

TRAINING WINNING TEAMS PART 6

This GN should be read
unitedly as a Home.

Balance and Fun

By Maria

FD/MM/FM 3586 11/05

Dear Family,

I'm having a lot of fun preparing this "Training Winning Teams" series for you, and I hope you're having fun as you study the Lord's counsel and apply it to your lives and Homes. Of course, I'm sure it's a lot of hard work too, as applying the Word sometimes is, but in the long run it will make you happier and your Home will feel the benefits.

2. In this GN, we're going to delve into two topics that are slightly intertwined: having a balanced Home and having fun as a Home. Having fun as a Home is a part of having a balanced Home, so some of the counsel overlaps; these two topics go hand in hand. I pray that these messages will be touchstones for the future.

3. Your Home is very much like one of those old-fashioned scales, and things need to be in balance as much as possible. If there is too much of any one thing in your Home, an imbalance, then it will tip slightly to one side, and the result will be discontentment, unfruitfulness, or problems. But if there is enough of everything—enough work, enough time to have fun, enough time for people, enough time for the children, and enough time for the Lord (which is, of course, the very most important thing)—then there will be harmony and happiness.

4. Having fun together as a Home is another key to success. Happy Homes are those who know how to have fun, how to let their hair down and relax, and who enjoy their teammates' company and fellowship. Happy Homes are those who know when it's time to work and when it's time to play, and they are

equally enthusiastic about both. Happy Homes are those who realize that fun, recreation and relaxation are a human need, and without it they will be dry and lacking.

5. Remember, dear Family, that we're to enjoy life, enjoy one another, and enjoy Jesus most of all. We have a happy religion, not a sad one. We're serious about our service for the Lord, but we're also to have "joy unspeakable," as the Bible says (1Pet. 1:8). We have so much to be happy about, so much to praise our Husband for, so much to celebrate, and a wonderful life to enjoy to the full. Our lives are one big, long, happy adventure compared to many people's lives in the world.

6. So let's take the time we need regularly to savor the sweetness of the happy lives that we are blessed to live, the friends and loved ones and family that we are privileged to know and live with (as well as those we meet along the way), the important responsibilities for Jesus that we are honored to bear, the children that we can play a part in loving and training and raising, and all that goes into our fun, lively, revolutionary lives for Jesus.

7. Think about our wonderful lives for Jesus as you read this GN. Truly we have more to be thankful for than we could ever express, and more in life to enjoy than any others in this world. Thank You, Jesus, for being our source of perfect happiness!—And we thank You, too, for the words that You have given in this GN to feed us and instruct us about how we can have more balance and fun in our lives and Homes.

Love, Mama

BALANCE

The Brief

8. Winning teams know the importance of balance and they aim to achieve it. A winning team Home is not a hub of workaholics, nor a leisure center, nor a holy sanctuary whose members do nothing but meditate, pray, read, and commune spiritually. A winning team is balanced. It covers all its bases. It includes all of the important things in its schedule, and seeks the Lord about how to balance and juggle things when necessary. Winners know that there's a time for everything, and that everything should be in its place.

Pointers for Winning Teams

The four pillars of balance

9. (*Mama:*) It's so important that your Home has a good balance. Although this seems like a very basic concept, it's easy for Homes to get out of balance—such as putting too much emphasis on the work to the neglect of other important things that go into making your Home a success and keeping everyone happy. Of course, you do need to work hard for Jesus, give His service your all, and be professional in your work ethic (which is something I'll be addressing in the next GN in this series), but that can't be all you do.

10. In fact, a few years back when Peter was instructing our WS units about work ethic and the commitment to excellence that the Lord was requiring, at the same time he stressed the importance of all the other aspects of their lives and

having a good balance. To help those in WS to grasp this principle, he grouped each aspect of their lives for the Lord into four main pillars. These were:

- 1) Professional ministry life
- 2) Spiritual life
- 3) Community life
- 4) Personal and family life

11. Peter brought out how all of those different aspects of life needed to be in balance. Those in WS were expected to work hard and put in the hours when it was time to do so. They were responsible to focus on the spiritual when they took their time with the Lord. They also needed to take time with others and contribute to their “community,” their WS Home. They also needed to invest in their personal life—their families and marriages and friendships, and take time for recreation and fun. He said that all of these things were important; none of them should be neglected.

12. When we prepared this GN for you, the Lord said that sharing this analogy with you would help you to grasp the principle of having a balanced life. Although, as you know, WS units are different than your average field Home, because most people's primary ministry is office-type work (although we do have our faithful staff workers, those who teach the children, and our Home shepherds and managers—all of whom do not sit at a desk all day), the Lord said that nevertheless the same principles could be applied.

13. Of course, we can't slot everything that goes into Family life under a “pillar”—many things overlap. But the purpose of explaining the principle of these pillars to you is to get across the point that these are four of the main areas of your life that you need to give attention to on a regular basis—and if you're neglecting any one of these main pillars, chances are that your life will be out of balance. As I explain a bit more about the

Workers must have play, players must have work, and together a life is created in perfect balance.

pillars and what they encapsulate, you'll see what I mean.

14. The first pillar is your “professional ministry life.” This pillar is each person's main ministry for the Lord. Although most of us do a lot of different things in our ever-changing service for the Lord, we usually have something we specialize in. Some people are primarily teachers, others are primarily cooks, others are primarily witnesses, others are primarily Home shepherds, and others are primarily secretaries or office workers. So the time you devote to your “professional ministry life” is the time that you devote to your primary responsibility or job for the Lord. It's not the only thing you do, and certainly not the only work you do, but it's your main ministry or calling.

15. The second pillar is your “spiritual life.” This pillar is the focused time that each of us spend investing in our spiritual lives and walks with the Lord. As we all know, the spiritual should bleed into every other area of our lives, but the time you devote to this pillar is the focused, quality time that you spend with the Lord, in the Word, hearing from Him, praying, meditating, etc. Our spirits need to be fed, cared for, and nurtured. We invest in our spiritual lives personally, during our personal times of communion with the Lord, and as a Home—such as with united devotions, united praise times, united prayer vigils, etc.

16. The third pillar is your “community life”—your “community” being the Home in which you reside. This pillar is what we invest in our Home aside from our main ministry. It would generally include things like dishes, JJT, making the house a Home, fixing things that are broken, keeping up the cleanliness standard, caring for the sick, attending meetings and Home get-togethers that strengthen the “community” of your Home, helping to meet the needs of those in your Home, reaching out to others, etc. It would also involve filling in for other people when they're not available to do their ministry.

17. For example, say you're a full-time witnesser, but the full-time teacher is sick and you were filling in for her; then you'd be contributing

If both your work and your spiritual life were drowning, whom would you throw the lifesaver to?

to your “community,” to your Home life. In this scenario, teaching isn't your professional ministry for the Lord, but you'd be doing it to keep your Home happy and running smoothly. That's basically the purpose of everything in this category, and would include joining in on Home activities, even if they're not your personal preference. We also invest in our “community” through spending time with people, interacting with others—anything we do to contribute to the unity and happiness of the Home as a whole.

18. (Question:) Wouldn't interactions with others and communicating with others be part of our personal life or the free time we spend? And wouldn't doing “over and above” what you are asked to do be included in our personal lives in our interactions with others?

19. (Jesus:) It's true that these things can be done in your free time, and very often it will be in your free time. But even if it is done in your free time, you could still consider it a part of your community life. For example, if a couple decides to invite the singles to their room one night for some games, that might happen during their free time, but in reality they are contributing to the community of their Home. By reaching out to those singles they are promoting unity, and that is a part of community life, although it does overlap with personal time.

20. But I want to stress the point about reaching out to others, and want

to classify this as their community life—anything that helps their community to be a happy one. And, I also include the things people do that aren't their main ministry, things that contribute to the community on a physical level. So reaching out to others, especially those who aren't your immediate family or your husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend, would definitely fall under the pillar of "community life." Those are the things that help to make a house a Home, that build a community. *(End of message.)*

21. The fourth pillar is your "personal and family life." This includes taking time with your loved ones, your personal family, your mate. It also includes things you do for yourself, such as personal projects, personal upkeep, personal relaxation (or relaxation with friends), get-out and exercise, etc. Within this pillar you also need to have a balance—not spending so much time on yourself that you become selfish, not spending too much time with your personal family to the neglect of your greater family, not wearing yourself out during your personal time by always exerting yourself and not taking any relaxation time, etc.

22. For example, maybe you're someone who works hard at your ministry all week. You take your Word time faithfully, so your spiritual and professional ministry life are covered. You enter into the "community," into the activities and responsibilities of your Home. And you have regular personal time. That's good. But every free day you go surfing at the beach, or go on an all-day hike, and when you come home you're tired and go to sleep and don't spend any quality time with your mate. Then your life is going to be out of balance, because you're not giving proper time

or attention to your mate. So your married life—or your "personal and family life"—is not going to be good; it's going to be out of balance.

23. So within each pillar there must also be balance—balance in your personal and family life (investing time in yourself and your family), balance in your community life (for example, some people could get out of balance in this if they're only ever serving others and doing work for others, but never spending time with people or joining in on fellowships), balance in your spiritual life (using a variety of the new weapons, having Word time, prayer vigil, prophecy time, meditation, and all that goes into spiritual communion), and balance in your professional and ministry life as well (being prayerful, not going too fast or too slow, doing good work, etc.).

24. Good disciples are well-rounded; they're balanced. They're not all fun and no work, but neither are they all work and no fun. You might be a great worker, but if you don't take time for people, you're not well-rounded or balanced. At the same time, if you're always having fun and never working very hard, then you're not well-rounded or balanced either. You might be a great contributor to the "community life" of your Home, but if you're not investing enough time in your "personal and family life" by spending quality time with your mate and children, then that's not a good balance either. A healthy balance is the result of a good measure of everything.

25. There are so many ingredients that make up a happy Home, and having balance in your Home is an important one. If there's too much emphasis on the work and not enough time to relax and fellowship, people will be unhappy; or if not enough time is spent with the children, or taking time to love others, an imbalance occurs as well.

So it's important to try and maintain a good balance in your Home—not just for the success of your Home, but so that your Home can be a happy one. Every Home and disciple needs to strike a "just" balance.

**The things of the spirit
are paramount and should
supersede everything else.**

26. When thinking about these pillars, remember that having a balance doesn't necessarily mean that equal time needs to be devoted to each pillar. For example, probably the majority of the hours in a day would be devoted to your "professional ministry life." But if you're doing so much of that kind of work to the neglect of your children, or your mate, or not helping out in other areas of the Home when necessary, then that's an imbalance. Or, if you're not giving Jesus the quality time that He has asked for, then that's imbalanced too.

27. Also, we're not now mandating that you have to do all of these things every day, although you probably will dedicate some time to each pillar every day. For example, you need to invest in your "spiritual life" every day, because that's a Charter requirement. If you have children, you need to have family time with them every day, and that's part of your "personal and family life." And most people do something every day to contribute to their "community life" and their "professional ministry life."

