How do I compete with a device that's designed to capture attention? How do I teach my kids about God's love when they're getting their life lessons from YouTube? How do I create a Christ-centered home when everyone's scattered across different screens?

Here's what we've learned: You don't have to choose between faith and the digital world. Technology isn't the enemy—it's a tool. And like any tool, it amplifies what's already in our hearts. The real question isn't whether we should use technology, but how we can use it wisely to strengthen our families instead of pulling them apart.

Family, Faith, and Focus in a Digital World is born out of real conversations with real families wrestling with real challenges. We've talked with parents who feel like they're speaking a foreign language to their kids. We've sat with families where everyone's physically present but emotionally elsewhere. We've seen the frustration, the guilt, and yes, sometimes the defeat that comes with trying to raise godly children in a hyperconnected world.

“You don't have to choose between faith and the digital world. Technology isn't the enemy—it's a tool. And like any tool, it amplifies what's already in our hearts.”

But we've also seen something beautiful: families who have found ways to make technology work for them rather than against them. Parents who've discovered that the same creativity God gave us to solve problems can help us

navigate digital challenges. Kids who are learning that being connected online can enhance their connection with God and family when done thoughtfully.

In these pages, you'll find practical ideas that work in the real world—not perfect theories that only work in perfect homes. We'll talk about setting boundaries that stick, having conversations about online choices that don't end in arguments, and finding ways to use technology to bring your family closer together, not drive them further apart.

Most importantly, this isn't a resource book about retreating from the modern world. It's about engaging it with wisdom. The same God who guided families through every major change in human history—from agricultural to industrial to digital—is with us now. His truth doesn't change, even when everything else seems to.

Our prayer is simple: that your family will discover how to thrive, not just survive, in our digital age. That faith will grow deeper, focus will become clearer, and family bonds will strengthen through both meaningful connections and intentional breaks from the screen.

After all, we're all just trying to raise kids who love God and love others well—and that calling remains the same whether we're doing it with stone tablets, printing presses, or smartphones. As long as we're “grounded in the Bible, and focused on the mission.”

Maranatha!

Willie and Elaine Oliver, Directors

Department of Family Ministries

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

World Headquarters

Silver Spring, Maryland

family.adventist.org



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE BOOK

The Family Ministries Resource Book is an annual resource organized by the General Conference Adventist Family Ministries with input from the world field to provide Family Ministries leaders in divisions, unions, conferences, and local churches around the world with resources for the special family emphases weeks and Sabbaths.

Within this Resource Book you will find sermon ideas, seminars, children's stories, leadership resources, and other tools to help facilitate these special days and other programs you may want to implement during the year. In Appendix A you will find useful information that will assist you in implementing family ministries in the local church.

This resource also includes Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations of the seminars and handouts. Seminar facilitators are encouraged to personalize the Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations with their own personal stories and pictures that reflect the diversity of their various communities. To download a presentation please visit: **family.adventist.org/2026RB**

For more topics on a range of family life issues, download previous years of the Resource Book at family.adventist.org/resource-book/

CHRISTIAN HOME AND MARRIAGE WEEK: FEBRUARY 14-21

Christian Home and Marriage Week takes place in February embracing two Sabbaths: Christian Marriage Day that emphasizes Christian marriage and Christian Home Day that emphasizes parenting. Christian Home and Marriage Week begins on the second Sabbath and ends on the third Sabbath in February.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE DAY (EMPHASIZES MARRIAGE): SABBATH, FEBRUARY 14

Use the **Marriage Sermon** idea for the Sabbath worship service and the **Marriage Seminar** for any program segment during this celebration.

CHRISTIAN HOME DAY (EMPHASIZES PARENTING): SABBATH, FEBRUARY 21

Use the **Parenting Sermon** idea for the Sabbath worship service and the **Parenting Seminar** for any program segment during this celebration.

FAMILY TOGETHERNESS WEEK OF PRAYER: SEPTEMBER 6-12

Family Togetherness Week of Prayer is scheduled during the first week of September, beginning with the first Sunday and ending on the following Sabbath with Family Togetherness Day of Prayer. Family Togetherness Week of Prayer and Family Togetherness Day of Prayer highlight celebrating families and the church as a family.

A supplemental resource with daily readings and family activities will be provided for the Family Togetherness Week of Prayer. To download this resource please visit: family.adventist.org/familyworship

FAMILY TOGETHERNESS DAY OF PRAYER (FOR MARRIAGES, FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS): SABBATH, SEPTEMBER 12

Use the **Family Sermon** idea for the Sabbath worship service found in this Resource Book.

SERMON IDEAS

Sermon Ideas are meant to be an inspiration—the beginning of your own sermon. Pray to be guided by the Holy Spirit, so your thoughts and words may be an extension of God's love for each heart and family.

- **A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE:
RECLAIMING GOD'S RHYTHM IN THE DIGITAL AGE..... 12**

This sermon invites families to rediscover divine balance—teaching how sacred rhythms of rest, worship, and presence restore peace and unity.

