

The Wife's Position in the Home: The Need for Home Religion: Responsibility to Aged Parents

A true woman in the home is a treasure, and she should be respected and appreciated. The question is often asked, "Shall a wife have no will of her own?" The Bible plainly states that the husband is the head of the family. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." If this injunction ended here, we might say that the position of the wife is not an enviable one; it is a very hard and trying position in very many cases, and it would be better were there fewer marriages. Many husbands stop at the words, "Wives, submit yourselves," but we will read the conclusion of the same injunction, which is, "As it is fit in the Lord." {13MR 74.1}

God requires that the wife shall keep the fear and glory of God ever before her. Entire submission is to be made only to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has purchased her as His own child by the infinite price of His life. God has given her a conscience, which she cannot violate with impunity. Her individuality cannot be merged in that of her husband, for she is the purchase of Christ. It is a mistake to imagine that with blind devotion she is to do exactly as her husband says in all things, when she knows that in so doing injury would be worked for her body and her spirit, which have been ransomed from the slavery of Satan. There is One who stands higher than the husband to the wife; it is her Redeemer, and her submission to her husband is to be rendered as God has directed--"as it is fit in the Lord."

When husbands require the complete subjection of their wives, declaring that women have no voice or will in the family, but must render entire submission, they place their wives in a position contrary to the Scripture. In interpreting the Scripture in this way, they do violence to the design of the marriage institution. This interpretation is made simply that they may exercise arbitrary rule, which is not their prerogative. But we read on, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Why should the husband be bitter against his wife? If the husband has found her erring and full of faults, bitterness of spirit will not remedy the evil. [Colossians 3:12-16, quoted.] {13MR 75.1}

How many dishonor God by hardness of heart. We live from day to day, dependent upon the mercy of God. We must seek continually for forgiveness, and yet how reluctant we are to forgive others! Should Christ deal with us in as heartless a manner as we deal with one another, there would be no hope for us. No provocation can be so grievous as to authorize us to harbor feelings of dislike, of resentment, and retaliation. How grievous to the Lord has been our continual transgression. Think how entirely dependent we are upon Him, the continual recipients of His beneficence and mercy, and yet doing continually those things that are not pleasing in His sight. But does He cast us off? No, He bears with our perversity, and is ever ready to forgive us when we see our mistakes and errors, when we repent and humble ourselves before Him. Should the Lord keep a reckoning with us, what a debt would appear against us! But we can say every day, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

We cannot trust at all to our own goodness, but hope only in the abounding mercy of Jesus. The Lord forgives our transgressions; He pardons our sins; and when we realize the greatness of His mercy, the boundlessness of His love, we become partakers of the divine nature, and manifest the same tender spirit, compassionate forbearance, mercy, and love, and are ready to forgive others. {13MR 76.1}

The soul who has never submitted to God will show that mercy and pity have no place in his disposition, for he will betray a spirit wholly unlike Jesus. He will be harsh, unrelenting, unforgiving. If something arises in the home life that does not suit him, he will magnify the annoyance, will be resentful, harsh, dictatorial to those whom he considers in fault. But such are not the children of God. They are the children of the wicked one. They dishonor Christ, bruise Him, and put Him to an open shame. Though they may take an active part in meeting and in missionary work, they are stumbling-blocks to sinners. Let these poor, dark, deceived souls examine themselves. Let them understand the love of God, and closely criticize themselves, considering what manner of spirit they are of. Let them come to the point where they will forgive everyone his trespasses. {13MR 76.2}

The home life of the Christian should be exemplary. If husbands have likes and dislikes, if they have marked out a way in which others must walk, if they constantly fret and censure, accuse and condemn others, they are not walking in the way of the Lord. Should they mark their own transgressions, their own defects, harshness of spirit, and rebellion, the list would swell to greater proportions than the evil they condemn in others.