28. But presenting these four different pillars of life is not meant to weigh you down or bog you down with yet more things to think about, or more requirements. They're simply meant to be a gauge that you can use to determine whether or not your life is in balance—and also to see how your Home is doing overall. (Note: A few excerpts from the following message were published in "Shooting Straight, Part 4," ML #3502:26–33, but we wanted to include the full message in this GN.)

29. (Jesus:) A good balance always has been—and always will be—My delight. But it's not just good to have a balance; it's essential to have a healthy balance in every area of your life.

30. A rainbow has many colors; all colors must be present to make up that beautiful band that covers the sky. Every year is made up of seasons, and all of those seasons are vital to the cycle of nature. So just as there is variety and balance in nature, in My creation, so do I wish for you to have variety and balance in your life. In fact, I insist that

G
Giving your all to every aspect of Home life creates balance and is a key to having a happy, winning team.

you do, because it's the only way for you to have My full joy and happiness; it's the only way for you to meet the great needs that lie before you; it's the only way you'll keep from burning out.

31. Even if you think about something as simple as making a cake—all of the ingredients need to be present, and in the right amounts, in order for the baked product to come out right. If you don't put in enough baking powder or baking soda, it won't rise like it should. If you skimp on the flour, it will turn out soggy. If you add too little liquid, it will be dry. If you forget the eggs, it won't have the binding element to keep it together.

32. In the "cake" of your life, there are certain ingredients that must be present and balanced in order to make you successful as a disciple. These ingredients, these vital pillars in your life are your professional ministry life, your spiritual life and relationship with Me, your community life and your interactions with others, and your personal and family life. All of these things are important, necessary, and vital to you being a well-rounded, balanced disciple.

33. Your professional ministry life is your service to Me. This part of your life is your career. You've got to invest time in this, because it's important; it's what I "pay" you for. When you're doing your primary work for Me, I expect you to put your all into it—your focus, concentration, prayer power, attention, desperation, and commitment. When you're doing your work for Me, I expect that you will give it all you've got. But that doesn't mean that I expect you to devote every waking hour to your work. That's an imbalance.

34. Your spiritual life and relationship with Me is what you do to keep your spirit fed. It's the time you spend in the Word, in prayer, in loving Me intimately, in praise, in hearing from Me, in My

bed of love. This is the part of your life that sustains you, that keeps the fires burning in your heart, that gives you the strength every day to do My will. This should never be neglected, and you must give Me the time that is rightfully Mine every single day; it's My commandment to you. But you also can't spend all day in the bed of love or you'd never get anything done. You need the right balance.

35. Your community life and your interactions with others include reaching out to others, spending time with others, communicating with others. It also includes the things you do to help your Home, the times you help to carry the load, even if it's not your "responsibility." You do need to spend some time helping "your community"—those you live and work with—even if it's a sacrifice. If you're only ever doing your "professional work" for Me, your main ministry, and don't show love and give to those you have by your side, by going over and above what you are scheduled to do, then you'll be imbalanced. This area of your life must be balanced.

36. Your personal and family life is what you do in your free time. Some of you don't have any, or much, free time, and this needs to change. You need time on a regular basis to relax, to take a breather, to do something fun and enjoyable. If you don't, you'll burn out. And if you have children and a wife or husband or a boyfriend or girlfriend, then you're responsible to spend a sufficient amount of time with them. They're My gift of love to you and they are your responsibility, just like your work is My gift of love to you and your responsibility. So there must be a balance in this as well.

37. Most people in the Family struggle to find balance in their lives. Some are workaholics and need to learn how to relax. Some are loafers and need to learn how to work harder. Some are personal free time junkies and need to learn how to reach out to others, how to contribute more to their "community."

38. When I was on Earth, there was balance in My life. I didn't only spend time with

My Father. I didn't only feed the multitudes. I didn't only reach out to My closest disciples. My "family" at that time. I didn't only relax and take time off. I did a little bit of everything.

39. I spent adequate time with My Father, being spiritually strengthened for the big load I had to carry. I witnessed to the multitudes, I fed the sheep, I healed the sick. I contributed to the "community life"—our group of disciples—as we traveled, helping with the chores that needed to be done—such as the cleaning, the cooking, building fires to sleep around, etc. Then I also spent time with My closest disciples, showing them My love and assuring them that they were important to Me.

40. And, yes, I also took time off; I relaxed, I laughed, I danced, I drank, I sang, I talked, I slept, I bathed, I enjoyed the company of others. In those days, the forms of recreation and relaxation were much simpler, but I enjoyed what I had, and I encouraged My disciples to join in these times of fellowship and relaxation with Me. I wasn't always preaching, I wasn't always teaching, I wasn't always working. When My work was done, when I had done My Father's will for the day, I took time off. I had to, because I was encased in a human body; relaxation and recreation was a need for Me, just as it is a need for you.

41. Of all of the areas of your life, your spiritual life and personal relationship with Me is the most important—it should always come first and foremost. But then after that, all the other aspects are equally important. It's not like I look at your professional ministry life and see that if you're really putting in hours above and beyond the call of duty there that I'm going to give you extra bonus points. If you're doing that to the neglect of your community life, or your personal and family life, then you're not going to be scoring high as far as I'm concerned. You need a balance of a little bit of everything in your life, and that's how you please Me.

42. When you're taking the time off that you need to

Balance is an important key to happiness in your Homes and hearts.

If all of the pillars of your life are not balanced, your happiness may start to crumble.

take—not in excess, but in moderation—then this is pleasing Me. When you take the time to love and care for your personal family, then this is pleasing to Me. When you take the time to help out in your Home, or to lend a helping hand in your “community”—your Home—over and above the call of duty, then this is pleasing to Me. There is a time and a place for everything, a portion of your life that should be devoted to each of these important pillars. That’s how you have the balance. That’s how you please Me.

43. (Mama:) As I was working on this GN, I was reminded of a personal testimony that someone recently sent me about a valuable lesson that he learned. It was during a period of time in his life when he had neglected everything else for the sake of his work. But then at the end of it, the work wasn’t needed, and he realized that he had missed out on a lot—as had his loved ones—due to not living a balanced life. Even though this was already published in a *Grapevine*, I thought it was a very vivid example to include here again. God bless you for sharing your experiences for our benefit.

Dearest Mama,

I had an experience once that illustrates the importance of what the Lord said in the “What Really Matters to Me” GN about the need for us to be loving while working toward our goals—and that that is what He looks at.

When I was at the IVM years ago, I was assigned a video project. To me, this was a very important and all-consuming goal. I felt I needed to be faithful with this assignment, and while I was working on this, I spent very little time with others. After all, I had an “important” job to do, and didn’t have time to

stop and talk or give a hug to someone. That would have to wait until after I had finished.

The goal was my sole vision, and how I got there was of secondary importance. My kids also saw little of me during this time—not that anyone was asking me to limit my time with them—but I took it upon myself to elevate this job to a place of supreme value. Boy, did I feel like I was really doing something and accomplishing for the Lord!

The project went on for about three months, and then to my dismay, the whole idea got canned! Oops! Now I had to look back over those three months and see what I had left to show for all that time. Since the project had gotten canned, I definitely didn’t have that to show, and sadly, I didn’t have much else either.

The Lord showed me that if I am not operating in love, it’s all just works of the flesh, and will be burned. If during those three months I had gone slower, taken time with others, done the humble thing, preferred others, spent quality time with my children, spent time loving Jesus, and investing in those things that really matter, then it wouldn’t have made any difference to me if the project had gotten canned or not. I would still have made progress during that time, and there wouldn’t have been any loss.—*Anonymous male, Earth (From GV 192).*

The spiritual should always be in first place

44. (Mama:) As our Husband said in the preceding message, our spiritual lives and relationships with Him should always be our top priority. That should not just be our personal priority, but also every Home’s priority, as the Lord has so clearly instructed us many times, and very strongly in the first GN in this series. This includes Word time, praise time, loving Jesus, personal prophecy, etc.—all of the things that enhance our spiritual lives and draw us closer to Jesus.

45. However, because we live in the flesh, it’s a constant struggle to keep the right balance in this area of our lives. It’s always a challenge to

put the things of the spirit before the things of the flesh, and specifically before the work that always looms before us. So it takes great effort—effort that we must put forth—to ensure that we have a just balance in our Homes, that we’re giving due attention to the Lord and the things of the spirit. It’s not easy, but as we all know so well by now, it’s imperative to our spiritual lives and walk with the Lord.

46. (Jesus:) One way to keep the spiritual element of your Home alive, so that it’s always the priority and doesn’t get crowded out by other things, is to promote the things of the spirit and make them the highlight of your lives that they should be. Work to make the things of the spirit—your united times with Me, your devotions, and the times when you celebrate Me and My gifts and My power—fun, appealing, and desirable. It’s human nature that you will take the time to do the things you like to do. So if you look forward to engaging in spiritual activities, then you’ll give them the priority they deserve.

47. Of course, even if your Home gets behind spiritual events and puts a lot into your times of Word, prayer, praise, and other such activities, they’re not always going to be your “favorite” thing. For one, the Enemy is always fighting your time with Me. He tries his damndest to get you to push this time aside, because he knows how important it is. So although you should try to make your spiritual times together as a Home appealing and interesting, sometimes that won’t be possible, no matter how well-intentioned you are, and you’ll just have to obey because I have said so and put Me first. If the spiritual elements of your Home can be fun, appealing and desirable, that’s great. But if it doesn’t always seem that way, then you still

have to keep Me in first place out of obedience, because that’s where My blessings lie.

It helps to schedule

48. (Mama:) Having a well-balanced Home takes scheduling. Because there’s always so much work that needs to be done, it can end up taking all of everyone’s time, and people neglect other things that are just as important but perhaps not as demanding—like Word time and communion with the Lord, the time everyone needs with their mates and children and loved ones, time to relax, etc. So it’s vital to schedule these things. As much as we usually want to have a balance, if we don’t make time for those things that are difficult to fit in, or that often get pushed to the side, then we probably won’t have much success.

49. For you, Home shepherds and managers, it’s good to keep in mind these four pillars of life, at least generally, regarding the schedules for your Homes. It’s good for you to understand that the people in your Home need time to invest in these four pillars. And when you’re aware of this, and everyone in the Home is aware of it, you will begin to recognize signs of when someone’s life is a bit out of balance. For example, you will be able to recognize when someone is working too hard at their ministry to the neglect of one or more of the other pillars.

50. You on the Steering Council should consider your Home members and their workloads and the schedule in the Home and measure things against these four pillars. Keeping these in mind as a tool or a guide can help you not to overlook things that are sometimes overlooked—like seeing if each person in your Home has time to take their W&R, quality time with the Lord, or time to be with their family. Then you can rearrange things accordingly when necessary.