- **WHEN KNOWLEDGE INCREASES:
FAMILIES OF FAITH IN A DIGITAL AGE.....24**

This message reveals how prophetic knowledge and modern technology test our faith, guiding families to use innovation for mission.

- **GUARDING OUR HOMES:
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This sermon equips families to protect their hearts from digital invasion by nurturing discernment, boundaries, and Christ-centered relationships in the home.

A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE: RECLAIMING GOD'S RHYTHM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

BY WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

THE TEXT:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

THE TYRANNY OF THE PING

We would like to begin by asking you a question. How many of you checked your phone before you even got out of bed today? Don't be ashamed now—keep those hands up! How many of you have felt that anxious flutter in your chest when you can't find your phone? How many families are sitting around the dinner table, but everybody's face is glowing blue from a screen instead of glowing with the warmth of conversation?

Willie Oliver, PhD, CFLE and **Elaine Oliver**, PhD, LCPC, CFLE are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

We live in an age, beloved, where we are more connected than ever before, yet families are falling apart. We can FaceTime (video chat) with someone on the other side of the world, but we can't have a heart-to-heart with the person sleeping in the bed next to us. We know what strangers had for breakfast on Instagram, but we don't know what our own children are struggling with in their souls.

The enemy has been clever, dear ones. He has taken the very tools that could bring us together and turned them into chains that separate us. He has made us slaves to the notification, servants to the screen, and prisoners to the ping.

But we've got good news for you today! The same God who set the rhythm of the universe—who established day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, and gave us Sabbath—this same God has given us a blueprint for ordering our lives, even in this digital age.

Today's message is titled *A Time for Every Purpose: Reclaiming God's Rhythm in the Digital Age*. Let's pray.

PRAYER:

Gracious Father, as we open Your Word today, open our hearts to hear what You would say to us about the times we live in. Help us to discern Your voice above the noise of this digital age. Give us wisdom to order our days according to Your perfect timing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Please turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 3, and let's read together verses 1 through 8.

THE TEXT:

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; A time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war; and a time of peace."

MAIN TEXT ANALYSIS: THE DIVINE RHYTHM

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF SEASONS (V. 1)

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”

The very first thing Solomon establishes, beloved, is that there is a divine order to life. The Hebrew word *zeman* means time, or season—it speaks not just of chronological time, but of appointed time, purposed time, God-ordained time.

When God created the world, He didn’t just fling stars into space randomly. Genesis 1:14 tells us He set those lights in the firmament “for signs, and seasons, and for days and years.” “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

But what have we done in our digital age? We have tried to eliminate seasons! We want spring all year round. We want to be available 24/7. We want to harvest without ever having planted. We want to reap without ever having sown.

Listen, church: Your smartphone doesn’t understand seasons! It doesn’t know the difference between work time and family time, between Sabbath and Sunday, between sleeping and waking. But God does! And He’s calling us back to His rhythm.

Constant stimulation causes mental fatigue. A constant flow of notifications, messages, and social media updates overloads the brain’s processing capacity. The constant vigilance required to monitor these inputs keeps the mind in a state of high alert, making it difficult to find mental quietude. This state of persistent activation can lead to anxiety and burnout, which are the opposite of the rest and restoration that solitude provides. Psychologist Sherry Turkle notes that when we are always connected, we can become dependent on the validation of others. Rather than developing a secure sense of self, we use other people to prop up a fragile ego, a concept psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott referred to as a “False Self.” This dependency makes being alone uncomfortable, as it removes the source of constant validation.

II. THE DANCE OF OPPOSITES (VV. 2-8)

Now watch how Solomon unfolds this principle. He gives us fourteen pairs of opposites—twenty-eight different activities that make up the fullness of human experience. But notice something beautiful here: these aren’t contradictions; they’re complementary seasons that work together to create a complete life.

A. “A time to be born, and a time to die” (v. 2a)

Every family knows about beginnings and endings. But in our digital age, we’ve lost the art of letting things die. We keep dead conversations on life support

through endless text chains. We refuse to let toxic relationships end because we can still see what they're doing on social media.

Sometimes—people of God—love looks like hitting the “unfollow” button. Sometimes, wisdom means letting that group chat die. Sometimes family health means saying, “This device has served its season, but now it's time for it to rest.”

B. “A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted” (v. 2b)

Oh, this speaks to our souls! In our instant-gratification culture, we want to plant and harvest in the same day. We want to post a picture and get immediate likes. We want to send a message and get an immediate response.

But family relationships are like gardens, beloved. You can't microwave intimacy. You can't download deep connection. You can't stream authentic love.

Ellen White reminds us in her book, *Child Guidance*: “The Lord made Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden to dress the garden and keep it for the Lord. It was for their happiness to have some employment, or else the Lord would not have appointed them their work” (White, 1954, p. 345). There's something about working with your hands, about waiting for seeds to grow, that teaches us patience in a way no digital device ever can.