Brother and Sister____, do you not affront others by this spirit? Do you not let harsh words of retaliation come when you would better be silent? Do you not do things that wound and bruise and irritate the spirit? Do you not create an atmosphere about you which is as poisonous spiritual malaria? Why not remember how much you have to be grateful for? Jesus is still interceding in your behalf, but in a short time He will arise and put on His garments of vengeance. Then there will be no more sacrifice for sin, no more pardon. Every soul will remain either holy or sinful, for no more will the atoning blood be offered. {13MR 77.1}

I want you both to feel that now is your day of grace, your day of repentance. Now, while it is called today, harden not your hearts. Seek for the renewing grace of Christ. Learn to be as lenient toward others as you wish God and others to be toward you. Have the forgiving love of Jesus in your hearts, that Jesus may forgive you. The spirit of retaliation must be banished from the heart before the Holy Spirit can abide in the soul. [Ephesians 4:23, 24, 29-32, quoted.] {13MR 77.2}

If we are doers of the Word, we shall take heed to the voice of God and bear our cross after Jesus, hourly subduing self. The law of God must be written in the heart, or we will never practice its holy precepts. We must have the Spirit of God, or we can never have harmony in the home. The wife, if she has the Spirit of Christ, will be careful of her words; she will control her spirit, she will be submissive, and yet will not feel that she is a bonds slave, but a companion to her husband. If the husband is a servant of God, he will not lord it over his wife; he

will not be arbitrary and exacting. We cannot cherish home affection with too much care; for the home, if the Spirit of the Lord dwells there, is a type of heaven.

If the will of the Lord is carried out, the husband and wife will respect and love each other, and everything that would tend to mar the peace and unity of the family circle will be repressed. Kindness and love, the spirit of tenderness and forbearance, will be cherished. The love we give to others will be reflected back upon us. That which we sow we shall also reap. If Christ is formed within, the hope of glory, the husband and wife will not talk of their unsuitability to each other. If Christ abides in the heart of the wife, she will be at agreement with the husband, if Christ abides in his heart. If one errs, the other will exercise Christlike forbearance, and not draw coldly away. {13MR 78.1}

If the Word of God is obeyed, the home will be the center of the highest kind of missionary work, but those who are at a disagreement in the home life, do not practice the words of the Lord, and will never be fit to enter the heavenly mansions, unless they are transformed by the grace of Christ. If the Lord should permit them to enter heaven, they would not be happy, for they would find something that would not please them. Someone would be in heaven whom they had never loved on earth, and they would want them banished from the place of bliss. If we are sanctified, refined, and made meet for the society of the saints in this life, we shall be fitted for heaven. If we manifest the character of Christ here, we shall have a heaven to go to heaven in, and shall be cheered by glimpses of our eternal home, which Jesus has gone to prepare. {13MR 78.2}

We are to strive earnestly through the grace given us to represent Christ, and not to make prominent our own crude ideas, our own objectionable traits of character. We are ever to keep our will in subjection to God's will, and be willing to be disciplined by His Holy Spirit, that we may shed forth His beams of light. We should manifest His love in our home, and when we are away from home we shall carry the same pleasant disposition, and manifest forbearance, meekness, courage, and love in the Lord. {13MR 78.3}

All murmuring and complaining will be put aside as unworthy of the children of the heavenly King, unworthy of the members of the royal family, who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus. The heavenly mansions are prepared for those who are pure, who love and obey the Word of God, and there we shall meet to part no more. {13MR 79.1}

I have been shown that home religion is the great need in every family. The home circle should be the center of the purest and most elevated affections. There peace, harmony, affection, and happiness should be cultivated every day. There the precious plant of love should be carefully cherished, that it may not die. Every plant that Satan has planted--jealousy, anger, envy, evil surmising, evil speaking, impatience, fretfulness, prejudice, vanity, covetousness, and selfishness--should be rooted up without delay. There is constant peril for the soul who nurtures these evil qualities, for they will bear a burden of evil fruit, whereby many will be defiled. These poisonous plants defile the soul and crowd out the precious flower of love. {13MR 79.2}

There are many who think they have a burden for souls, who talk in public of how much they love God, and yet they see no necessity of weeding the garden of the heart, see no necessity of letting the light of the Sun of Righteousness

in to nourish the plants that God has planted. Such do not know Jesus; they do not know what it means to be a Christian. It takes earnestness, patience, prayer, and genuine faith to war successfully against evil dispositions. But it is necessary that even the thoughts should be brought into subjection to Christ. {13MR 79.3}