51. Of course, a lot is left to personal choice as well. Even if some of the main things are scheduled—like time for each person in the Home to have their Word time, time to do things together as a Home to contribute to the “community life” of the Home, time for the parents to have with their

When making decisions that might affect the balance of your Home, ask yourselves what Jesus would do.

children, time for everyone to invest in their main ministry, etc.—there’s still a lot that’s left up to individual initiative and faithfulness. Even if you have a free day, for example, it’s your choice what you fill it with.

52. So although it helps to schedule things as a Home, there’s the personal accountability aspect as well—assessing your life and making sure that things are in balance and that you’re not neglecting anything important. You can ask yourself if you’re giving enough time and attention to your spiritual life, to your family and personal life, to your community life, to your professional ministry life. And if something is out of balance, you can work to fix it.

53. (Jesus:) It’s one of those laws of the physical world—and you who are ruled by time must learn it well if you want to have a fruitful, happy, balanced life: You have to make time for the important things. If you don’t make time for them, as much as you want to do them, get to them, and make sure that nothing is neglected, it won’t happen that way. The reason for this is that there will always be too much to do. There will always be emergencies. There will always be things coming up that you didn’t expect.

54. So when there are things that are very important, that you know you can’t afford to neglect—like your time with Me, your quality time with your children, your time to bond together as a Home, your time to relax—then you have to schedule it. Some people don’t like the concept of scheduling things like their time with Me, or their time to relax, or their time with others, because they feel it should be more spontaneous. Well, spontaneous is good in its place, but for all you busy missionaries and disciples, it doesn’t usually cut it in the long term, because you’re too busy for that.

55. So what you must do is sit down and look at your time. You have 24 hours in every day. That doesn’t change. What can and does change is what you do in those 24 hours. So you

**Balanced
Homes are
happy Homes.**

have to start with the most important things. Give the most important things the blocks of time that will ensure that these important things will happen.

56. You’re not going to be able to slot every little task, every little need, and you’re not going to be able to slot the emergencies. But you have to slot the things that you know you can’t afford to neglect. If the important things don’t have a slot of time, they won’t fit into your day. It’s as simple as that.

57. And as you’re making your schedule and realizing you’re not going to fit everything in, here is where you have to remember a law of the spirit: If you seek first the Kingdom of God and My righteousness—in other words, the things I’ve told you to do, My priorities—then all these other things will be added unto you (Mat.6:33).

58. So as you’re putting aside those precious blocks of time for time with Me, time with your children, time to relax together, time for the priorities in your work, time for exercise and your other physical needs, you can be claiming My promise that then “all these other things will be added unto you.” Either I’ll give you time to get to them, or I’ll take care of them so that you don’t have to worry about them. Either way, it’s a win-win situation.

59. It takes a lot of unselfishness to make a good communal Home schedule work. Everyone has to be willing to fill in for one another so that everyone gets their Word time and their work done. You have to agree together as a Home on what the priorities are—what you’re going to put your manpower and woman-power toward. But creating a good schedule together is worth putting effort and time into.

60. Having a good schedule is one of the pillars of a fruitful, happy, balanced Home and work. It’s the key to making sure you’re fulfilling the priorities. And when you are, you can claim My promise with full faith: All these “other things” will be added unto you.

If things are out of balance

61. (Mama:) If things in your Home have been out of balance and the Lord is speaking to you about it through these messages, then it will take some effort and work to get things back in balance. That's not a bad thing. In fact, it can be a wonderful thing, because it's an opportunity for the Lord to lend you His equalizing power as you rearrange your schedule and make changes.

62. Your Home might need to make a united effort to balance things out. For example, if you have relegated the Word, praise, prayer, and the things of the spirit to a place of lesser importance in your Home, you'll need to work hard to promote that as being just as important—in fact, more so—than the work. Or if you've not given your children the ample time they need, in favor of the work, you will need to rectify that and seek the Lord for solutions.

63. Again, as I said earlier, it's not as if every aspect of your lives needs equal time. Some things just take more time than other things. Or, when you're lacking in some area, you will need to devote more time to it to get your Home up to snuff.

64. (Jesus:) Following the board criteria is a good safeguard to help keep your Home in balance, because you can't fulfill the criteria in any board if you aren't putting time and effort into it. So it is a constant reminder of several of the important focuses of your Home.

65. There is, however, still opportunity for your Home to at times get so focused on one area that you neglect other areas. If that happens from time to time and then things fall back into balance, that's okay, because sometimes you have to somewhat neglect or deemphasize one area in order to focus manpower, time, effort, or resources on improving another area. That's natural. You can't focus evenly on everything all the time.

66. But I want to encourage you that it's very important to step back from time to time

and look at your Home overall, look at your individual lives, and see whether you're living a balanced life. It's easy to focus on the work and neglect other things, but that only works for a while. In time, people become unhappy, problems grow and get out of hand, and then you have to pull back and focus on the things that you should have been giving attention to all along. It's not an efficient way to operate in the long term.

67. So besides working to fulfill the board criteria—which will automatically help to bring each pillar into focus from time to time—I recommend that you also hold a Home meeting every once in a while in which you step back and look at your Home and ask yourselves whether your lives are in balance. There are situations you can watch for, which can help to alert you if things are getting out of balance. Ask yourselves questions like:

- Is our Home a happy place? Is there laughter and joking and smiles and praises at mealtimes, devotions, and times of relaxation together?
- Are our children secure, relaxed, and comfortable around each other and the adults in the Home?
- Are our children happy with their teachers? Are the teachers happy in their ministries?
- Is everyone getting a chance to get out and go witnessing from time to time, even if it's not their main ministry?
- Do we invest time and resources in opportunities to relax together as a Home—alternating between activities geared to the younger and older generations, so that everyone has things to look forward to in our Home life?
- Does everyone have some aspect of their work that they enjoy and feel challenged by? Does everyone stay busy, or are some people overwhelmed and others bored?

Take a tip from a tightrope walker: If he loses his balance, he falls.

- When it's work time, does everyone pretty much show up on time and put in the necessary hours?
- Does our Home's day and work time start at an agreed-upon time in the morning, or do we have a hard time getting our Home off the ground, teams out the door, kids' school started on time, etc.?
- Does everyone get time to relax—a regular W&R day, and at least some time every day when they can meditate, touch base with Me, take a nap, clean their room, or do whatever other personal things they need to do?
- Do people have things to do during their time off that they find relaxing and fun, besides System entertainment?
- Are our Home's communal areas clean and well cared for? Does everyone pitch in and contribute toward keeping our Home looking nice and an enjoyable place to be together and a good testimony to visitors?
- Are our young people (JETT's and teens, especially) active participants in our Home, both in the duties and the meetings and activities? Are they being trained to take on responsibility?
- Are our united devotions, Loving Jesus nights, times of spiritual fellowship and prayer vigil alive and inspiring? Do they contain variety and surprises, or are they dull, routine and predictable?
- Does our Home carry a spirit of busyness or peace and faith?
- Are we in the habit of often putting the work before our time with the Lord, or the children's needs, or people's personal needs and happiness?

68. Those questions don't cover every aspect of Home life, but they will help you to think about a few key areas that can sometimes be neglected when there is a lot of work to do and not a lot of extra time to plan. The more there is to do, the

more important it is to fight to have a balanced life, a balanced Home. The work you will have always with you. Don't let it take over your life!

69. Take time to balance things in your life and Home. Take time to step back and see what areas have been neglected, and give them a bit of attention. Your Home will be happier because of it, and each individual will be more fruitful and productive. Avoid problems and hassles by maintaining a good and proper balance, which is My delight!

Give it your all

70. (Mama:) There's a lot that goes into our busy lives for the Lord, and often in order to have a good balance, we can't devote a lot of time to any one thing. So a key is to do everything with your whole heart. Have a glory in everything you do. Make the most of every precious minute, no matter what you're devoting the time to. Because it's all important and together works to create balance in your Home, give it all you've got.

71. In fact, your Home should make a conscious decision and agree together that you're going to give each aspect of your Home life your all. Make a commitment that when it's time to work, you're going to work like everything depended on working. When it's time to spend time with others or the children, you're going to give that your all. When you take time with Me, you're going to make it quality. When you're asked to do something in the Home that isn't your main ministry or job, but it's something that needs to be done to contribute to the "community" of your Home, then you're going to do it cheerfully. When it's time to relax and have fun, you're going to put effort into that as well—make an effort to be there, be supportive, participate, not be a wet blanket, etc.

72. (Jesus:) There are so many different aspects of Home life. That's one of the unique things about Family Homes—they serve so many different functions! They're your church, your school, your nest where you raise your family. They're your places of work and your community center. They're your headquarters that you organize

and launch your outreach programs from. They're a nursery, a restaurant/cafeteria, a showcase of your missionary life. They're places of recreation, places of sleep and rest, places of study, places of work.

73. A key to having happy, winning teams is to determine as a Home that all those various aspects are an important part of your Home and your life, and that you're all going to give your best to each aspect as it is needed. Then there will be a sense of camaraderie, unity, and unselfishness, which creates balance and enhances progress.

74. Everyone has aspects of their life or the Home that they prefer to invest in and aspects they'd rather skip. But when everyone gives their best to whatever they're doing at the time, there is a spirit of excellence and happiness and fulfillment that pervades everything and that in turn motivates the Home even more.

75. If someone is a teacher and they give the kids their best, then the parents are at peace and thankful and feel good about leaving their kids to do their work. If the parents give their best to their work for Me when their kids are being taught, then the teacher feels fulfilled and motivated and happy to pour into the children in their absence.

76. When it's time to have devotions together, if the Home unites and everyone is there fully in spirit, there is a tremendous sucking and drawing power that moves My Spirit, and the devotions is extra feeding and inspiring for each person. When it's time to relax together and everyone shows up and is ready to participate, the happiness and enjoyment is multiplied, and strong bonds are formed in the spirit between all of you.

77. Can you see how important it is to put your all into each aspect of Home life? If someone feels, "I have so much other important work to do, I shouldn't be cooking dinner," well, the dinner probably isn't going to be that inspiring, and people will feel that. But if on the other hand the cook puts her all into that meal, then when everyone comes for dinner they will feel loved and appreciated and motivated to in turn do their best.

78. It really pays off, My loves, to decide together that whatever you do, you're going to

do it with all your might. It generates love, trust, unity, and brotherhood. It encourages others to do their best for Me, and they in turn encourage you to do your best. Strive for a spirit of excellence in your Home—not perfection, but wholeheartedness. It will go a long way toward making your Home not just okay, but wonderful; not just livable, but actually enjoyable and fruitful. Try it!

Watch out for the spirit of busyness

79. (Mama:) A sure sign of an imbalance in your Home is if the pervading feeling and atmosphere is one of busyness—with everyone rushing here and there and feeling overworked and stressed, not taking time for people, not taking sufficient time for the children, putting your times with the Lord on the back burner, etc. This should not be the picture of your Home.