C. “A time to weep, and a time to laugh” (v. 4a)

Here's where we get into dangerous territory in our digital age. Social media has created a culture where we only show the highlight reel. We post our laughter, but we hide our tears. We share our victories, but we mask our defeats.

But listen, family: authentic relationships require both seasons. If your children never see you weep, how will they know it's safe to cry in front of you? If your spouse never sees you struggle, how can they truly understand your strength?

Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb (John 11:35), even though He knew He was about to raise him from the dead! Even the Son of God honored the season of sorrow.

The problem with our digital lives is that we try to be “on” all the time. We try to be the same person in every context, at every moment. But God designed us for seasons of joy and seasons of sorrow, seasons of strength and seasons of vulnerability.

D. “A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing” (v. 5b)

Now we're getting to the heart of family relationships! Physical affection has seasons, too. There's a time when your toddler wants to be held constantly, and there's a time when your teenager needs space. There's a time for intimate conversation with your spouse, and there's a time to simply be present together in silence.

But here's what's happening in our digital age: we're embracing our devices when we should be embracing each other, and we're distancing ourselves from our loved ones when we should be drawing near.

Research from the Center for Creative Leadership found that families who establish "device-free zones"—times and spaces where no digital devices are allowed—report significantly higher levels of satisfaction and connection. They create seasons of embrace!

E. "A time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (v. 7b)

Oh family, if we could just learn this one principle, it would revolutionize our families! In our digital age, we think we must respond to everything immediately. We feel compelled to comment on every post, to answer every notification, to have an opinion about everything.

But Solomon says there's a season for silence! Sometimes the most loving thing you can do for your family is to put the phone down and just listen. Sometimes the wisest response to that inflammatory group message is no response at all.

Ellen White counseled in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5: "We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise" (White, 1948, p. 161).

Notice she mentions praying in different places—the chamber, the barn, the orchard. These were seasons of silence, seasons of listening for God's voice. When was the last time your family had a season of digital silence together?

THE GREAT DECEPTION: TIME WITHOUT PURPOSE

But here's where the enemy has been craftiest, beloved. He hasn't just given us digital distractions—he's given us digital distractions that masquerade as productivity, as connection, as purpose.

We scroll through social media and tell ourselves we're "staying connected." We binge-watch Netflix and call it "family time." We text instead of talking and convince ourselves we're "communicating."

But Solomon says there's "a time to every purpose under the heaven." That word "purpose" in Hebrew is *chephets*—it means delight, desire, God's will being accomplished. Every season should have divine purpose!

Let me ask you, church: What is the divine purpose of spending three hours scrolling through other people's vacation photos? What is the God-ordained goal of arguing with strangers in comment sections? What heavenly objective is accomplished by checking your phone 150 times a day?

Ellen White saw this coming when she wrote: "Angels delight in a home where God reigns supreme, and the children are taught to reverence religion, the Bible, and their Creator. Such families can claim the promise: 'Them that honor Me I will honor' " (White, 1948, p. 424).

THE REDEMPTION RHYTHM: **GOD'S SOLUTION FOR DIGITAL FAMILIES**

I. ESTABLISH SACRED SEASONS

The first thing we must do as families is to establish sacred seasons—times that are set apart, protected, holy.

THE DAILY RHYTHM:

- Morning devotions before devices (Psalm 5:3: "My voice you shall hear in the morning, O LORD").
- Family meals without screens (Deuteronomy 8:10: "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God").
- Evening prayer and reflection before sleep (Psalm 4:4: "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still").
- Ellen White emphasized this in her book, *Child Guidance*: "If ever there was a time when the diet should be of the most simple kind, it is now. Meat should not be placed before our children. Its influence is to excite and strengthen the lower passions and has a tendency to deaden the moral powers" (White, 1954, p. 461).
- Notice she's talking about preparation—creating conditions that help us connect with God and each other. Our digital diet needs the same kind of intentionality!

THE WEEKLY RHYTHM:

- The Sabbath becomes our great teacher here. From Friday evening to Saturday evening, we practice letting go of our digital striving, our online anxieties, our virtual commitments. We remember that we are human beings, not human doings.

II. CREATE CONSECRATED SPACES

Just as the tabernacle had different areas for different purposes, our homes need consecrated spaces:

- Bedrooms as sanctuaries for rest and intimacy (no charging stations)!
- Dining rooms as temples of fellowship and gratitude.
- Living areas as spaces for face-to-face conversation and play.

Dr. Larry Rosen's research on "iDisorder" shows that families who create device-free zones in their homes have children with better sleep patterns, improved academic performance, and stronger emotional regulation skills.

III. CULTIVATE CONTEMPLATIVE HEARTS

The deepest need in our digital age is the need for contemplation—the ability to "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Ellen White understood this and shared in the book, *The Desire of Ages*: "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit" (White, 1940, p. 83).

