

CONFERENCE

Connections

The Love List

When I was in college, my cousin, Jane Ha, encouraged me to write a list of what I wanted in a future spouse. I prayed for God to give me this list, but eventually my prayers changed. I realized that it was more important to pray about the future spouse I would be. I began to pray for God to shape and mold me to be a good fit for the wife I was praying for.

While I was in seminary, my best friend, Thomas Lee, told me he'd found someone who would be a great fit for me, and he wanted me to call her. I didn't want to call a strange girl, but he called me practically every day for three weeks. I finally decided to call her, armed with 10 conversation topics to combat any awkward moments of silence. I didn't need them. Before I knew it, Ashley and I had talked for 45 minutes.

We were scheduled to meet each other for the first time a few months later. I was supposed to meet her at the University of Maryland library. This was before GPS and before I understood beltways—highways that circled the city. After seeing the same exit three times, I realized I was late and lost.

When I finally made it to the campus, I began running. I asked the first student I saw where the library was. It turned out there were four libraries. I rushed to the nearest one. When I arrived, the lobby was empty.

While contemplating what to do next, I saw a petite girl



sitting in the distance. I wanted to ask her if she had seen anyone, but as I got closer and saw she was Korean, I realized this must be Ashley.

I also recognized this wasn't the first time I'd seen her. I had met her at a Korean camp meeting she'd organized several months earlier. I was blown away by her leadership. I remember going to the sessions early just to watch her. It was more admiration than attraction, but I couldn't believe this was who I'd been talking to these past few months.

I also realized she was the girl of my dreams. I literally dreamed about her. In the dream, I was preaching and lost my Bible, and she helped me find it.

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Jonathan Park
SECC President



Stories from SECC



Love is the greatest thing God has given us, and we want to celebrate it this month in Southeastern California Conference (SECC)! Thank you for sharing your stories of the love coursing through you and your spouses, family, and friends.

Keturah Reed
Azure Hills Church

I felt the love when more than 70 family and friends generously donated money to a fundraiser I'd set up, making it possible for me to attend a Bible Lands tour with Andrews University during the summer of 2023. Traveling to Israel and Egypt has always been a dream of mine, and to be able to learn and walk in places I'd only read about in the Bible was a rich blessing. This experience is something that will always stay with me and something that I will continually draw from in my ministry and as I complete my coursework through Andrews University's Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry.

Priscilla and Jim Walters
Loma Linda University Church

Jim and I met in college, but our mutual admiration started three years later when he was an exchange student to Loma Linda University from Andrews University's seminary for one week. We were both eager to get mail from each other. I said I wanted to go to Andrews to see my "college roommate," since he hadn't suggested a way to get together. We met each other's families over Christmas vacation, and I decided to look for a job in Michigan, turning down a good job at the medical center. I thought I would not have survived the snowy winter, driving my little convertible MG Midget, had I not been deeply in love. We have a commitment to keep each other happy. I've appreciated being free to say that I need hugs, or together time, or a date, or that we need to go to bed together at the same time, knowing Jim will try to comply. We try to keep a sense of humor about differences and have faith we can work it out. Love is a beautiful gift from God, to be cultivated and nurtured by honest communication between couples, families, and church communities.



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However, I knew I didn't have a chance. She was so cute and high class. Since I had already blown it by being an hour late, the pressure was off. I decided to enjoy myself; at the very least, I'd make a new friend. We went out to eat, and we hit it off so well. I remember thinking, maybe I do have a chance. The deaconess at my home church wanted me to break up with whoever I was dating because she had someone for me. The young lady she wanted me to date turned out to be Ashley. All roads led to Ashley. I just had to wait to see if she felt the same way. When I proposed, it took her almost three weeks to give me an answer. She went back and forth with God. She wrote out prayers, which I still have. What struck me were her words, "We've been praying, and I commit to him." Commitment is what kept us. Commitment transcends richer or poorer, sickness or health, good times or bad times. Commitment goes beyond all those things. And we have been committed to each other for over 27 years now. I am happy to say my wife, Ashley, checked all the boxes on my list. And I pray God answered my other prayer of making me a husband fit for this amazing woman.

By Jonathan Park



"Love is a beautiful gift from God."

