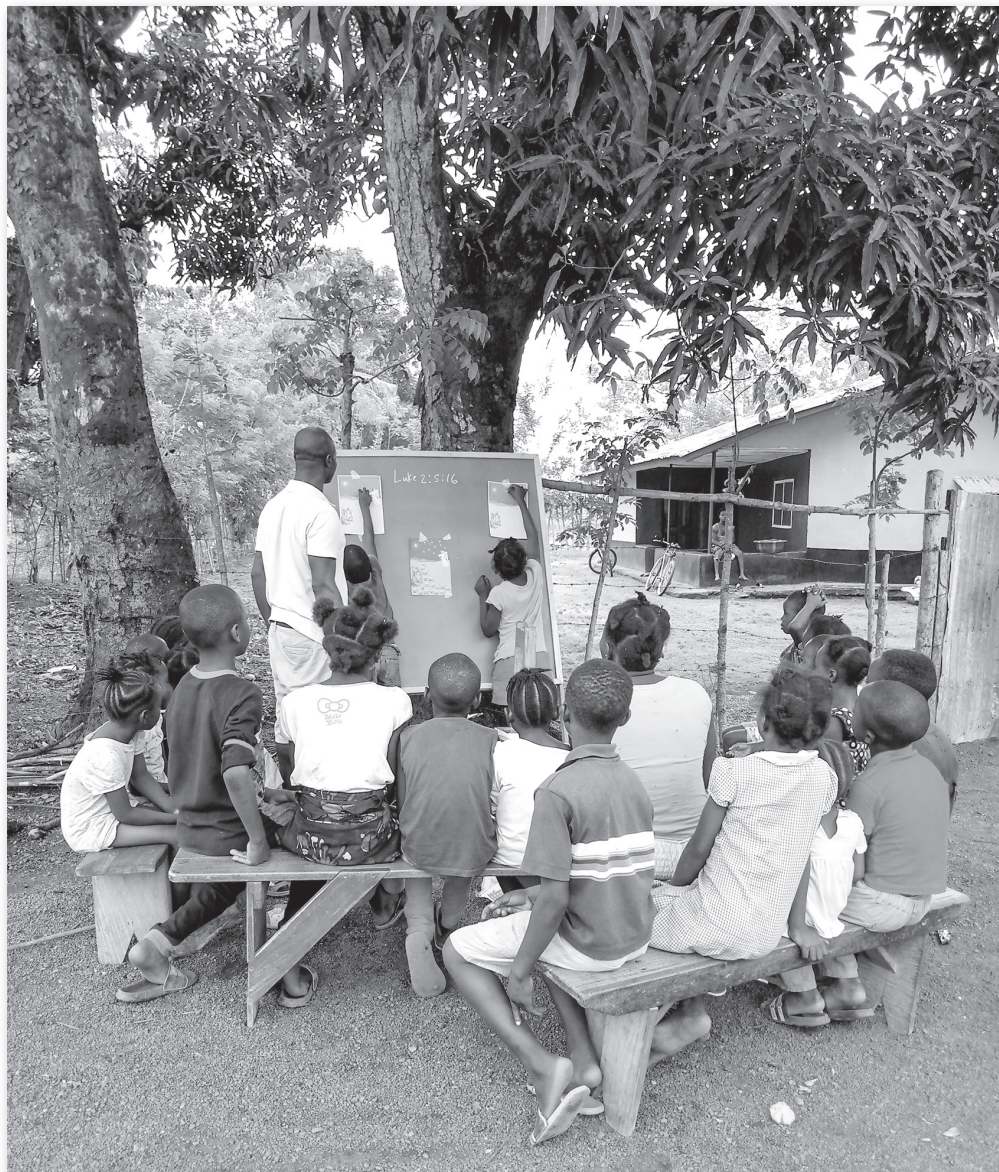


The Mission Paper of Zion

Family |
Articles in English 2021 Spring | **Siionin Lähetyislehti** 



CONTENTS

- 3 Membership in God's family is a gift
- 5 Lifelong Marriage
- 8 Every Child is God's Creation
- 10 Family Life in Equality
- 12 Education and Conscience - Knowledge of Right and Wrong
- 15 The pandemic created online internet services in Ecuador
- 18 Social Media in Our Home

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Membership in God's family is a gift

Christian Doctrine (CD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland expresses the traditional notion of family: "A good home is a great gift from God. It connects parents, children and other family members. The foundation of a family is marriage. In marriage, a man and a woman are joined in a lifelong union. Their mission is to care for and raise both each other and their children in the fear of God." (CD 1948.)