80. The spirit of your Home should be one of peace, joy, and happiness. Your Home should manifest a spirit of the joy of the Lord. And if this isn't the case, there's a good chance something important is out of balance. If people in your Home aren't very happy, if things are always rushed instead of peaceful, if there's no time to relax and let your hair down, then something is wrong. There's an imbalance of some kind, and it's likely that there's too much emphasis on the work to the neglect of all the other things that keep your Home happy.

81. (Jesus:) If you want an easy indicator of how balanced your Home is, ask yourselves how happy everyone is. Do people in your Home exhibit My joy? Or does everyone always seem stressed and busy? Do people in your Home generally exude a spirit of peace, faith, and trust? Or do you more often feel that things are rushed and people are frazzled? Are those in your Home too busy for people?—Too busy to take a minute or two to talk to a child, too busy to stop for a hug, too busy to appreciate someone, too busy to take some time at the end of a full day to relax and fellowship?

82. If your Home is in balance, people will be happy, because your needs will be met. You

will have My joy; you will exude peace and faith and trust. You will take time for people. You will take time for Me, and the spirit of your Home will bear witness of a good balance. Those who observe your Home or visit your Home will be able to clearly tell by your spirits whether or not things are in balance and whether or not those in your Home have their needs met.

83. If you Home shepherds are unsure of whether your Home manifests this joy and peace I speak of, rather than the spirit of busyness, ask your coach. Or ask the Home shepherds of another Home for their opinion. Sometimes it's helpful to get an outside opinion, if you're too close to the situation to accurately gauge. Of course, you can also ask Me, but having the input of others is also helpful.

84. Manifesting joy and happiness in serving Me is so important, and it largely comes about as a result of your Home having a good balance in all things—working hard, but not too hard; investing in your children, but not to the neglect of other important things; spending time with Me every day and making it count; taking time for people, and showing them that you love them and have time for them because they're worth it; taking regular time off to relax and recuperate and fellowship and enjoy the bonds of love and camaraderie I've blessed you with.

85. I don't judge your Home only by how hard you work. I look at the overall picture and see if everything important is given sufficient time. I desire to see balance in your Home, and to see your faithfulness to schedule in My priorities. When you get to Heaven you'll be sad if you discover that you missed out on much of the joy of life because you didn't take time to enjoy times of recreation or fun, or you thought you were too busy to get to know and love the children, or you rushed through life without stopping to take enough time for people.

86. When you get to Heaven I don't want you to say, "I lived a good life because I worked night and day in order to live a packed-to-the-brim life for Jesus. I was so busy for Him and accomplished a lot of good works. I really got a

lot done." I want you to be able to say, "I lived a full life for Jesus, giving His love to others!" The main purpose of having a balanced life is not simply to have one, but so that you remain loving to others, you keep Me in first place, and so you don't burn out. When you stand before Me, it will be the effects of your balanced or unbalanced life that you will see, not whether or not you had one. If it was one full of My love, then I will be pleased with your service, and so will you.

When things are in balance, there is harmony; when things are imbalanced, there is disarray.

Talk About It

Optional discussion questions

- Go around the room and have each person explain which of the four pillars of life—spiritual life, personal life, community life, and work life—they tend to overemphasize, and which one they often underemphasize, and why they think they do so. You could also ask yourselves this question as a Home, and unitedly pray to be able to balance things out better, or discuss ways that you could put more emphasis on the pillar that is presently weaker.
- Discuss some of the things your Home might miss out on if you're too work-oriented and too busy. What are some of the losses? It helps to discuss the losses, because if you know what you stand to lose if things are imbalanced, it motivates you to want to keep things in balance.
- Do you feel that your Home generally exudes a spirit of busyness or a spirit of peace and the joy of the Lord? If the spirit is most often one of busyness, why is that? What can you do to change things?
- When you get to Heaven and see a review of your life, what are the things in your life that

you think the Lord will be the most happy about? Is this different from what you most often give priority to in everyday life?

Praise Ideas

Optional praise ideas

- *Four-pillars praise:* Praise the Lord for something about your work for Him (specifically your main ministry) that you are thankful for. Then praise Him for some aspect of your spiritual life and communion with Him that you particularly enjoy. And do the same for your community life (communal living, those you live with, etc.), as well as your personal life (free time and family and friends).
- *Qualities praise:* Thank the Lord for a specific quality in someone, and then tell the Lord how it reminds you of Him. For example: “Thank You, Jesus, for Pat’s gentle spirit. It reminds me of You, and how loving and merciful You are with us when we make mistakes.”-
- *Fill in the blanks praises:* Use some of the following praises and fill in the blanks:

“Your love is so warm, Jesus, like ____.”
(Example: “Your love is so warm, Jesus, like the sun.”)

“I get so free with You, dear Husband, that I feel like ____.” (Example: “I get so free with You, dear Husband, that I feel like a bird floating effortlessly on the breeze.”)

“I get a glimpse of Your magical love when ____.” (Example: “I get a glimpse of Your magical love when I see a breathtaking sunset.”)

“Do” the Word

Optional practical ways to be “doers of the Word”

- Ask the Lord about each of the four pillars of life—your spiritual life, personal life, community life, and work life—so that He can give you an evaluation on how you’re doing

in each one. Ask Him whether or not you put enough time and effort into each area of your life, or if there is an imbalance.

- If there is something that you have been neglecting in your life—such as not spending enough time with others, not going out of your way to show love and affection, not spending time with the children, not helping out in the Home in sacrificial ways just because you love and want to help others, not taking time for fun and recreation, not taking quality time with the Lord, or neglecting the new weapons, etc.—make a commitment to do something (even if it’s a very small step) within the next week to improve in that area of your life.
- Discuss the questions in paragraph 67 in a future Home Council meeting. And if you have to answer “unsatisfactory” to any of the questions, brainstorm solutions and practical steps that your Home can take to make progress.
- Home shepherds, do as the Lord said in one of the preceding messages: “If you Home shepherds are unsure of whether your Home manifests this joy and peace I speak of, rather than the spirit of busyness, ask your coach. Or ask the Home shepherds of another Home for their opinion. Sometimes it’s helpful to get an outside opinion, if you’re too close to the situation to accurately gauge. Of course, you can also ask Me, but having the input of others is also helpful.”

Hot Key: Equilibrium

87. (*Jesus:*) Call on the key of equilibrium to help you to find the right balance in your Home—the type of balance that will help you to not only form a winning team, but maintain progress and remain bonded on the long term.

Through the key of equilibrium you will have access to the stabilizing force of My Spirit that will help you to be the rock-solid and yet flexible Home that I need you to be. By invoking this key it will be easier for you to find and maintain a good balance.

Prayer Boost

88. Dear Love, we know that a just balance is Your delight, and we know that there's a time for everything under Heaven. You've said and explained how it's vital that everything is done in decency and in order, in its time and place. It's hard at times to find this balance, but we want to ask You now for a special anointing for it.

89. Jesus, we want to be a fast-moving, efficient, wise, hard-working yet fun-loving team. We want to find the right balance in each thing and give it the right priority and effort. We need You for that, dear Husband. We depend on You to help us keep changing, tweaking, and adjusting till we get it just right. Help us to stir ourselves up continually and not to be hesitant or afraid to reevaluate things, or to rethink our methods or schedule or any aspect that could be done better or more efficiently.

90. As a winning team of disciples in Your Family, we need and want to give due importance to all the aspects of life necessary to be happy, efficient, and productive. That's a hard thing to keep up over the long term; it's difficult to stay fresh and balanced. But You can help us to find the motivation and will to achieve and maintain a balance that will not require too much work, but that will be pleasing to You—and, most of all, efficient and beneficial to our lives and service.

91. We ask You to activate the keys of equilibrium, inspiration, diligence, relaxation and communication on our behalf. Please help us to keep a good balance between our work life, our personal life and relaxation, our spiritual life, and our communal life. You have the answers and radical solutions that we want. You have the wisdom that we need. Please help us to open ourselves to You and receive Your help whenever we need it. We're Your yielded and humble brides who can do nothing without You. Please fill our vacuum. Help us to find a good balance as we follow You.

Merry Medicine

Put Down That Horse, Soldier!

By Kevin

There's an ancient Chinese proverb I once made up that goes like this: "He who carries his horse into battle has inhaled too much incense or something" (circa 2005).

What's the significance of this proverb, you might ask? Here's what I think:

1. Creating a winning team does not mean carrying weights and burdens that are three times the capacity of your strength and that occasionally kick you in the rear.

2. Creating a winning team does not mean turning your Home into a temple of achieved spirituality, where the only activities allowed are intense spiritual meditation, correcting people when their meditation is not intense or spiritual enough, and maybe some JTT.

3. We are warriors, and so we still have to ride into battle, even if we really, really do feel that "every day is like Christmas" and we've "already started on today's batch of eggnog."

4. If I had been alive during the days of ancient China, I probably would have been imprisoned for writing such dreadful proverbs.

Now here's a real proverb—one from Solomon, who not only knew how to write real proverbs, but produced several hit singles, such as "Songs of Solomon Chapter 1" and "Songs of Solomon Chapter 2." Check this out:

"Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it..."

No, wait; wrong book of Solomon. Here we go, this is the one:

"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is His delight" (Proverbs 11:1).

So I guess the Lord is pretty serious when He says we need a balance. With that in mind, I suppose the following fictitious Homes must be at least reasonably abominable:

The Lounge and Lather Home: Our gorgeous beachfront property is blessed with excellent

swimming facilities, including a set of luxurious hot baths and a large, fully functional sauna. That's all, though; we never really had the funds to buy any chairs, beds, witnessing tools or anything.

The Holy Temple of the Perpetual Devotions: Accommodations are sparse in our Home in order to avoid members becoming a "comfortable Christian" in any way, shape, or form. Entertainment consists of a yearly pow-wow'd showing of the last 10 minutes of the movie "The Apple."

Double-sided Candle Incorporated: Our centrally located office also provides Home members with ergonomic office chairs, doubling as excellent sleeping quarters for that necessary one hour of sleep per night. Each Home member enjoys a full daily schedule of what we like to call "the three H's of a winning team": hard work, hard labor, and hardly anything else. (Note: Babies are required to change their own diapers and help generate electricity through specially made baby walkers with pedals.)

So I guess in order to "delight" the Lord and avoid being an abomination and stuff, we need to think along the lines of having a balance.

Perhaps we should strive to put into practice the message of the old song "Achoo! I Love You!" Just kidding. The message of the old song, "We're gonna have a good time serving the Lord." The problem is, sometimes it's easy to get so stuck on the "good time" part. When someone asks you to claim a key during prayer vigil, and all you remember is the "recreation" and maybe "happiness" categories, then everyone eventually stops asking you to claim keys.

Conversely, it's easy to dwell so much on the "serving the Lord" part, we actually start to wonder if it would be more efficient to line up the Home for dinner and feed them food assembly-line fashion.

But if we can learn to find the right balance between all of the important aspects of our lives, I believe we will all be a lot happier servants and soldiers of the Lord. That way every day can still be "like Christmas," but we can have a great time dashing through the "snow" to deliver some serious "presents" down the Enemy's chimney. Charge!