Yohalmo and Joann Saravia
SECC Hispanic Ministries

I was hanging out on a Sunday afternoon in New Jersey when my friend called me suddenly. He asked, "What are you doing right now?" I responded, "Nothing," and he asked me for a huge favor: "I need you to come with me to New York. There's a girl that I like, and I want to meet her." So, I agreed to go with him. We went to the Intervale church in the Bronx, and my friend went straight inside to meet the girl. She was playing the piano. While I was waiting at the door, a girl came out. Her eyes melted when she saw me. That girl turned out to become my wife. To top it all off, that day was Valentine's Day. We've been married for 39 years. The funny thing is my friend was the one who was looking for a girlfriend, not me, but I was the one who ended up with a girlfriend. Sometimes you just have to let the Lord lead.



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The Sticky Note

The lady sitting in front of Holly at church was wearing the most beautiful dress that Holly had ever seen. It was so beautiful, in fact, that Holly just had to compliment her! But Holly was a very, very shy girl. She couldn't build the courage to approach the lady after the church service ended. As Holly walked out, she noticed a pad of sticky notes by the help desk. On a whim, she took one and wrote, "To the lady in the flowery pink dress, you looked beautiful today!" Then, she stuck it on the wall. Maybe the lady would see it; maybe she wouldn't. Either way, Holly had done her best.

The next Sabbath, Holly entered the church and noticed two new sticky notes on the wall! She quickly ran up to read them. The one right next to Holly's said, "Thank you for the compliment! It made my day." Then, in the same handwriting, a third sticky note read: "To today's flower donors, daisies are my favorite! They look amazing."

Holly excitedly wrote on another sticky note: "Thank you to our pastors for all that you do!" "What a nice idea!" Holly's dad exclaimed. He took a sticky note, and before Holly knew it, her whole family was writing sticky notes to put on the wall too.



The following week, there were even more sticky notes on the wall—too many to count! Praises, compliments, shout-outs—everyone was writing little notes of love to each other. A woman passed by with multiple pads of sticky notes, and she winked at Holly as she placed them at the help desk. Holly was amazed to see that her small, shy act of kindness for one person had blossomed into a huge movement of love for the whole church.

By Megan Jacobs

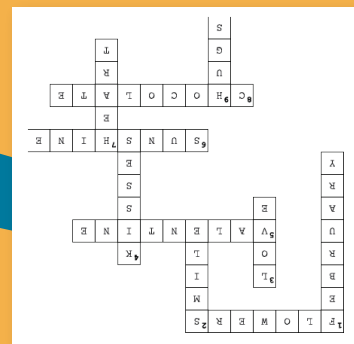
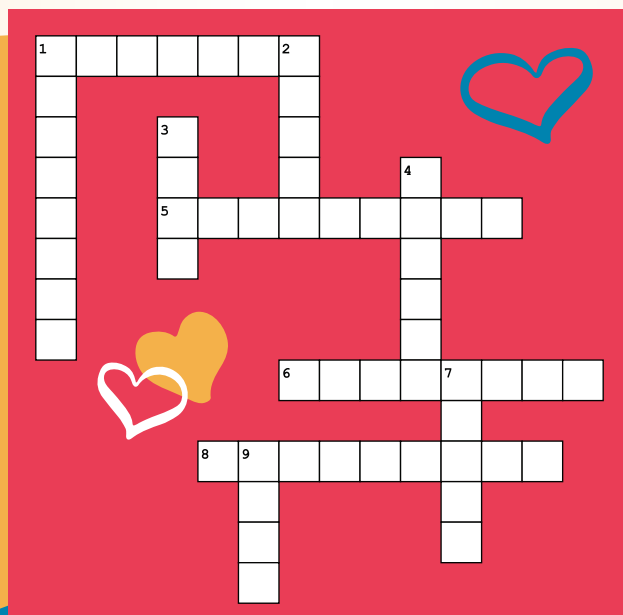
Valentine Crossword Puzzle

Across

1. A fresh gift of nature
5. Will you be my ___?
6. Happiness when skies are gray
8. A sugary treat

Down

1. The shortest month of the year
2. Turn that frown upside down!
3. What God is, according to 1 John 4:16
4. The O's of XOXO
7. Where the home is
9. The X's of XOXO



Answers