Whatever will make the character lovely in the home will make it lovely in the heavenly mansion, and by your home life Jesus will measure your religious life. The grace of Christ can make your home a place of peace and rest, but unless you heed His Word and cherish His Spirit, you are none of His. God requires you to be sanctified wholly in your home life. The religion of Christ is not a religion to be reserved for certain places and occasions, and then laid aside at home. The truth as a sanctifier is needed more in the home than in any other place. Every thought, every impulse, every word and deed, is to be sanctified by the power of the truth. {13MR 80.1}

I have dwelt upon general principles before the church in_____ because I knew that they were in peril in regard to their home life. But there has been little disposition to accept the truth; the light has been disregarded. I have tried to do as Jesus did in His teaching--bring out principles that must be made practical in the everyday life of the home. Home religion will exert an influence in the neighborhood and in the church. When home difficulties arise, the same spirit of trouble will be carried into the society that surrounds the home. Home difficulties have been made public by some, and much sympathy has been created for those who have related their grievances; but to pour out to others troubles which have come into existence because of a lack of connection with God, and through the outworking of objectionable traits of character, is a great mistake. {13MR 80.2}

Those who have followed such a course might better remain at home, pray, and surrender the will to God. They would better fall on the Rock and be broken, and then they will die to self, and Jesus can make them vessels unto honor. Then they will have fervent and noble affection, which will give fragrance to the character. Christ said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" [Lev. 11:44]. [1 Peter 1:13-16, quoted.] {13MR 80.3}

In many families we hear very little affection expressed. The members of the family seem cold and alienated, and regard all manner of expressions of affection as sentimental. There is no need of sentimentalism, but there is need of thoughtful courtesy one toward another, of chaste, ennobling, dignified manifestations of regard. Many who profess to love God seem to pride themselves on their hardness of heart. In language and action they reveal a character that is an offense to God. The tenderest affection should be cherished in the family circle. Especially between the husband and the wife should thoughtful love and refined courtesy ever be manifested. Brothers and sisters should never act as though they did not love one another; they should learn to restrain hasty words and manifestations of impatience. Every member of the family should manifest kindly affection one for another. {13MR 81.1}

Children should respect and reverence their parents; parents should be kind and affectionate toward their children; and all should seek to make one another happy. In the books of heaven the character of the home circle is recorded by the angels. Meetinghouse religion has no value when there is an absence of home religion. {13MR 81.2}

To a large extent parents create the atmosphere of the home circle, and when there is disagreement between father and mother, the children partake of the same spirit. Make your home atmosphere fragrant with tender thoughtfulness.

If you have become estranged, and have failed to be Bible Christians, be converted, for the character you bear in probationary time will be the character you will have at the coming of Christ. If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth. {13MR 81.3}

The traits of character you cherish in life will not be changed by death or by the resurrection. You will come up from the grave with the same disposition you manifested in your home and in society. Jesus does not change the character at His coming. The work of transformation must be done now. Our daily lives are determining our destiny. Defects of character must be repented of and overcome through the grace of Christ, and a symmetrical character must be formed while in this probationary state, that we may be fitted for the mansions above. {13MR 82.1}

Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, I beseech you, do not indulge in low thought and vulgar speaking. Coarse sayings, low jests, want of courtesy in the home life, will leave an impression upon you, and if frequently repeated will become second nature. The home is too sacred a place to be polluted with vulgarity, sensuality, and recrimination. There is a Witness who declares, "I know thy works." Let love, truth, kindness, and forbearance be the plants cultivated in the garden of the heart. {13MR 82.2}

It is no evidence of manliness in the husband for him to dwell constantly upon his position as head of the family. It does not increase respect for him to hear him quoting Scripture to sustain his claims to authority. It will not make him more manly to require his wife, the mother of his children, to act upon his plans as if they were infallible.