FUN

The Brief

92. (Mama:) Winning teams make time for fun together, because they know that it's an important part of what keeps their team players happy and bonds them together as one. They know that all work and no play makes a very dull Home; there's a time for work, there's a time to invest in the spiritual aspects of the Home, but there also need to be times for people to let their hair down and relax and have fun together. Fun, fellowship, recreation and relaxation are an important part of every winning team.

Pointers for Winning Teams

Have fun together as a Home

93. I can't stress enough how important it is for you to have fun together as a Home. Having fun together, relaxing together, laughing together, learning about one another, becoming friends, engaging in recreational activities—all of these things are part of what contribute to making your Home a well-rounded one. Having fun and recreation is an often overlooked or minimized element, but it's essential for every well-rounded

disciple and every happy Home. Time away from work to relax and enjoy good fellowship and fun is not time wasted and shouldn't be seen as such. It's part of what makes life complete.

94. (Jesus:) Part of living is to have a balance in all things, to have well-rounded experiences.

Discipleship isn't only about working hard and dying daily; it's also about playing hard and having the joy of your salvation. Marriage isn't only about working together or caring for the children together; it's also about having fun together. For a Home to be a winning team, it's as important to have a balance as it is in your personal discipleship or your marriage, because in essence, that's what a Home is, on a larger scale.

95. Witnessing and follow-up is important. Caring for the needs of the children is important. Keeping the cleanliness and health standard high is important. Provisioning and having your needs is important, as are the many other aspects of running your Home. But it's just as important to have relaxation and fellowship in your Home—both unitedly, and individually or in smaller groups.

96. Having fun, fellowshiping, and taking time to relax together actually strengthens your bond. And while going on outings and excursions, or planning game nights or parties is enjoyable and is a type of fun, it doesn't always have to be a lot of work to prepare or even have to involve the whole Home planning or deciding that this slot of time is planned for "fun." Spontaneous fun or relaxation is just as unifying, and interaction on a lighter level, away from work, away from deadlines or schedules or errands, creates memories that promote positive feelings in your Home.

97. Having fun is a huge part of unity. Of course, you can't just sit around all day having fun and not getting any work done, not following up on your sheep, or taking care of business matters. But just the same, you can't expect to be a close-knit Home, a winning team, bonded together as a marriage, as a family, without taking time to unwind and have fun.

A magical bond of love forms when you take time to relax and enjoy one another's company.

98. A Home that works hard together and plays hard together is a fruitful Home, a successful Home, a new-bottle Home, because having fun keeps you young. Making the effort to have fun experiences together, to fellowship, and to revel in the joy of your salvation brings you closer together, and bonds you as friends and family.

99. I love to have fun, and I love to have fun with you. So creating that time to have fun as a Home is letting Me into not just your missionary work, not just your set times of Word and communion with Me, but into every aspect of your life and your Home. It's truly making Me a part of everything—work, spiritual feeding, rest, and play—and opens the door to greater blessings, greater unity, and greater fruitfulness as a Home.

100. Treasure this gift of having fun as the key to a successful team, and a boost toward greater unity. When you take time to fellowship and have fun together, you get to know each other better, problems within the Home are easier to sort out, there's less friction and stress and the Home runs smoother, your work is more efficient, and your team is stronger and more resilient.

101. If you miss this important ingredient to successful communal living, people will feel like only co-workers rather than also being family or mates. You won't know each other as well, and so misunderstandings or personality conflicts will be more sensitive and more stressful. People won't feel as connected to each other and that the Home is truly their Home. People will lean more toward selfishness, toward what they can get out of the Home, how they can care for themselves or their own, rather than feeling refreshed from their times of relaxation and unwinding together, and the knowledge that the Home's success and fruitfulness is dependent on their contribution and what they make it.

102. If you don't think you have time to have fun, schedule it. Have a time at the end of the day a couple of days a week, or some weekends that everyone fellowships together, whether it's calm relaxation and talking, or a sports activity, or an organized game night, or an evening where people have dinner in smaller groups (and extend it later into the evening a little), so people have time to talk and get to know each other better.

103. A happy, close-knit Home is a well-balanced Home. So if your Home isn't happy, then something's missing, and it could be that your Home is lacking in having a little more fun and fellowship.

Jesus is fun and likes to have fun

104. (Mama:) Unfortunately, it's easy to feel guilty about having fun, taking time off, or relaxing and fellowshiping. Because we in the Family have so much to do and are such hard workers and so conscientious, and aim to redeem the time as much as possible, we can sometimes feel like taking time off is not really such a wise investment of our time. We feel we would benefit more by filling that time with other things.

105. And while that might be the case in some instances, especially if your Home is imbalanced and you're taking too much time off to the neglect of your work and other responsibilities, in many more cases we need to fight the mindset that time for fun and fellowship is time wasted. The Enemy is always there to tell us that we're not doing enough, or we're not working hard enough, or we shouldn't be relaxing and taking time off, because there are so many other things that are more important.

106. So when the Enemy is making you feel condemned in this way, you need to look at the facts. The facts are that taking time off, relaxing,

fellowshipping, and doing extracurricular things like engaging in recreational activities are all a part of what make well-rounded disciples and Homes, as I said earlier. These things are not just nice; they're necessities.

107. It also helps to remember that Jesus is fun and likes to have fun. It's a part of His nature. He's not all seriousness and work—He knows how to enjoy life too. And when we're having fun, relaxing, and enjoying life, within the bounds of His will, then we're being like Him. He never looks down on us or condemns us for it; in fact, He encourages us to enjoy Him, each other, and the wonderful life He has given us.

108. (Jesus:) There are many aspects to My personality. I embody love, truth, conviction, just judgment, spiritual communication, balance, the spiritual weapons, and many other things. But I also embody fun and freedom in the spirit. An important side to My personality is fun and freedom. I am serious when I need to be serious, but I also let My hair down often. I have My work and I have My play, and if you are to be like Me, you must also have both work and play.

109. It may seem funny to you that I'm telling you that I have fun. I can even see you wondering what type of fun I have. Well, let Me give you a glimpse. In Heaven there is much that I do for fun. In fact, I enjoy almost every kind of fun, because when I spend time with My brides, each one's idea of fun is different. There are all kinds of things available in Heaven to do for fun and relaxation and enjoyment and entertainment, and very often My fellowship with those in My heavenly realm revolves around fun.

110. Yes, I have times of work when we discuss business matters, and times when I give spiritual input and training, and of course there are times of focused spiritual communion and intimate lovemaking in the spirit. But in addition to all of these aspects of My relationships with My brides, there are plenty of other times when I have fun with them. I do all kinds of things, according to the likes and needs of My brides.

Taking time to stop, rest, and relax is not time wasted—it will keep you going even longer, and with more inspiration.

111. I have picnics, go to banquets, watch concerts, attend births, go swimming, watch exciting happenings on one of our huge-screen 3-D TVs, go dancing, watch sunsets, walk in the forest, hike in the mountains, play in the sand on the beach, go surfing, ride horses, fly, travel around the universe in heavenly vehicles, take boat rides on the Magic River of Life, chat with the angels at the pearly gates, go skiing or snowboarding on one of the simulated slopes, slide down the side of the Heavenly City, play ping-pong and soccer, help one of My female brides with her interior décor, or disguise Myself and wander around the Heavenly City and observe the happenings.

**Life is precious,
and meant to be
savored.**

112. That's just to name a very few of the things I do for fun—and that's not including all of the things I do for fun that include you on Earth, such as joining in on the fun things you do. Of course, it's hard for you to know that I'm there, because you can't see Me or feel Me, or talk to Me in the flesh. But every time you ask Me to be with you during your times of fun and recreation and relaxation, I'm right there with you, enjoying everything you are enjoying. That's fun for Me. I also enjoy our lovemaking times in the spirit; those are a highlight for Me.

113. Another thing I have fun doing with you and for you is performing miracles and answering your prayers. Those are some of My favorite “fun” things to do for you, because I know that you often see the manifestation of My power, and it proves to you that I'm around and alive and helping you in the spirit. That's why it makes Me so happy when you notice that I did a miracle or answered your prayer and you thank Me for it. It makes the “fun” more complete. It's not as “fun” when you don't notice or thank Me.

114. The reason I'm getting into all of the details about how I have fun is to show you how important it is. After all, if I'm the most spiritual guy around, and the busiest person in the universe, yet I still recognize the importance of fun and downtime—how much more should you? It's not

just a nice thing; it's a necessity. It's not just something you should fit in if you have time, or if your Home members have time; it's something everyone needs in order to be healthy spiritually and happy in their service to Me.

115. Work for Me is never all fun, but it should never be all work either. That's wrong. It's not the way I am, and it's not the way I want you to be. If you have no room in your life or Home for fun and recreation and letting your hair down, and letting My Spirit of fun and freedom flow, then you're neglecting a very important aspect of My Spirit. You're failing to follow My example.

116. Fun might not seem that important when you compare it to the work, but you can't judge by surface judgment. You see immediate progress and results when work is being done, but you don't see any tangible fruit when you take time off or have fun or relax. It's true that nothing is getting done in the physical that translates into anything tangible when you're having fun or downtime, but those times work to strengthen and rejuvenate and inspire the spirits of My brides. Thus, they're extremely important.

117. My loves, you work so hard to be like Me in so many areas of your lives. You aim to be loving like I am, to be understanding like I am, to be kind and friendly like I am, to be an embodiment of Me in every way. So remember that it's part of My nature to be fun-loving, to indulge in the freedoms of the spirit, to enjoy “letting My hair down,” and to recognize the need for relaxation, entertainment, and fun. You need it, and those you work with and live with need it too. Be like Me: Have fun, and don't be afraid to let it be known!

It's worth the cost

118. (Mama:) Although you don't always need to schedule fellowships, relaxation, and recreation—as some of the most meaningful “downtimes” can happen with little or no planning—you'll find that in order to ensure they're a regular part of your life and Home, it might be

easier to slot them into your schedule and plan ahead. You schedule everything else in order to make sure it happens—your Word time, your prayer vigils, your work time, etc.—so it stands to reason you’ll have a higher success rate if you plan your fun and recreation as well, at least to a certain degree.

119. Another benefit of scheduling your fellowships and fun slots ahead of time—which you would need to factor into the schedule—is that it provides ample time to plan something that will be well worth everyone’s time. If the united times of fun and recreation are well planned, then even when things are busy, people will be more likely to sacrifice the time they would normally be working to enjoy the fellowship and relaxation with their Home members. You can also rotate people in the Home planning such events, so that the work doesn’t always fall on the same people.

120. Planning fun times as a Home might cost you a bit—in time, effort, prayer, and even in money sometimes. But it’s well worth it to keep your Home happy and inspired.

121. (*Jesus:*) A wise executive knows that there is more to reaching his goal than the job itself. He knows that the people he employs are so important to the success of his business that they are worth investing his time and money and personal interest into. He can’t run the business without a staff; he can’t reach his goal without a team—and not just any team, but a good team. And once he gets a good team together, one that he knows can really do the job—they’re skilled, they’re smart, they’re dedicated, and they’re going to mean success—he wants to keep that team together. He doesn’t want even one person to leave for “greener pastures,” because each one plays a key role in the success of the business.