In holy matrimony couples are provided initial subsistence for their common journey with words of encouragement and blessing: "May the word of the Lord be a light in the pathway of your life, a comfort in sorrows, and a counselor in times of trial, so that you may patiently and gratefully receive all that has happened to you in this sacred ordinance by God's permission." (Sacred Acts booklet, older edition).

The Bible relates of different families. At that time, as in our time, there were single-person households. In Bethany was a home to a family of three siblings, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. There were single-parent families as well as spouses

who had not been given children. There were also families where there could be a lot of children.

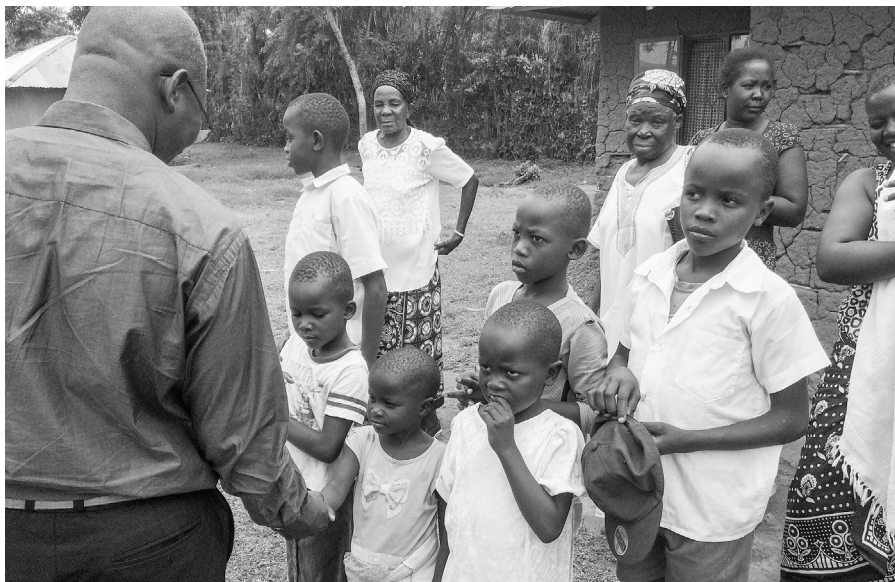
BY GRACE PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD

In the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul portrays a festive picture of God's family. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" (Eph 2:19).

He opens his image by saying, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" (Eph 2: 1–2).

In his letter, Paul also refers to his own former life: We "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

(Eph. 2: 3). He then writes to them in many words what God did in Christ: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God;" (Eph. 2: 8.)



Through faith, the apostle was allowed to live and know what it means to receive the gift of God when he is able to possess in his heart the peace of God that exceeds all human understanding.

Salvation applies to Jews and Gentiles: “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” (Eph 2: 16–17.)

In this great family of God, in his church on earth, believers in Him walk

under grace. The blissful value of this home will once be revealed onto our comprehension in the land of perfection. Weakness and imperfection plague us in this time, but Christ’s atoning work brings a new perspective: “Might is in His victory, / life is in His blood so free; / in His holy wounds we see / joy and bliss eternally. / Grace will lead us on our journey / till our homeland shore we see.” (SZ. 217:2) □

Text: Martti Murtoperä, Translation: H.P.
This text is a shortened version. The original text was published in Päivämies on June 13, 2018.

Lifelong Marriage

During a wedding, the pastor asks the couple in the presence of God and in the presence of the congregation, “Do you want to take NN as your wife / husband, be faithful to her, and love her in good and bad days, until death?” The ring is placed on the finger to symbolize the lifelong duration of marriage.