Contemplation requires silence. It demands solitude. It insists on seasons of disconnection from the world so we can connect with God.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS: LIVING THE RHYTHM

FOR PARENTS:

- **Model Digital Sabbaths:** Show your children what it looks like to regularly disconnect from devices and reconnect with God and family.
- **Create Rituals of Transition:** Develop family practices that mark the movement from digital time to sacred time—perhaps a special prayer, a moment of silence, or a symbolic act of putting devices away together.
- **Teach the Art of Presence:** Help your children understand that love is spelled T-I-M-E, and time is more than just being in the same room with your device.

FOR COUPLES:

- **Establish Communication Seasons:** Have regular times when all devices are put away and you focus solely on each other.

- **Protect Intimacy:** The bedroom should be a sanctuary for rest and connection, not a charging station for devices.
- **Practice Gratitude Together:** Before bed, share three things you're grateful for from the day—and none of them can be digital!

FOR CHILDREN:

- **Learn the Rhythm Young:** Teach children that just as we have bedtimes for our bodies, we need “bedtimes” for our devices.
- **Develop Alternative Activities:** Fill the non-digital seasons with activities that build character, creativity, and connection—such as reading, crafting, nature walks, and service projects.
- **Understanding Consequences:** Help children see the connection between their digital habits and their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION: WHAT SCIENCE CONFIRMS

Modern psychology is catching up to what Solomon knew: human beings are designed for rhythm and purpose.

Attention Restoration Theory (ART), developed by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, proposes that exposure to nature restores mental fatigue by allowing directed attention to rest and recover, thereby improving cognitive functions such as working memory and attention. This restoration is facilitated by natural environments, which offer “soft fascination,” allowing the mind to wander without demanding effortful concentration. Key elements of ART include the presence of “soft fascination,” a feeling of being away from daily demands, the overall scope of the environment, and an individual's personal “compatibility” with the setting.

Flow State Research pioneered by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and furthered by psychologists like Jeanne Nakamura, describes the “zone” of peak performance, intense focus, and intrinsic reward. It demonstrates that our deepest satisfaction comes from activities that fully engage our attention in purposeful ways. Digital distraction destroys our ability to enter these meaningful flow states.

Attachment Theory reveals that children need consistent, focused attention from caregivers to develop secure attachments. When parents are chronically distracted by devices, children develop anxious attachment styles that affect them for life.

Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair, author of *The Big Disconnect* (2013) found that children as young as four years old report feeling “sad, mad, angry, and lonely” when their parents are distracted by devices. One child said, “I feel like I’m not important when my mom is looking at her phone.”

THE PROPHETIC CALL: A TIME FOR DECISION

People of God, we are living in prophetic times. Ellen White wrote in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8: “We are living in the closing scenes of this earth’s history. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The hours of probation are fast passing. We have no time—not a moment—to lose” (White, 1956, p. 252).

If we have no time to lose, then we must be intentional about how we spend our time! We cannot afford to waste these precious hours scrolling mindlessly, arguing online, or allowing digital distractions to steal our focus from what matters eternally.

The enemy knows that if he can fragment our attention, he can destroy our spiritual power. If he can make us slaves to the notification, he can keep us from hearing the still small voice of God.

But we believe God is calling us to be a peculiar people in this digital age—a people who understand seasons, who honor rhythm, who choose connection over distraction, presence over productivity, relationship over entertainment.

THE CHALLENGE 30 DAYS OF DIVINE RHYTHM

We want to challenge every family here today to commit to 30 days of practicing divine rhythm:

WEEK 1: ESTABLISH SACRED TIMES

- Choose one hour each day for completely device-free family time.
- Begin and end each day with prayer before touching any device.
- Implement one device-free meal per day.

WEEK 2: CREATE CONSECRATED SPACES

- Remove all devices from bedrooms.
- Establish one room in your home as a device-free zone.
- Create a family charging station outside of living areas.

WEEK 3: CULTIVATE CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES

- Spend 15 minutes each day in nature without any devices.
- Practice one minute of silence before each meal after praying for your meal.
- End each day by sharing three things you're grateful for (no digital topics allowed).

WEEK 4: EXPAND AND ESTABLISH

- Implement a weekly digital Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Sabbath.
- Plan a device-free family activity each week.
- Teach your children to check in with their hearts before checking their phones.

THE PROMISE:

GOD'S BLESSING ON DIVINE ORDER

We can tell you what happens when families embrace God's rhythm in the digital age:

- **Children grow up secure in their identity**, not seeking validation through likes and comments, but knowing they are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator of the universe.
- **Marriages become stronger** as couples rediscover the art of presence, of really seeing each other, of making space for intimacy that can't be interrupted by a notification.
- **Parents become more peaceful** as they stop trying to keep up with the impossible pace of digital life and start walking to the beat of heaven's drum.
- **Families discover joy** in simple pleasures that have been drowned out by the noise of our connected age—the sound of laughter around the dinner table, the peace of reading together in the evening, the satisfaction of working on a project with their hands.