122. Being the wise executive that he is, he looks at his employees as a team, and at all aspects of their lives.—Not just their work output, but their family, their health, their personal life, their fulfillment, their job satisfaction, their problems, and he does his best to meet those needs. He gives them perks when he can, organizes office events,

highlights “the employee of the month,” hosts parties at his house, plans fun sports activities for everyone, etc. He gives them days off, and pays them overtime when they need to work past normal work hours. Maybe he inspires his staff with a personal slogan that they shout unitedly, such as: “As a team we do it better!” He finds out what incentives and benefits will inspire his employees to stay together, to produce great work, and be happy doing it.

123. What team player wouldn’t do his best at work if work is a place where he feels appreciated, respected, and liked as a person? What team member would want to go someplace else when he not only has job satisfaction right where he is, but he loves his work because he likes the people he works with, his family likes them, his kids like them, plus they have fun together?

124. That’s the way your Homes should be—more than a place where you work and get the job done. Getting the job done is important, because that is My commission to you, to go into all the world and give the lost My Words. But in order to be effective witnesses, believe it or not, you need to have a Home life that is happy, interesting, operates smoothly, where you have your needs met, where you feel respected and appreciated by others, where not only you and your family live, but your friends live.

125. Home needs to be a place that you enjoy, that you look forward to coming home to after your day’s work is done, and where you’re inspired to get up in the morning. Home should be a place where you are happy to meet your brother or sister in the kitchen, and where you feel that other people are happy to see you.

Taking time off, to enjoy the Lord and each other, is like taking a pain reliever. It takes some of the ache out of trying or busy times, and helps you to relax, rest, and feel refreshed.

126. Your personal life and that of every single Family member in your Home is very important to Me, and not just so that you can get the job done that I ask of you (although that is very important), but because I want you to be happy and to enjoy serving Me together. I want you to reflect your sincere joy in Me to the entire world as a witness that serving Me full-time is a wonderful life, and that My promises do not fail if you obey. Remember, I'm not a sad God. I love life! I love to have fun with you. I love it when you love to have fun together.

127. "Sounds good," you say. "I'll take some of that. But it's not like that in a lot of Homes I've seen." But it can be if you invest some time and a little planning, prayer, and, yes, even money if you need to, into making your Home a fun place to live. You and everyone else in your Home deserve to have some fun, to relax at times—lots of times—to enjoy each other and enjoy life. Life is short enough and the goal is not how much you have accomplished when you get here, but how you went about accomplishing it, who you loved along the way, how much of My love you gave to others.

128. Take time as a Home to do fun things together. It's important to get to know the other side of your mates and co-workers, their personal side, their fun side. When you work together you see the work side of each other. The more you work together and pray together and fight the spiritual battles together, the better you work together. But as you know so well, all work and no play makes a dull student—so it's true for your personal life as well. If you only work together as a Home, only do the "musts" together, like have united devotions, prayer vigil, feed the sheep, fundraise, etc., and you never take time to have relaxing, inspiring, whoop-it-up fun times together, most likely your

Home members will feel the "have to do it" side of life more than the "our Home is great" side.

129. And your Home is great! You're all wonderful members, giving your life to Me and others, so let it show. Let people see how much fun you can be, how much fun your Home can be, and how much fun serving Me can be.

130. If necessary, be willing to spend some money for a fun activity that you can do together. Not that it takes money to have fun. You can do lots of fun things together that don't cost anything. But on the other hand, don't worry about spending a little if you need to from time to time. Schedule the time. Budget the extra finances. Make it happen, because it's very important to everyone's personal happiness, as well as very important that each one sees the other side of people's nature.

131. It can be humbling for people to come together simply to have fun instead of on a work basis. This type of humbling is good for the Home spirit. Some people might normally have a ministry position that appears "higher" than the next guy and they're used to giving instructions; but when you come together for pure and simple fun times, no one is "higher" than the next guy. This is good for everyone's camaraderie and humility.

132. If you're only used to relating to a person on a work level and maybe they seem too serious, or too "letter of the law," or something, but then you see them having fun at a party or singing at the top of their voice, or volunteering for a skit, you get a completely different perspective of that person. You begin to see another side of them, a good side that helps you to appreciate them all the more. When you've had fun together, it makes working together the next day a lot more inspiring. It makes it easier to be positive about each other, to see the human and lovable side of your mates. It helps to relieve any work stress and pressure and gives you a new outlook on your work. People will feel more ready for a full work day if they also have times to relax and have fun.

133. It's also a good sample to your Activated friends and Active members when they see you living My joy. And as the saying goes, if you act

If you're feeling guilty about having good, godly relaxation and fun, then that's the condemnation of the Enemy.

inspired, you will soon feel inspired! If you join together as a Home and do fun things together, whether you feel like it or not at the time, it will soon be fun and you will begin to enjoy living together even more, and your Home will soon be a really fun place to live.

A lack of fun in your life makes you get old faster, cranky quicker, and worn out before your time.

134. (*Jesus:*) The issue of being your brother's keeper, Home accountability, and more integrated Home shepherding will only work within a spirit of love, unity, and camaraderie. When there is coldness and distance within a Home, looking out for one another can be viewed as self-righteousness, being "picky," and can be received with a lot of negative sensitivity. This is why it's so important to create bonds between each other in your winning team.

135. I don't necessarily mean that every Home member has to be best friends with every other person. Perhaps some folks feel that their personalities don't click when it comes to spending off hours together, and they just feel closer to some people than others. That's pretty natural, and it's not a problem. It is important, however, to create times of united fellowship and fun—times where you aren't discussing Home issues, problems, the children, schedules, etc., but where you can have a good time together and enjoy Me and each other's fellowship.

136. When the only interaction between Home members is impersonal, of a business nature, or troubleshooting, it becomes much harder when there comes a time to get personal in a shepherding or "brother's keeper" way. There hasn't been a cushion of love built up. All you have is the bare bones, and then any kind of correction or giving checks becomes much harder to take.

137. It's like a roast beef sandwich without bread: You can have the essential, the slices of

beef, and that's the basic all-important ingredient. But to make that sandwich an enjoyable experience, you have to have bread on either side. You probably want to moisten it with some butter or a little gravy, maybe even add a slice of cheese or two, and some onions. While all these other things aren't essential, they really do enhance the flavor.

138. Creating an atmosphere that engenders unity and bonding is not as hard as it may seem. Most people enjoy doing a lot of the same things—and utilizing those common bonds, doing those things unitedly, bringing My Spirit and thus My love into your midst, will be a huge steppingstone to inspiring love and friendship amongst your winning team.

139. The plan doesn't have to be elaborate, nor does it have to cost money. It's the simple joys that I can really use to bring My Spirit in. Of course, setting aside a small budget for activities or events can be a good idea, and is a worthwhile investment of your resources, as having fun together is an important steppingstone to uniting your Home and reaching that "winning team" goal.

When it's a sacrifice

140. (*Mama:*) From time to time it can actually be a personal sacrifice to join in on fun, recreational, and entertainment-type activities. Sometimes there'll be something planned for your Home and you just don't feel like participating in it, or you're tired after a day's work, or you prefer to fellowship on a smaller scale, or the particular activity isn't up your alley and you'd prefer to do something else. Maybe you're not even a real activity type of person, and prefer not to fellowship or participate in many events. Or perhaps you're shy, or there's something else that holds you back. But the Lord blesses it when you don't speak negatively about such activities, and you join in anyway as much as possible for the sake of unity and the many benefits associated with fellowshiping and having fun together as a Home.

141. (*Jesus:*) It's a good idea to participate in Home activities and events, even if you don't

feel like it. Not only does your active participation promote unity, but it's also good for you personally. When you take the plunge even when you don't feel like it, it's good for your spirit, and I bless you for your sacrifice. I bless you for contributing to the fun and entertainment, even if it's not your favorite activity. I bless you for your humility. I bless you for taking the time to get to know and appreciate the things that those you live with enjoy, even if it will never be your personal favorite activity.

142. When everyone is too picky and choosy about what type of events they will participate in, it can create quite a bit of disunity in a Home. It can make those who plan the united activities or fellowships discouraged if there's no participation; they'll feel like, "What's the use of planning anything?" And it can cause your Home to become selfish when each person does only what they like to do and doesn't participate and join in on Home activities. It's something to be very careful about, because although I don't expect you to like every activity, I do expect you to give of your time and contribute to the unity of your winning team in this way as much as you are able to, and I will bless you for it.

Keep the renewal alive

143. (Mama:) In your times of fun, remember to keep the spirit of the renewal alive in your Homes. What I mean by this is to be sure to guard against defaulting to worldly entertainment for your fun, relaxation, entertainment, and enjoyment. Although, as you know from reading the "Shooting Straight" GNs, worldly forms of entertainment can have their place in our Homes and lives, it's important to keep them in their place and make an effort to engage in uniting, bonding, fun, fellowship-type activities as a Home that aren't connected at all to worldly entertainment.

144. Also, it's important to ensure that your Home has a variety of fun times and activities—some for the adults, some that the children can join in on, some catered to the JETTs and teens, etc. It's only fair to allow everyone the chance to relax and have fun, since

it's a need for all ages. In addition to that reasoning, it does wonders for your unity, and will help your upcoming generations to learn how to have a good balance in their lives too.

Having fun can keep you young, vibrant, a new bottle, free, happy, and a better disciple.

145. (Jesus:) In planning out your recreational and relaxation activities, the most important thing is to seek Me. It's okay to use entertainment from the world from time to time, with My permission and in accordance with the guidelines I have laid out in the Word. But as you well know, this should never be what you default to. Be sure to plan good, quality times of fellowship and fun for your Home. The best way to be sure you're hitting the mark is to ask Me, to check your plans with Me, so that I can direct and instruct you.

146. Be sure to have a good variety in who you gear your united activities to. Sometimes it will definitely be My will for you to have a fellowship geared to the adults only. But then at other times it's good to make the party or activity a Home event, so that everyone can participate and enjoy themselves—from the youngest to the oldest. Sometimes you'll want to focus the whole activity on the JETTs and teens, and maybe even invite some of the young people from a nearby Home. And at all times, of course, you'll want to include Me and the elements of My Spirit, so that I can pour down My maximum blessings on your fun times together.

Know what you need and when

147. (Mama:) If you're feeling tired and spent and want to just chill or relax or let your hair down, be sure to pray and ask the Lord exactly what you need. Very often what you feel like and think you need is exactly what you do need—some type of physical recreation, relaxation and fun. But sometimes you might actually be very spiritually drained, and taking time to have a big party or

fellowship or activity wouldn't be the cure for you. What you may really need is time with the Lord, time to be refilled and refreshed spiritually.

The desire to relax and have fun is not a weakness; it's a God-given gift.