GOD’S WORK OF CREATION

Marriage is part of God’s order of creation. Jesus affirmed marriage as God’s order of creation and communicated it to the people of the new covenant. He taught, “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mark 10: 6–9.) Man and woman are equally precious in the face of God. Created differently, they complement each other. Adam exclaimed after seeing Eve, ‘This is she!’ (Genesis 2:23.)

When God unites spouses with His word, God’s work of creation is being

accomplished. God gives a spouse as a gift. God’s will is that it would be good for spouses to be in marriage, but one can selfishly frustrate God’s intention.

AS A GIFT OF TEMPORAL LIFE

The Apostle Paul taught how marriage is a gift from God. The spouse is primarily a helper and support: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). The spouses can gratefully state how they received Heavenly Father as the life partner of this very person. In the good days of life, one can rejoice in his company - when the bad days come, there is a person with whom worries, adversities, and sorrows are shared.

Marriage commits a spouse for the rest of his or her life. It means not just living on emotions, but also wanting and agreeing to live together though imperfect. Loved in poverty and wealth, sickness and health, youth and old aged. One of the most essential things about commitment is to agree to take care of the marriage. When a conflict arises in a marriage, a conciliatory mind, interaction, and forgiveness are needed. In our homes there is a daily

race of reverence and the counsel Jesus gives ever present before us: “Marriage commits a spouse for the rest of his or her life. It means not only living on emotions, but also wanting and agreeing to live together in the disabled. Loved in poverty and wealth, sickness and health, youth and old age. One of the most essential things about commitment is to agree to take care of the marriage. When a conflict arises in a marriage, a conciliatory mind, interaction, and forgiveness are needed. Every day in the home there is a race of reverence and the counsel Jesus gives before your eyes: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them”. (Matthew 7:12)

God has ordained marriage to protect man from the effects of sin: “to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Cor. 7: 2). Sexuality is part of our being, and God has meant for it to be implemented in marriage. God protects us from falls through marriage and a lifelong partnership. A sex life according to God’s will in marriage increases love and brings joy to both. Distorted by sin, it can also become evil and dirty.

Through marriage, God continues His work of creation work. He blesses the children according to His will. Even

in this matter, we can trust God. If He gives children as gifts, he makes the spouses a mother and a father, a parent of these children. It is important for every child to have their own mother and father.

The lifetime duration of marriage is important not only to the spouses themselves, but to their children, grandchildren and friends, even society as a whole. The home provides sustenance for life and future. The love experienced and being accepted there has a strong impact on spiritual growth. The permanence of married parents creates security for loved ones in the midst of ever-changing times.

MEANT FOR HEAVEN

Marriage is a lifelong school of God for spouses, where they are also raised for heaven. In marriage, we are responsible not only to each other and our family members, but also to Heavenly Father. A believing home is the congregation of God in miniature size. Jesus said, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20). In marriage, we get to practice love of neighbor, respect for another person, and loyalty every day. We feel joy, but also sadness and disappointment. Experience shows that where



spouses want to live by faith, it is also possible to overcome the difficulties of marriage. Forgiveness allows us to experience happiness. Because we are incompetent, weak, and fall into sin, it is worth humbling ourselves to ask forgiveness. God's grace has no measure in marriage either. So often when a spouse repents, he or she is forgiven, "not seven times but seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:22). In the gospel, God gives strength to fight selfishness and all other sins.

At no point in their lives do spouses want to part away from each other; they

want to understand and support each other. When much has been forgiven, also loves and pardons a lot. Happy is the home and marriage where the repentant is forgiven their sins.

In the face of death, we separate from the most beloved person, our God-given spouse. In the midst of grief and longing, we are thankful for our common journey and in the spirit we rejoice in the hope of seeing them again. □

Text: Olavi Vallivaara, Translation: H.P.
The article was published in SRK's Current Affairs book in 2009.

Every Child is God's Creation

The question of receiving children as gifts from the Lord is based on the Biblical revelation of God as The Creator. This is reflected, for example, in Patriarch Jacob's response to his brother Esau when he asked of Jacob's children, "These are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant." (Genesis 33: 5). There has been a desire to adhere to this Biblical revelation in Conservative Laestadianism.