Ellen White declared in her book, *The Adventist Home*: “The more closely the members of a family are united in their work in the home, the more uplifting and helpful will be the influence that father and mother and sons and daughters will exert outside the home” (White, 1952, p. 37).

But we must choose love. We must choose presence. We must choose God's rhythm over the world's rush.

CONCLUSION: THE TIME IS NOW

Family of God, there is a time for everything under heaven. There was a time when our ancestors lived without these digital devices, and they built strong families and deep relationships with God. There may come a time when these devices are taken away from us, and we'll need to know how to connect without them.

But today—today is our time to choose. Today is our season to decide whether we'll be slaves to the screen or servants of a Holy God. Today is our opportunity to reclaim God's rhythm for our families.

The enemy wants us to believe that we don't have a choice, that we're helpless against the pull of digital distraction. But Joshua declared, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15), and we're here to tell you that choice is still available to us today!

You can choose to serve the notifications, or you can choose to serve the Lord. You can bow down to the blue light, or you can bow down to the One who is the Light of the world. You can worship at the altar of entertainment, or you can worship at the throne of grace.

Solomon ended this passage in Ecclesiastes by saying, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). God wants to make your family life beautiful, but it must happen in His time, according to His rhythm, following His seasons.

The question is not whether you have time for God and family—the question is whether you'll make time for what matters most.

There is a time to scroll, and a time to pray. There is a time to post, and a time to be present. There is a time to connect digitally, and a time to connect spiritually. There is a time to be entertained, and a time to be transformed.

Beloved, the time for transformation is now! The season for change has come! Will you answer the call to return to God's rhythm? Will you lead your family back to divine order? Will you choose heaven's harmony over earth's cacophony?

Let's pray together, and let's commit together to honoring the God of seasons in every season of our lives.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come before You to recognize that we have allowed the urgent to crowd out the important, the immediate to override the eternal. We have traded Your perfect rhythm for the world's restless rush. Forgive us, Lord.

We pray for grace to establish new patterns, divine rhythms, holy habits in our families. Help us to discern the times and seasons You have ordained for our lives. Give us wisdom to know when to engage with technology and when to disconnect. Help us to model for our children what it means to walk in step with Your Spirit rather than being driven by the demands of digital devices.

We ask for Your blessing on our homes, that they might become sanctuaries of peace in this noisy world. Help us to create spaces where Your voice can be heard above the clamor of notifications and the chatter of entertainment.

Lord, we want to be a people who understand seasons, who honor rhythm, who choose Your ways over the world's ways. Make us families that shine like lights in the darkness of this digital age, showing others that there is a better way to live.

We commit these next 30 days to You, asking for Your strength to implement the changes You're calling us to make. Help us to be faithful in small things so that You can trust us with greater things.

In the precious name of Jesus, our Savior and our example of perfect balance, we pray. Amen.

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven." May God help us to live in His perfect timing, for His perfect purposes, in these challenging but hopeful days. Remain encouraged and faithful! Amen, and amen!

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WHEN KNOWLEDGE INCREASES: FAMILIES OF FAITH IN A DIGITAL AGE

BY DELBERT AND SUSAN BAKER

THE TEXTS:

Daniel 12:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Proverbs 18:15

INTRODUCTION

Picture a simple scene: A family gathers around the dinner table. The food is hot, the prayer is said, but instead of conversation and laughter, each person bends their head toward a glowing screen. A text buzzes, a notification pings, someone checks a feed, and the moment of togetherness dissolves into digital distraction.

This scene is repeated across the world, in mansions and huts, in bustling cities and rural villages. Technology, once a tool, has become a rival for our attention and affection.

We live in an age Daniel foresaw: “Seal up the scroll until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4). We have more knowledge, more access, more devices than any generation before us.

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Artificial intelligence (AI), social media, smartphones, and global connectivity are transforming the way we live, work, and interact with one another.

But the question for families of faith is this: *Will technology draw us closer to God and to each other—or will it quietly replace those sacred connections?*

Paul's counsel is urgent for our time: "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). That's the framework of this message. God calls us, as Adventist families, not to flee from technology in fear, nor to embrace it uncritically, but to test it, redeem it, and use it for His glory.

Let us examine ways to approach this important subject effectively:

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND PROPHECY

The rapid rise of knowledge is not random; it is prophetic. Daniel's vision is being fulfilled before our eyes. What once took decades of research to examine and understand can now be accomplished in hours by the use of artificial intelligence. Languages can be translated in seconds. Ideas once locked in libraries are now on our phones.

In his book, Daniel predicted that knowledge would increase as human history progressed. More than 100 years ago, Ellen White expanded on the idea that the explosion of knowledge Daniel predicted would be fulfilled specifically in the last days. (*Signs of the Times*, April 26, 1883). She saw new inventions as providential tools for spreading the gospel, printing presses, railroads, and telegraphs. She did not fear the latest technology of her day. Instead, she asked, "How can we harness these advances for God's mission?"