148. The physical fun and recreation might make you

feel better temporarily, but if you are feeling spent and need spiritual strengthening and renewal, then please be sure to take the time—and don't just replace it with activities, which won't give you the spiritual revival you need. If you are spiritually drained, taking the time to tank up spiritually is much more important than the physical relaxation.

149. But remember that sometimes you may need both—the spiritual rest and refilling and time with the Lord, and some physical fun and entertainment and relaxation as well. Just don't do the one (fulfilling your physical needs) to the neglect of the other (supplying your spiritual needs), which is even more important.

150. (Jesus:) When you're feeling spent, sometimes a physical pick-me-up will help you. But I also want to be included, and very often I would like to hold you in My arms and comfort you and strengthen you. The physical relaxations are often only like bandages, whereas My comfort and My Words will heal the wound completely. So be sure to have a good balance in this area of your life and be on guard against always seeking physical fun to lighten your load or ease your mind or relax your body. Although this is sometimes exactly what you need, at other times it can be a temporary cure, when I want to help you with My Spirit.

Counsel on having successful parties

151. (Mama:) While on the topic of “fun,” something that many of you—especially you young people—like to do for fun is to have parties. Peter and I are all for parties, and we think they're a tremendous avenue for fun, relaxation, fellowship and entertainment, if they're shepherded, if you're hearing from the Lord about the details,

and remaining within the boundaries of the Word and the Charter.

152. Unfortunately, however, I recently received two reports about parties from some concerned

shepherds, which I'm going to share excerpts of with you here, followed by a message from the Lord in response, with good lessons for all.

There have been a few situations, parties and fellowship-type of gatherings, where way too much alcohol was consumed, and it seems it goes unchecked, to where shepherds just dismiss it as something that now “is allowed.” Some questionable behavior has cropped up from that, such as young people partying all night at a park drinking away, to where it could have endangered the security of the work. On other occasions you hear comments about parties where basic things such as respecting and abiding by the Law of Love guidelines and being respectful of each other are overlooked because there was too much drinking.



About two weeks ago there was a dance. At the dance there were several specific mistakes made, which we are finding out about more every day, but mostly it seems that there was not much prayer put into the preparation of the event, and the bar was managed by a teen, a young visitor who is actually on PS, and another young person who seemed to encourage underage young people to drink. The party was a bit wild; they had a mixed drink to offer, which was not mixed prayerfully (too strong).

There were other mistakes made that night, such as bringing the dance outside to the yard of the house and causing a lot of noise, which apparently brought the police to the door. [One of the young people also got extremely sick the next day, though it's unclear if this was related to the alcohol—though it seems it may have been.] Thank the Lord, he is now recovering.

After finding out a few more details regarding the events and how the evening had unfolded, we talked about it with our Home, and we wrote a letter to the Home who had hosted the dance to find out what lessons, P&Ps and reactions they had all drawn from this very serious situation. Because this happened [a young man who got severely ill] right after a not-so-well shepherded party where hard liquor was served (in a mixed drink, but too strongly, with no real definite obedience to the alcohol guidelines, and underage people drinking and getting drunk), we felt that the Lord wanted us to send a message to the Homes in our region to share the lessons that we've drawn from the situation.

Yesterday we had a city council which [an RS] attended as a representative of the shepherding desk, and a shepherd from one of the local Homes. Thank the Lord, they were able to discuss this whole event quite extensively. What struck us as odd was that quite a few people, particularly the shepherds of the Home that hosted the party, seemed to be somewhat dull to the seriousness of the situation and why it had happened. For example, they were surprised that they should've asked the Lord not only whether they could have the party, but how to hold the party, what alcohol to serve, what the theme of the party was to be, the balance of System music vs. Family music (it was brought to our attention that that party had no Family music at all), and just to realize that there is a lot more to organizing a party than just getting a general approval from the Lord.

People responded very well and it was a real eye-opener for them, which led us to think that others in our region may also need the instruction and the reminders, and also to get some instruction on what practical steps to take to host a good, fun, yet safe dance party!

**God has a
merry heart, so
we should too.**

153. (Jesus:) I love to see you, My brides, enjoying life and enjoying one another. I love to see you partying and having a good time. But I am saddened and even angry when you step outside of the limits I set and do things that are hurtful or not according to the Law of Love, when you do not obey the guidelines in the Word, when you let things get out of hand, when you don't keep your spirits in check. You have many freedoms, but if you do not handle these freedoms wisely, then I may have to withdraw them.

154. First of all, it's important for all of you to realize—sheep and shepherds alike—that it's imperative that you ask Me everything when it comes to planning and hosting parties. If you want your party to be a success, if you want it to be a blessing to those who attend, if you want it to be in the spirit and as enjoyable as it can be, without accidents or incidents or Law of Love infractions or security problems, and any other of the negative effects that can happen when you're not in My Spirit, then you will need to seek Me specifically about every detail.

155. Don't just ask Me whether or not you should have a party, but take it further. Ask Me when you should have the party. Ask Me who you should invite. Ask Me what ages should attend. Ask Me what food you should serve, if any. Ask Me what drinks you should serve, if any, and how much should be served. Ask Me what games you should play and what music you should play—if these are going to be included in the party. Ask Me how I would like you to include Me in on the evening—such as whether I would like you to begin your evening with some praises, devote some special games to Me, make some toasts to Me, set aside a dance to dedicate to Me, receive a message or written prayer from Me to read at the party, or whatever else I may show you to incorporate. Ask Me for any and all counsel that I may want to give you in order to make your party a success.

156. Those planning parties need to be spirit-led, prayerful, and mature. Hosting a

party, especially if it's for your whole Home, or if you're inviting other people from the area, is a very big responsibility. If you're the host, you're responsible to make sure that I have given you My stamp of approval on the details. You're responsible to see to it that the activities of the evening stay within the bounds of My Spirit. If you're serving alcohol, you're supposed to keep an eye on things, to make sure that people are sticking to their drink limit and aren't overdrinking or getting sick. Of course, those attending are responsible to hear from Me personally about how much they should drink at the party, as per the alcohol guidelines in the Word and the Charter, but you should help others to be good. And if you're hosting a party, it's probably a good idea that you don't drink much (if any) alcohol, so that you can keep an eye on things and make sure they're going in the right direction. Remember, you're responsible!

More tips for hosting a party where alcohol is served

- Remind everyone attending the party to ask the Lord ahead of time what their alcohol guidelines should be for the evening, as per the counsel in "Alcohol Liberty = Alcohol Responsibility!" (ML #3466, GN 1057). Even if there is a limit of drinks being served at the party per person, everyone should still abide by the personal guidelines the Lord has given them, if He has instructed them to drink less than what will be allowed.
- If possible, have nonalcoholic drink options available for those who won't be drinking during the party. There will often be those who can't drink, either because the Lord instructed them not to, or because they are pregnant, or underage, or for other reasons.

- Be sure that the bartender is a very responsible person and will stick to the limit of drinks per person, and not be swayed by those at the party to give them more.
- Be sure that you know the ages of all those attending the party, to ensure that you are not serving alcohol to those who are underage. Abide by the Charter rules regarding drinking for those under 21.
- If anyone will be driving home after the party, ensure that there are sufficient designated drivers.
- If you're serving alcohol to those at the party on an empty stomach—such as pre-dinner drinks—it's a good idea to serve some kind of food or snacks along with it, such as chips or pretzels or nuts, if available. Alcohol can really affect some people and make them sick if they drink it on an empty stomach.
- Have lots of water available throughout the party to ensure that everyone stays well hydrated.

Regarding drinking at parties or elsewhere, please keep the following counsel from "Charter Amendments 2003" (GN 1033) in mind:

It is important that you understand that what this suspension [of the drinking rules] means is that you who are 21 and over are now responsible for your own alcohol consumption—that you drink wisely and moderately without negative repercussions to yourself or others. This does not give you the right to drink alcoholic beverages in whatever quantities desired and as often as you want without regard to moderation. As in everything, you must be prayerful and

seek the Lord about what you drink, when you drink, and how much you drink.

The temporary rules lifting of the Charter alcohol rules applies only to those 21 and over. It does not suspend the Charter alcohol rules for those under 21 years of age. Those 18 through 20 are just learning how to drink alcohol responsibly. Most young people also have a lower tolerance for alcohol than those who have been drinking for longer and have learned what their personal limit is. For 18- through 20-year-olds, the stipulations laid out in the “Food and Drink Rules” C. are still in effect. In other words, there is a maximum weekly limit for those 18 through 20, as well as a limit of 20% alcohol content for the types of alcohol consumed.

157. Now that you’ve heard all of this counsel from Me, you’re probably thinking that it’s going to be no fun to host a party. Well, it’s true that it’s a lot of work to hear from Me about the details. And it’s true that you might not have as much fun as if you were only attending the party and weren’t responsible for the outcome of it. But because you are, there’s a heavy weight on your shoulders, and it’s important that you bear that weight with maturity and prayerfulness. Remember that you are responsible for everyone attending. You’re not at the party to create a good time for yourself. You’re there to make sure everyone else has a happy time. You’re there to help people to have fun, but not to go too far. You’re responsible to do your part—in a loving and prayerful way—to help make sure that nobody overdrinks or gets sick, and that there are no accidents or security problems.

158. It’s a big job to host a party, and most people don’t really like to do it, because of the sacrifices involved. But if you want to have fruitful, in-the-spirit, safe parties, My loves, it’s

**Party with Jesus and you’ll
always have a ball of a
time!**

important that there’s always someone, or a team of people, who are taking responsibility for the party. Sometimes the host of the party might be one of the Home shepherds, or a couple of Home shepherds. But it doesn’t have to be. Anyone can host a party if they’re willing to take responsibility for others, if they’re willing to be prayerful and careful, and hear from Me about the specifics, and counsel with their shepherds about anything they’re unsure of. Shepherding and counseling is an important part of good, successful, inspired parties.

159. So you who are planning parties, please be open to counsel and shepherding. And, of course, be open to Me and My counsel most of all. And you, dear Home shepherds, be willing to shepherd the parties in your Home. I don’t mean you should squelch the fire of someone’s plans if they’re just not your cup of tea. You’re not meant to be a “bucket of cold water,” but a guide, a director, a prodder. The best thing that you can do is to encourage the party planners to hear from Me about all of the details. If they are planning something that you are unsure about, ask them to ask Me about it and share the prophecy with you. Let them learn how to host loving, in-the-spirit, fun, memorable parties, as you guide and direct and counsel them.

160. And in some cases you have to be prepared to shepherd after the party as well. Hopefully parties won’t go wrong very often, especially if you’re shepherding them in the planning stages. But if one does, or there are problems, or things get out of hand, then you can pray and ask Me about it afterwards—or better yet, have the hosts who were responsible for the party ask Me—so that I can bring out the lessons and turn it into a learning experience. Don’t get overly freaked out if a party goes wrong; I can and will teach those involved, if you continue to shepherd them through it.