The prophylactic stance in our Christianity is based on God's order of creation and the first article of our creed. Marriage is based on God's ordinance, in which man and woman become one flesh (Mark 10: 6–8). One of the functions of marriage is to continue growing the family to a new generation (Gen. 1:28).

Human reason easily rebels against the revelation of the Bible. It causes us to question: Is the earth not already filled? How will we have strength to take care of all our children? Why can't a married couple decide the size of their family themselves? It is emphasized in our Christianity that the Bible prom-

ises that man with his questions may trustingly lay back and abide in the wisdom and guidance of God. The Creator knows when the earth is filled, and no man is born into this world without God's knowledge.

When reciting the first article of the creed, we confess and acknowledge, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Human life is not the result of chance, but every child born into this world is God's creation. A Christian can confidently let God decide the number of children in a family. For some, God gives a big family, for others a smaller one.

When looking to receive children, reference is also often made to the book of Samuel, which speaks of God as Lord of life and death (1 Sam. 2: 6), and to the Psalm, which states, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Ps. 127: 3). However, the teaching of our Christianity is not based on individual verses of the Bible, but on the overall message of God's word that the decision to begin and end life is in the hands of omniscient God.



CONSCIENCE TIED TO GOD'S WORD GUIDES CORRECTLY

Receiving children as gifts from the Lord is a matter of faith for believing parents. Although associated with childbearing are feelings of joy and love, it also involves worries and fears and pain. The situations of families can vary and spouses may face very different issues.

In the midst of raising a family with children, parents may get tired. Parental resilience is an issue that needs to be taken seriously - mothers of families with children in particular need all possible support, especially from the fathers. Their endurance in raising and rearing children, the relationship between the parents is of great importance. At the same time, caring for marriage means taking care of the

well-being of the whole family. In addition to helping those close to you - walking alongside and supporting you - you should seek professional help if necessary.

God can also allow a mother to get sick, which is why a doctor may find that while ill a new pregnancy for the mother is not possible due to her health condition. From the point of view of the Christian faith, diseases are also known to God and to His permission. During the treatment of a serious illness, it is important that the mother be allowed to rest and recover from her illness. In this case, it is always a matter of a personal solution based on mutual respect between the spouses, in which the conscience being bound by the Word of God guides the Christian.

In challenging situations, it is not good for spouses to be left alone, but it is worth discussing the matter with trusted believing friends with prayer. The best assurance we can get in the midst of varying questions comes from the encouraging message of God's Word regarding our Heavenly Father's

care and guidance. Even when faced with painful situations, God's Word above all encourages faith and trust in God's guidance. □

Pekka Aittakumpu, Translation: H.P.

The text has been shortened from the original article published in *Päivämies* on February 8, 2017.

* * *

Family Life in Equality

Based on God's work of creation, we as humans are unique, not only in our appearance but also in our personality. Some of our qualities are inherited, some are modified by our surroundings. It is good for us to get to know ourselves, to find our strengths and weaknesses, and to recognize the special features of our own character.

When we know ourselves, managing relationships is also easier. In marriage, it is important that spouses value each other's personalities. Sometimes we hear a saying about the kind of mate one has chosen; "it has chosen its stable cover". By this we mean that spouses are like "created" for each other and their characters fit well together. In marriage, it is good to know each other's needs and reconcile them to satisfy both.

Love helps in marriage to settle into the position of the other spouse and to understand him or her better. Love increases only through love, not insisting. The selfish insistence that the other should change to be just like I desire leads to conflicts in marriage and, at its most serious, spiritual subjugation. Things should always be looked at from the perspective of both spouses. (Phil. 2: 3-4). Making another happy brings joy and happiness to oneself as well.

EQUAL RELATIONSHIP

Marriage is an equal human relationship based on God's work of creation, which should be governed by the principle of mutual respect. In his letter (1 Peter 3), Peter gives a very special obligation to husbands. He advises to live

with his spouse skillfully and to show respect and tact toward them. This should be remembered especially when the family is growing and the spouse's resources are being tested.