That same question is ours today. Families are surrounded by devices. Children learn to swipe before they learn to speak. Parents juggle the demands of work emails, online shopping, and endless notifications. The danger is not just overuse; it is misplaced use. The challenge is not the tool itself but the direction of our hearts.

Solomon's wisdom is clear: "The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Proverbs 18:15). In other words, knowledge is good, but it must be guided by wisdom and discernment.

PRINCIPLES FOR STRONG FAMILIES

How can Adventist families remain anchored in God's Word while navigating a sea of digital change? Three principles can guide us:

1. THE OPPORTUNITY MOMENT

“Every advancement in knowledge, every acquisition of power, opens before us new fields of labor and new opportunities to work with God” (White, 1903, p. 262).

Technology offers families fresh opportunities:

- Parents can utilize Bible apps and devotionals to guide family worship.
- Grandparents, if not living close to their grandchildren, can share spiritual values and activities by connecting through texting and video calls.
- Youth can share their testimonies with the click of a button to friends and audiences across their social circles, communities, and the world.
- The opportunity moment is real—but only if families claim it intentionally.

2. THE HUMAN AND DIVINE METHOD

God’s way has always been partnership: “Divine power combined with human effort” (White, 1889, p. 538).

- Technology cannot build strong marriages and raise godly children. Apps cannot disciple teenagers. AI cannot produce a Christlike character.
- This is personal spiritual work that requires prayer, discernment, discipline, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Families must guard against outsourcing spiritual growth to gadgets, video programming and AI.
- Instead, they should let digital tools supplement, not replace, individual time, personal devotion, and family worship.

3. The Glory Principle

“Does it bring glory to God? Does it lead minds to Him?” (White, 1930, p. 398).

- This principle is simple yet searching; it can apply to every area of life and to every device available. Before we click, scroll, or download, we must ask:
- Does this, and can this, device and content honor God?
- Does this activity build family faith or break it down?
- Does this use of technology make us more like Jesus or more like the world?
- The Glory Principle is a practical filter families can intentionally incorporate. It is something that can be
- practiced, taught, and modeled to adults, youth, and even young children. If it doesn’t bring glory to God,
- it doesn’t deserve our time or attention.

TECHNOLOGY AS A SERVANT, NOT A MASTER

When wisely managed, technology can bless and enrich family faith and spirituality. Consider these possibilities:

1. ENHANCING BIBLE STUDY

AI-driven tools can help families explore Scripture in new ways, with cross-references, historical context, and study plans. A grieving parent can quickly find every verse that offers comfort from God. A curious teenager can compare Bible translations. Technology can deepen our understanding of God's Word and provide us with new perspectives to enliven our faith.

2. STRENGTHENING FAMILY WORSHIP

Families can use digital devotionals, Scripture songs, or guided prayer apps. Parents can create "tech-assisted" worship, using a screen to show a Bible video clip, then putting the device down to discuss and pray together. The key is intentionality: the device serves the worship, not the other way around.

3. SUPPORTING CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

James compares God's Word to a mirror (James 1:23–25). Technology can act as a modern mirror, prompting self-reflection and accountability. Journaling apps, reminders to pray, or shared family gratitude lists may cultivate spiritual habits. Yet no app can replace the transforming power of Christ. Tools can support, but only Jesus saves, and the Holy Spirit enlightens.

4. ADVANCING THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

Revelation challenges us to take the everlasting gospel "*to every nation, tribe, language, and people.*" Technology accelerates this mission:

- Adventist media translated instantly into multiple languages.
- Online evangelism reaching closed countries.
- Content designed for different learning styles and cultures.

The Bible writers who penned Scripture could not have imagined how God's Word could be distributed around the world with the click of a button on a phone or laptop. The ones and zeroes of computer coding have replaced papyrus and ancient ink. The digital tools we have today can help to finish the work of spreading the Gospel faster than ever. Families can be part of this by sharing truth through their own platforms.

DANGERS FAMILIES NEED TO AVOID

1. SHORTCUTS TO CHARACTER

There is no app for sanctification. No AI system can produce holiness. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Technology can facilitate learning, but it is the Holy Spirit who applies the Word to our hearts and minds. Families, as well as each believer, must guard against the misperception that spiritual growth can be automated.

2. ABDICATING SPIRITUAL THINKING

Technology can never replace discernment. Families cannot allow AI or media to think for them. Spiritual laziness regarding the use of technology will surely erode faith. Rather than allowing the indiscriminate use of technology, responsible parents will lead their families in thoughtful, prayerful choices.

3. GULLIBLE CONSUMPTION

AI can generate falsehoods, deepfakes, and misinformation. Social media can push biases and distort the truth. Children are exposed to moral confusion, harmful images, and addictive patterns. Families must teach vigilance. Paul urges: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Families need the courage to reject harmful content and protect their homes.