161. Please, My brides, party in the spirit. If you let Me plan the party with you and be right there with you

The machinery of your work will not run consistently if you forget to recharge.

throughout the evening, your party will be so much better and cooler than it would otherwise be. I make everything better. I enhance everything—even your times of fun and partying. In fact, you’d be surprised how much I like to party, and how happy I am when you make Me a part of your fellowship and fun!

162. (Mama:) Thank You, dear Husband, for that sobering message about the responsibility of hosting parties. Help us all to heed Your counsel and do what You’re instructing us to do, so that You can bless us fully.

163. And, dear Family, here are a few more tips that I wanted to remind you of, which the above message brought to mind.

164. —Be sure to pray over any drinks that you serve at parties, or at any times. Ask the Lord to fill them with a good spirit—a happy, loving, fun spirit. Ask Him to keep you from any negative effects of the alcohol, whether it be sickness, bad moods, etc. You could use some of these key promises, which were published in an *Eve* mag:

Call on the keys of sanctification as you drink, and I will cleanse your alcohol from anything that’s not of Me and fill it with My uplifting, edifying, loving Spirit.

Your times of recreation and relaxation and partying where alcohol is involved will be filled to the brim with My Spirit if you call on the power of the keys.

The keys will help the alcohol you drink to benefit you in a positive way, so that you can relax and enjoy loving fellowship with Me and others, without any negative side effects.

My powerful, purifying, cleansing, loving Spirit can fill anything—even an alcoholic beverage—if you claim it through the keys.

165. —Say a good prayer before your party begins. Claim the keys of recreation, fun, fellowship, partying, and any others that you can think of. Claim some “recreation and relaxation” key promises, or some of these new key promises received especially for parties (or receive some new ones for the occasion).

I’m your Party Host, and I’ll be right here in the midst of you, enhancing everything you do, down to the tiniest detail, as you claim the keys of recreation, fellowship and fun!

Call on the party keys, and your party will not only be fun, but meaningful, relaxing, enjoyable, and laced with extra cool and special benefits from Heaven that only My Spirit can bring.

Surround your whole party with a bubble of key power, and I will keep outside of the bubble anything negative and not of My Spirit, and inside of the bubble happiness, fun fellowship, and meaningful enjoyment will abound.

This party is My gift of love to you, and by calling on the keys I will give each of you special individualized gifts throughout the evening, the gifts that I know will mean the most to you.

Talk About It

Optional discussion questions

- What rating would you give yourselves as a Home, on a scale of 1 to 10, on the level of your friendship and unity? How often do you take time to relax and have fun together—as a whole Home and in smaller groups? Do you think you have enough times to fellowship

and get to know one another? If not, what are some united activities you'd like to plan and try as a Home?

- Do you, as a Home, diversify your activities and forms of relaxation to cater to the needs of both generations and both sexes?
- Do you participate in activities even when they are not your favorite, for the sake of others and for the benefits of unity?
- Do you feel that you personally draw others in during times of fellowship? Or do you have a tendency to only party and relax with a smaller group of your friends who you feel comfortable with?
- How is your Home doing in regards to continuing to abide by the renewal guidelines, as far as minimizing worldly entertainment?
- Are there more ways that you could draw your flock (Active members, etc.) into times of fellowship and relaxation that are inspiring and bring in the Lord's Spirit?
- Do you have enough activities and fun things for the children, JETTs and teens to participate in? Or do you mainly cater to the adults when it comes to fellowship, recreation and fun?

Praise Ideas

Optional praise ideas

- *Recreational praise:* Praise the Lord for all the different types of things you like to do for relaxation and recreation, especially those that engender unity and friendship with others.
- *On-the-edge praise:* Praise the Lord for something fun that you have always wanted to do, but have never had (and probably never will have) the chance to do on Earth—either because it's way too expensive, or it's too dangerous, or the Lord hasn't yet opened the doors for it. Tell Him that you're so thankful that you'll be able to do that thing, or something even better, when you get to Heaven. (A variation of this praise is that you could only thank the Lord for recreational and entertainment activities

you look forward to doing in Heaven—things you imagine you'll be able to do, or that the Lord has informed us about in some of the pubs, like *LinkUp*, *Blade*, *Xn*, etc.)

- *Party praises:* At your next party or fellowship, try one of the following praise time ideas:
 - Praise our wonderful Husband for something you're specifically looking forward to about your evening together—a drink, some part of the menu, the dancing, the fellowship, the games or activities, or some other specific aspect.
 - When you look around at everyone attending the party, what is the first word that comes to your mind? Then praise the Lord incorporating that thought.
- *Fill in the blanks praise:* "This party is a special touch of Your love to me, Jesus, because _____."

"Do" the Word

Optional practical ways to be "doers of the Word"

- Form an activity committee, if you don't already have one, to help with the organization and planning of Home activities. This committee would not have to do all the work themselves, but they would help to keep things moving and fresh, and be the backbone of the Home activities. For example, they could bring up the topic in a Home Council meeting to ask for ideas or discuss an upcoming event, delegate different activities to be organized by various ones in the Home, pray about ideas and counsel with the Home managers as to when to try to organize an activity/event, etc.
- Ask each person in the Home (including the JETTs and teens) what type of activity they would like to help organize. This helps to spread the load, as well as gives people the opportunity to sign up for something they would like to help with. You could either leave the floor completely open for any suggestions,

or put up a list of ideas that you have already discussed as a Home that you'd like to do, and then everyone can sign up to help organize at least one of the activities. For example: a special dinner, an upcoming birthday, a dance, an inspiration, a Loving Jesus night (for those of age), a game night, a fun evening vespers, a united sports activity, an outing, a barbeque or picnic, etc. These mini-committees could then work in teamwork with the Home managers to coordinate and plan their specific activity sometime over the following weeks or months.

- Read over the post-renewal guidelines on System entertainment in the "Shooting Straight" GN series, and ask the Lord how you are doing and whether or not you are minimizing worldly input sufficiently in your entertainment and recreation times.

- Try one of these simple activities as a Home:

Have a short dance after dinner.

Pair up in twos and go on walks together one day a week for your daily get-out.

Go for a picnic. Pack up your dinner and drive to a park at sunset. Enjoy each other's fellowship and God's creation.

Have united get-out games, provided these are done in a spirit of love and do not become overly competitive.

Have an evening of testimony telling around the dinner table.

Pass around the guitar one evening and sing some oldie-goldies.

Come up with a few interesting questions, and have an evening of "getting to know you."

Have a game night. Look up some new or renewal games from the renewal CD. Even if they're games for kids, you'd be surprised at how much fun (or more fun) they can be with grown-ups.

Draw names at the beginning of the week, and be that person's "angel," doing nice things for them throughout the week. Keep it a secret till the end of the week.

Have a storytelling night on the subject of your choice: angels, miracles, witnessing, how a husband and wife got together, etc.

Have personal testimony sharing. Everyone tells how they got saved or joined the Family, or for SGAs, how they made their commitment to the Lord, and what led up to them making that commitment.

Make a special snack one evening, and have appreciation time for each other. Everyone goes around and says something they're thankful for about someone else. You could also do this beforehand on slips of paper and then read it unitedly.

Try writing a simple song together as a Home some evening. Have one team work on the lyrics, another team on the music, and then work to put it together. This can be really funny, and a lot of fun to do, even if you don't ever come up with a #1 hit song.

Have a "spirit trip" night. Put on some soft music, dim the lights, and ask Me to speak to you about Heaven, angels, your spirit helpers, etc.

Get an instructional video on massage, and try giving each other a massage.

Have the guys plan a special evening for the girls according to what they'd enjoy most (for example, a candlelight dinner, foot massage, lots of conversation, etc.) and then vice versa the following week (or month) with the girls doing something for the guys along the lines of what they'd most appreciate. (For example, preparing a real guy type of meal like hamburgers or a BBQ and beer, as well as some dances or performances, etc.)

Anecdote

A rich man once had to leave his home on a long voyage. Once his preparations had been made and his belongings packed, he summoned his servants and attendants and bade them take care of his estate and possessions during his absence. He also named a steward over them, to distribute

duties and see to it that his business continued to prosper. Then he was off.

The steward was an old friend of his who had long been in his service. He was determined to show himself worthy of the trust he'd received. He explained to the rest of the staff all that he meant to accomplish before the master's return. There were harvests to reap, sales of produce to be made, and the steward intended to expand the estate by acquiring more lands, and branching out into new areas of business. Surely all of this activity would show the master how devoted his servants were. The estate rules were modified, and more time was to be spent in service than before.

As time went by, though, the steward was disappointed to see that things were not altogether improving. The business was diversified and the traders were busy, but there had not been the increase in prosperity that he'd hoped. There were more lands as well, but the lack of additional laborers meant that they were not properly tilled and worked. He did not spare his own efforts, but soon realized that the extra work and more stressful lifestyle had taken a toll on his health and that of the other workers. There was also less singing and merriment as they worked, and some of the servants began wondering if they could not instead be employed on another estate.

When the master of the house returned, he realized the gravity of the situation and speedily reorganized his workforce. He especially clarified exactly what he expected of each member of his staff, and made sure that there were times and opportunities to engage in recreational activities. Soon his business was once again expanding, and his workers were once again singing as they toiled.

Prayer Boost

167. (Prayer:) Jesus, we want to be fun like You are! You're the coolest Person in the universe, the most hip Individual! You're not just our great God and High Priest, but You really like to get down with us and have fun! You have fun in Heaven, and You like to join with us in our times of fun, to make them special, memorable, and better than they would otherwise be without Your Spirit enhancing them.

168. Help us, Jesus, not to get so busy serving You that we forget to enjoy life and to enjoy our dear friends and loved ones that You have given us. Help us not to wear ourselves out by not taking sufficient time with You most of all, but also by not taking time to relax and regenerate. Help us to remember how important it is, make the sacrifices necessary for it, and fit it into our schedules. We know that if it's important, You can help us to be able to slot it in.

169. And when we do have times of fun, relaxation, recreation and entertainment, help us to be faithful to include You, our wonderful Husband. Help us to remember to make You a part of everything, to invite You to our activities and parties, so that You can give them that extra zing and zest of Your Spirit, and also keep us within the boundaries of Your will. We know that when we include You, no matter what the activity or event, it's always better. You make fun times so much more fun, Jesus!

170. We want to have fun with each other, and with You most of all, as we call on the keys of the Kingdom and our spirit helpers to assist us. Thank You, Jesus, for being so awesomely powerful, yet so personal and down-to-earth as well. Thank You for loving us so much that You can actually enjoy the things that we enjoy along with us. Help us never to forget that You're right beside us, with loads of happiness and fun to pour down upon us. Thank You, Jesus, for the blessings and gifts of Your Spirit!

Hot Key: Heavenly Spirits

166. (Jesus:) My keys of heavenly spirits free you to venture into new realms of freedom and honesty that will help you join heart to heart with your brethren, deepen your love for them, wipe away hurts, and cause you to reach out in love toward them.