The old format of sacred words of matrimony advises that a man should be faithful in his calling to take care of the temporal and eternal good of his family and patiently put his hope in God and remember that he must make an account of the government of his room. A husband should love

and respect his wife, encourage her in sorrows, and comfort in suffering. He must avoid the hardness and bitterness of the heart, and in humility prefer her over himself. A wife should likewise love and respect her husband. She should be helpful to her husband and carry together the worries and joys.

When love and respect are right, there is no need to argue in the family about who dictates and what is done. The apostle writes, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for him." (Eph. 5:25.) The word of the Bible exhorts us to follow the example of the sacrificial love of the Son of God. This love does not seek its own, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; (1 Cor.4:5).

THE GOSPEL FREES FROM TRANSGRESSION

In our time, people's selfishness is evident in all human life. In a marriage, selfishness easily leads to unlovingness and hardness. Financial worries, work pressures, and illness add to the distress. Self-interest takes precedence over common interest. We often forget that a spouse

has the right to his or her own relationships and hobbies, for example. The situation can even lead to domestic violence, with love and respect being replaced at worst by physical violence. Difficulties can pile up so insurmountable that it seems impossible to continue the journey together. The question may arise as to whether I have married the wrong person.

Humbling and admitting one's own mistakes is the only way to mend matters and continue the journey together. The gospel preached from the kingdom of God frees even the most serious transgressions. In marriage, it is good to learn to forgive even without asking.

When God's grace is allowed to influence in both will and action (Phil. 2:13), walking the common path will go hand in hand. Next to us travels our escort, the most understanding companion and best supporter. □

Text: Risto Göös, Translation: H.P.

The text has been shortened from the original text published in Siionin Lähetyslehti 7-8 in 2003.

Education and Conscience - Knowledge of Right and Wrong

Education is the most difficult task. As they raise their children, the mother and father themselves grow into parenthood. In a large family, there may be children of different ages, from young adults to very young children. The developmental stages of each child change the relationship between parent and child.

Parenting is about growing with guidance. Values based on God's Word give it a good starting point. The educating guardian takes his child through childhood and sends the child on the path of life with prayers and blessings. It must be humbly acknowledged that one's own strengths and decisions cannot guarantee a good life for one's child — nor even that a child remains a child of God.

WE SOW AND PRAY

The little baby carries the secret of faith inwardly as a birth gift. The enemy of the soul wants to take away that gift. Esau and Jacob lived their childhood in a believing family (Rom. 9:11). Jacob

remained a child of God, but Esau fell on the broad path of sin.

The Christian home experiences the pressures of the times, but parents want to pass on certain values to the next generation. Above all, we raise our children for heaven. We sow the eternal seed and pray to the Lord of life to bless its growth.

RIGHT AND WRONG

Children need boundaries set to guide their growth with love. The child does not always accept the views of his or her parents, but claims that times have changed. Even then, the parent's advice can remain as tiny sprouts to eventually bear a good harvest. When challenging home values with questions, an adolescent seems to as if check that everything is safe as before.

In paradise, the serpent questioned God's word, "Did God really say..." (Gen. 3: 1). The enemy of the soul does not sharply deny the Word of God, but sows doubt. Sin would not be a sin, but a reinterpretation of God's will: "then



your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3: 5).

Dishonesty is one of the temptations of our time. The pursuit of financial gain may obscure understanding and make one tempted to use dishonest means. In such situations, it is necessary to discuss and advise the one who has fallen. Sometimes it is good to say unequivocally what is right and what is wrong. The most important thing, however, is to treat the fallen with the gospel. In confession, we can confidently tell the confessor father about things that weigh on us and believe the gospel.

CONSCIENCE

In religion class at school, there was the topic of conscience. The teacher compared the conscience to a reliable compass. In addition to the compass, navigation requires a map and knowledge of terrain. Sometimes a nearby magnetic force interferes with the compass, and then the needle doesn't point to true north. Almost all the students remembered situations where their conscience had guided them. Conscience should be tied to the Word of God like a compass with a map. Then our conscience will correctly direct us where the road goes to heaven.

Even a very young child senses the voice of conscience in his heart. Fostering this gift is a valuable part of sowing seeds of faith. Bad feelings all vanish when everything is forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus. As he grows up, the child matures to look at things from an ethical point of view and his conscience as if is more vigilant. Then there should be time to converse with the child. If the child is not helped out of these bad feelings, that voice will gradually subside. As a result of sin, the conscience ceases to rebuke, and eventually the child may lose their childhood faith.