BALANCED SPIRITUAL TECH PRACTICES

How can families thrive spiritually while living in a tech-saturated world? Here are five practices:

- **Pray Before You Plug In** – Begin each day by asking: “*Lord, guide how we use these tools today.*” Make prayer the family’s first connection.
- **Discern then Discuss Together** – Families should openly talk about what they watch, read, and consume. Shared reflection cultivates wisdom and accountability.
- **Innovate for Ministry Outreach** – Use tech creatively: livestream a Bible study, share an encouraging verse on social media, design worship playlists, or create short testimonies. Let your family’s digital footprint point to Christ.
- **Integrate Tech and Non-Tech to Deepen Spiritual Growth** – Use technology to enhance, not replace, worship, family devotions, and personal study. Use it and then don’t use it; try mixing up digital devices with just reading from

a hard copy Bible. Try a “digital free Sabbath” periodically, setting devices aside to focus on God and one another.

- **Set Healthy Boundaries** – Parents must model healthy tech use. Establish screen-free zones at meals, during worship, and at bedtime. It may not be easy, but the end will justify the efforts invested. Boundaries protect what matters most.

ADVENTIST MOVEMENT AND FAMILIES

One can reasonably assume that Ellen White would support the use of modern technology for the benefit of others and the cause of good if she were alive today. In referring to how advances could be used in God’s work, she declared: “New methods must be introduced. God’s people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living” (White, 1946, p. 70).

We are living in that prophetic moment. Technology is here to stay. The question is not *whether* we will use it, but *how* we will use it. Like Paul, we are called to become “all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Our methods can change, but our message cannot.

The increase of knowledge is a providential challenge. Families of faith must rise with wisdom, courage, and creativity. AI and digital tools are not ultimate threats nor ultimate saviors; they are tests and opportunities. If surrendered to God, they can help us prepare people for Christ’s return.

A CLOSING WORD...

Recently, we spoke with a 19-year-old young woman. She made a serious statement that stuck with us. She said, “*It is not easy to be a young person today!*” Simply stated, but profoundly true. There are avenues for attack on today’s youth that we have not seen before, and technology is at the top of the list!

In summary of this important subject, we share these concluding ideas that can help parents and guardians to be successful as they partner with children, youth, and persons of all ages to use technology responsibly.

First, Reasonably Talk About It: Like any good instruction, repetition is better than a one-time lecture. Make conversations about using technology ongoing and not just when the kids are in trouble for their usage! If children understand why boundaries are important, they will be less likely to view parental input as a desire for control to be resisted.

Second, Model Your Message: Ensure that children see you modeling wise technology use. They will immediately pick up on the hypocrisy if you are always

viewing content on a device, even if it is for work. Keeping technology limited is a good way to signal to the entire family that they are valuable to you and that you place a premium on spending time with them.

Then, Put Safeguards in Place: Don't be hesitant to put parental controls and filters on your children's devices. Period. You would not stand by and watch someone throw a grenade into your home; why would you let the media be unmonitored? There must be follow-up with all good intentions; follow-through with a strategy, and follow-on with affirmations.

Finally, Use Grace and Gentleness with Firmness: Be gentle, not overbearing. The Bible encourages parents to "not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). Learning is a process, and kids will make mistakes, just as parents do. Foster a spirit that builds trust and reinforces children for being honest. Resilience is built through failing and trying again. Don't be too hard. And, ask the Holy Spirit for continual guidance.

CONCLUSION:

FAMILIES THAT SHINE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The goal is to be a family that has technology where it serves but never rules. May children know the joy of Sabbath walks more than endless scrolling. May our worships and devotions be enriched by tools but not replaced by them. May parents teach discernment, grandparents share wisdom, and Christ remain the Center.

This is possible, not by rejecting technology, nor by bowing to it, but by redeeming it for God's glory.

Daniel's prophecy has come true: knowledge has increased. But as Paul reminds us, wisdom must rise with it: *"Test all things; hold fast what is good."*

Families of faith, let us rise to this prophetic moment!

Let us use every tool, every device, every invention as servants of the gospel, not masters of our souls. Let us stay connected to God, to one another, and to the mission before us.

And finally, may our homes be filled with faith and love, shine as beacons of hope in a world distracted by screens but desperate for truth. And may our homes be places of light, truth, and hope, preparing for heaven and eternity.

APPEAL*

Will you commit, as a family, to let Christ, not technology, be the center of your home?

Will you covenant together to use these tools for God's glory, to set boundaries, and to grow closer to Him in this digital age?

If so, let's lift our eyes from our screens and turn our hearts toward heaven, where no signal ever drops, and where the connection is eternal!

**Optional for Appeal: Use the Family Covenant for Faith and Technology (in appendix).*

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A FAMILY COVENANT FOR FAITH AND TECHNOLOGY

Our family seeks to honor God with our use of technology.

To do so, we covenant to CONNECT to God through this Covenant...

