

## Relational Family Chaos Can Be Overcome, Adventist Expert Says

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

"If the apostle Paul was a clinician, he would suggest the diagnosis of our times is relational chaos," Morgan Medlock, an experienced millennial, Adventist, Harvard-trained psychiatrist and health policy expert, said in her keynote presentation at the recent 2023 Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice.

The fully online event is part of a partnership of the Adventist Church's General Conference Department of Family Ministries and three entities at Andrews University: the Department of Discipleship in Lifespan Education at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary; the School of Social Work; and the Institute for the Prevention of Addiction. In 2023 the conference was headlined as Families and Emotional Health under the motto "Hope, Heal, and Thrive!"

In her keynote Medlock, also a Master of Divinity graduate of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, reflected on the social situation according to what Paul described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. The apostle wrote that "in the last days . . . men will be lovers of themselves" (verses 1, 2). Medlock then connected it to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on families, and then shared biblical principles that can help families to recover and move "from breakdown to breakthrough."

Medlock said that the pandemic uncovered relational disorder in our families. "We saw an increase in adverse childhood experiences," she said. "We saw an increase in anxiety and depression, middle age crises, parental distress and trauma, and households in disarray"

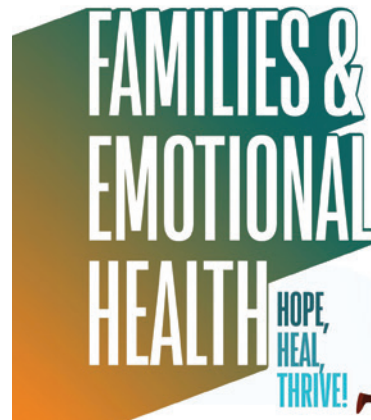


Photo: General Conference Family Ministries Department

She shared how even secular authors are acknowledging the chaos reigning in many contemporary families and its disastrous effects on institutions and society in general.

### A CHOSEN FAMILY

Secular authors are stating that the solution to family relational chaos is to adopt a "chosen" family, or, as an expert defined them, "the people who will show up for you no matter what"

From a spiritual standpoint, Medlock said, "we have a chosen family, [which] is not created through artificial relationships with drifting individuals. That chosen family comes from none other than the Son, Jesus Christ, who said, 'You did not choose Me, but I chose you' [John 15:16]"

She explained further, "The biblical view of chosen family is that as we develop intimacy with Jesus Christ, we are in fact able to participate in the intimacy that He has with the Father." Jesus loves us as He is loved by the Father, Medlock

Family Research and Practice presentation outlines Bible-based solutions.

said as she quoted John 15:9. This is the basis that allows us to love other people, she added.

### TRANSFORMED FAMILIES

Following this model will be transformational for our families, Medlock emphasized. When we accept being part of God's chosen family, we are empowered by the Spirit to love our families as the Son loves us.

"This intimacy we have with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit empowers us to love others not according to our family history but our spiritual history," Medlock said. "Through the power of God's Spirit . . . the relational chaos of our times loses its grip on us . . . We can now forgive others as we have been forgiven. We can now have a family that is rooted in empowerment, coming alongside to build confidence and inspire us in our families to be who God created us to be. Our families' greatest need is not a method, but a person, Jesus Christ, to take us from breakdown to breakthrough." ©