The years of childhood and adolescence may also involve constant monitoring of one's conscience. Such sensitivity can take away the joy of believing. An open dialog or working conversation connection with a close believer is important at such a stage in life. The prayer of every Christian parent is that their child's experiences of a merciful God would take root in a person's heart early in life.

BAPTISM AND CONSCIENCE

Baptism is a covenant of good conscience (1 Peter 3:21). In baptism, God joins His children to His congregation to be cared for. When heeding the voice of God in our heart, it enables us to make comfortable choices. Paul

reminded Timothy of the relationship between good conscience and faith: the rejection of good conscience leads to the shipwreck of faith. (1 Tim. 1:19.)

The baptismal command includes a teaching assignment. Parents raise children in the knowledge of Christ. Asking forgiveness and forgiving, plus bringing children to hear the Word of God are the best ways to sow the seed of faith.

A PURE CONSCIENCE IS HEAVEN ON EARTH

If God awakens the conscience of an unbelieving person, the person's mind usually remembers things by which he has transgressed against God and his neighbor. The feeling of sin does not yet justify or make one righteous. When one can believe the gospel that all their sins are forgiven, the peace of God fills the heart.

Young Joseph refused to sin and transgress against God (Gen. 39). Moses refused the status of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:24). They had the same mind as Paul, who said in court that he would endeavor to always maintain a clear conscience before God and man (Acts 24:16). □

Text: Samuli Kortenieniemi, Translation: H.P.

The text has been shortened from the original text which was published in SRK's Current Affairs book in 2009.

The pandemic created online internet services in Ecuador



Photo: R Roiko

Zoom clubs are currently available in Ecuador. The picture is from services on a 2019 mission trip.

Believers in different cities in Ecuador now have more access to services and see each other on a regular basis.

The pandemic has been widely perceived as a blessing by God among believers in Ecuador, though some believing relatives have been fatally plagued by the pandemic. It has created an online services where the congregation gathers once a week to hear the God's Word.

This is a very great gift from God compared to the fact that before the pandemic, physical services were held once every six weeks.

NEWS AND QUESTIONS

On January 24, Ecuadorians heard the Word of God through Zoom. There were believers from several cities and, for example, Fanny Quishpe from the Ecuadorian countryside.

English-speaking Randy Herrala from the United States delivered a sermon which was translated directly into Spanish by an interpreter in Finland. Some other Finns also took part in the services.

After the services, there was time for open discussion. Participants exchanged experiences and recent events and also raised questions, for example, relating to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

CONSEQUENCE OF THE MOCKERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God made it clear through several mouths to the church that the blasphemer of the Holy Spirit will never again have a sense of remorse nor a sincere need to attend services. The service guests were encouraged to trust God to protect them from falling into this kind of sin. No one who is concerned about it is guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which, according to Jesus' teaching, cannot be forgiven. The mocker guilty of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit will no longer have penitence and will not get the sincere desire to ask forgiveness of their sins. □

Texts: Paulus Mikkola

The news and interview were published in SRK's Siionin Lähetyslehti - publication on February 17, 2021.

CLOSE-UP

My name is Fanny Maria Quishpe Ortiz

My homeland is a beautiful and good country.

I live in Shuyo, Riobamba, Chimborazo Province, Ecuador.

My neighborhood looks like the countryside. Lots of strawberries, corn, and tomatoes are grown here. It is peaceful here and the climate is mild.

I make a living from a small restaurant at home, I sell food. Many times farmers order food to be delivered in their fields, and my husband delivers the food on a motorcycle to them.

Life as a believer is beautiful in my country, but there are not many believers.

I see other believers when my family comes to visit, or in services through Zoom.

When we gather at the Word of God, it is a truly beautiful occasion. It feels really good to listen to the Word of God. The Word of God opens our hearts to listen.

I have duties in Christianity, including preparing meals for service guests. I cook the food at home and it is taken to the service site.