COMMITMENT TO STANDARDS

We will use technology to strengthen our faith. We will ensure that what we watch or listen to conforms to the Philippians 4:8 standard of what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

OBSERVE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

We will set limits to the time we spend with devices, so that they don't control us and the time we spend with each other; technology will serve, not dominate us.

NURTURE TOGETHERNESS

When possible, we will use technology together as a family-bonding experience through watching, playing, or listening together to build and advance our knowledge as a family.

NAVIGATE WITH WISDOM

We will guard our minds so that the technology we consume does not open the door to evil, immoral, or ungodly ideas that dishonor God or compromise Christian principles.

EMBRACE REAL-LIFE BALANCE

Our family will prioritize time together that is screen-free, including outdoor activities, reading, service to others, and family projects.

COMMUNICATE WITH LOVE

We will speak with love to each other, about each other, and about other people in all our digital interactions. This means using technology to reflect kindness and courtesy, rather than bullying, gossiping, or digital trolling.

TRUST IN GRACE AND GROWTH

If we violate this Covenant, we will extend forgiveness and grace to one another. As a family, we will discuss our struggles and victories honestly and pray for each other. Growth in grace will be our goal as we mature together.

SERMON OUTLINE:

When Knowledge Increases: Families of Faith in a Digital Age

Texts: Daniel 12:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Proverbs 18:15

INTRODUCTION

- Family dinner scene: prayer, food, but heads bowed to screens.
- Technology — rival for attention, affection, spiritual formation.
- Daniel foresaw this: “*Knowledge shall increase.*”
- Question: Will technology connect us to God and each other or replace sacred connections?
- Key text: “*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*”
- Paul’s counsel is urgent for our time: “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). That’s the framework of this message. God calls us, as Adventist families, not to flee from technology in fear, nor to embrace it uncritically, but to test it, redeem it, and use it for His glory.

I. INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND PROPHECY

- Daniel’s prophecy fulfilled: AI, instant translation, global connectivity.
- Ellen White: knowledge increase fulfilled in last days (*Signs of the Times*, April 26, 1883).
- She embraced new tools (printing press, telegraph) for mission.
- Principle: The issue is not the tool itself, but the direction of our hearts.
- “The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge...” (Prov. 18:15).

II. PRINCIPLES FOR STRONG FAMILIES

- **The Opportunity Moment** (*Education*, 1903, p. 262)
Bible apps for worship.
Grandparents connect spiritually via calls.
Youth share testimony with a click.
- **The Human and Divine Method** (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 1889, p. 538)
Tech cannot build character or raise disciples.
Requires prayer, Holy Spirit, personal effort.
Tools must supplement, not replace, devotion and worship.
- **The Glory Principle** (*Messages to Young People*, 1930, p. 398)
Ask: Does this honor God?
Does this build or break family faith?
If it doesn’t glorify God, it doesn’t deserve our time.

III. TECHNOLOGY AS SERVANT, NOT MASTER

- **Bible Study** – AI tools uncover context, cross-references.

- **Family Worship** – Tech-assisted, but Christ at center.
- **Character Growth** – Journals, reminders, gratitude lists.
- **Mission** – Gospel to “every nation, tribe, language, people” (Rev. 14:6).

IV. DANGERS FAMILIES MUST AVOID

- **Shortcuts to Character** – No app produces holiness (Matt. 4:4).
- **Abdicating Spiritual Thinking** – Tech can’t think for us; discernment needed.
- **Gullible Consumption** – Beware falsehoods, deepfakes, moral pollution (Col. 4:6).

V. BALANCED SPIRITUAL TECH PRACTICES

- Pray before you plug in.
- Discern and discuss as a family.
- Innovate for ministry outreach.
- Mix tech and non-tech for spiritual growth.
- Try “digital free Sabbaths.”
- Set healthy boundaries.
- Screen-free meals, worship, bedtime.

VI. ADVENTIST MOVEMENT AND FAMILIES

- Ellen White: “New methods must be introduced...” (*Evangelism*, 1946, p. 70).
- Paul: “All things to all men, that I might save some.” (1 Cor. 9:22).
- Families called to rise with wisdom, courage, creativity.
- Tech: neither savior nor enemy — a test and an opportunity.
- Practical Counsel to Parents
- **Talk reasonably and often.** Ongoing, not only when in trouble.
- **Model the message.** Children follow what we do.
- **Put safeguards in place.** Filters, limits, accountability.
- **Use grace and gentleness with firmness.** (Col. 3:21).

CONCLUSION & APPEAL

- Goal: Families where tech serves but never rules.
- Children treasure Sabbath walks over endless scrolling.
- Worship enriched by tools, but Christ remains the center.
- Daniel’s prophecy fulfilled — knowledge is increased.
- Paul’s counsel remains: “Test all things; hold fast what is good.”
- Appeal: Families, will you covenant to keep Christ—not technology—at the center of your home?
- Invitation: Lift our eyes from our screens and turn our hearts toward heaven, where no signal ever drops and the connection is eternal.