I find it so precious in the Bible by the forgiveness of sins and the fact that believers preach the forgiveness of sins to one another.

Faith is reflected in my life by giving strength to move forward in life and causing me to be more willing to help others. I also want to emphasize that everything is from God, He provides all that we need.



Photo: Interviewee

Fanny misses her daughters and family in far-away Finland.

And that everything happens according to God's will.

Many are surprised to hear that families and relatives in my country live together, and that here is a wide variety of climates and vegetation zones here.

I am glad to have dear children. It's important to me, and so is the fact that I have God.

What is challenging in my life is that I cannot carry out God's will. And also the fact that my children live so far away, in Finland.

In the future, I would like all my siblings to become believers so that they too can enjoy the love of God. I also hope that the pandemic will end so that services can be arranged again as normal. □

Social Media in Our Home

Social media refers to online communication where every user has the opportunity to be a content producer and an active communicator. Through the Internet, you can have a real-time discussion via social media or share photos, videos, and links to various sites.

Using social media can enrich a person's life. For example, it is effortless to keep in touch with distant relatives and friends through social media. Without this possibility, communication could be limited or even end complete. Despite the many positive opportunities and possibilities, there are risks associated with social media that are important to be aware of. You should openly discuss the challenges and dangers of using social media with family members and friends in faith.

MY ACTIVITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Epistle to Ephesians also advises the children of God of this day: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29). This is also good advice on social media. On the Internet, "talking" means, in addi-

tion to the actual comments, the images we upload there, "likes" and the sharing of links and news. Everything we do on social media is visible to many people. Therefore, we should avoid ambiguities. Someone may misinterpret our message, like things we intend for humor.

It is important to define your limits of your privacy on social media. It's worth thinking about what you want to tell others about yourself and what pictures to share. The time we are living is fueled by excessive transparency. There is no need to share personal and family issues with everyone. Once placed on the Internet, an image may never be permanently deleted.

An example is a strong influencer. The activities of adults on social media are conveyed as an example to children. The believer's profile does not include mentions of favorite movies, TV series, or idols.

Sensitive content on the Internet, such as sex and violent entertainment, is easily accessible. Inappropriate content also circulates on social media. According to Biblical teaching, these are of the world and do not belong to believers; "Love not the world, neither the



things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” (1 John 2: 15–16.)

Even believers may be tempted to publish self-shocking, even erotic-toned images that other users can rate and praise. Excessive self-expression on the Internet may fuel the lusts of the flesh and increase envy.

FACE TO FACE IS BETTER

Following social media too closely can be detrimental to everyday work and life. There is also a danger that social media will become so interesting and engaging that it will not be possible to go to services, for example. It is a good idea to discuss these issues with other family members.

Do we confess our faith as we ought in our activities and operations on the Internet and social media? May faith guide our speeches and actions in both the real and virtual world. A believer desires to use and do things on social media with a pure conscience.

Interacting on social media is no substitute for a genuine encounter. The written text lacks expressions, intimacy, and encouraging gestures. In a written discussion, the possibility of misunderstandings also increases.

Real soul care through the internet is difficult. A similar experience can be found as far back as two thousand years ago: “I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.” (3 John 1:13–14) □

Text: Pekka Kainua, Translation: H.P.

The text is shortened from the original text that was published in SRK’s Current Affairs book in 2012.



**Dearest Jesus, help Thy children
as Thine own e'er to remain,
so that none would fall to journey
on the broad and sinful way.**

**Thou hast promised to be ever
with Thy blessed children here.
On the way to school, oh, bless us,
may Thy Word to us be dear.**

**Be Thou also our protection
as we wander, as we play;
bless our nights, and guide our duties
ev'ry moment of the day.**

**Savior, with Thy hand of mercy
bless and shield our homes so dear.
Sisters, brothers, parents loving,
cleanse them with Thy blood so pure.**

**Dearest Jesus, in Thy mercy
help Thy gracious kingdom here,
where our sins are all forgiven
in Thy name and blood so dear.**

**May Thy blessed congregation
be our home on earth below,
till the day that Thou wilt call us
to a dearer home we know.**

W: Pekka Kinnunen 1971/USLV 1975