The Lord has constituted the husband the head of the wife to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Saviour of the mystical body. Let every husband who claims to love God, carefully study the requirements of God in his position. Christ's authority is exercised in wisdom, in all kindness and gentleness; so let the husband exercise his power and imitate the great Head of the church. {13MR 83.1}

Children are to be taught to respect their father and mother, and this education is to be given them by example as well as precept. When the father gives kind attention to the mother, and the mother shows reverence for the father, the children will be educated to love and reverence their parents. They will be enabled to keep the fifth commandment. [Eph. 6:13, quoted.] When unbelieving parents give commands that contradict the requirements of Christ, then, though it may be painful, the children must obey the Lord. But God has expressly enjoined upon children the duty of honoring the person and authority of father and mother. They are to treat their parents respectfully, to kindly care for them when they have ability and opportunity. The fifth commandments stands at the head of the precepts showing the duty of man to his fellow-men. {13MR 83.2}

The apostle exhorts parents to exercise their authority in wisdom. He says, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" [verse 4]. Great care should be exercised lest children shall be treated in a way to provoke obstinacy and rebellion. Many parents, because of their own want of self-control, arouse the worst passions of their children's hearts. They correct them in anger, and confirm them in their evil, instead of drawing them from the snare of Satan by correction administered in gentleness and love. {13MR 83.3}

Many parents professing to be Christians are not converted. Christ does not abide in their hearts by faith. Their harshness, their imprudence, their unsubdued tempers, disgust their children and make them averse to all their religious instruction, but this is not excuse for children's disobedience. If every family professing to be the children of God were indeed what they profess to be, what happiness would exist in the home. Christ would be represented in the home life, and parents and children would represent Him in the church. {13MR 84.1}

God requires children to care for their parents when the parents are unable to care for themselves. There is a record kept in the books of heaven of the crime of neglecting parents. Some children may give their parents a home but withhold love and tenderness and sympathy, and deprive their fathers and mothers of that for which they most long in their old age. While your father and mother live, it should be your constant study to bring cheerfulness and sunshine into their lives. You should smooth their pathway to the grave. This conduct toward parents would recommend you to the world, and will recommend you to heaven, as a child that obeys the divine precepts. {13MR 84.2}

Children should remember that aged parents have but little joy and comfort at best, and they should not through neglect and indifference heap sorrow upon sorrow on their parents' hearts. That children pursue a heartless course is not only a terrible grief to the aged father and mother, but it brings grief to heaven, for such children are recorded as violators of the commands of God. Those who do not respect and love their parents will never reverence the God of heaven, never be deemed worthy of a place in the new earth. {13MR 84.3}

How dead to all human feeling must children be who fail to realize the claim of father and mother upon them. How heartless, how cold they must be who are unwilling to remove sorrow from the pathway of the old. What kind of hearts must they have when they refuse to supply the needs of father and mother, when they have no kindness, when they show that it is not a pleasure for them to seek to make their parents' last days their best days! How can a son or daughter leave a mother to be cared for by strangers? The obligation to care for the mother is the same whether she is a believer or an unbeliever, agreeable or disagreeable. Thank God, there are but few in the world who would utterly ignore the claim of a mother upon her children, but there are some who never seem to bestow a thought upon their parents unless it is for the sake of some temporal advantage. They do not care whether they are cared for or not. The conduct of such children marks them as thankless; and ingratitude to parents is sharper than a serpent's tooth. It embitters the very springs of their lives, and brings down their grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. {13MR 85.1}

Selfishness, self-love, wicked, unkind actions, create an unwholesome atmosphere about the soul and steel the heart to all good. Children who are in this condition hear not the whispers of affection, for avarice has eaten out the good in the heart, and they deny their parents the favors which they could bestow upon them. How bitter will be the close of life to such children! They cannot have happy reflections when they themselves need sympathy and love. They will better appreciate what they should have done for their parents. They will then remember that they had the privilege of smoothing the pathway of their parents to the grave, so that they might have departed in comfort and peace. If they had denied them this comfort in the time of their helpless need, the memory of it will weigh like a millstone upon the heart. Remorse will eat into the soul. Their days will be filled with regret. The love we owe our parents is not to be measured by years, and is never to be forgotten. Our obligation lasts while they and we live. {13MR 85.2}

My heart has been pained as I have heard of the course taken by Brother and Sister _____ in regard to their mother. They claim to be Christians, but they have manifested a heartlessness toward their mother, a child of God, which will never be effaced from her memory while life lasts. Jesus has given us a lesson that we should study diligently. He described the two classes who will stand before the judgment throne. They are to be separated, not on the ground of their profession but on the ground of their practice. To those on the right hand He will say, [Matt. 25:35-40, quoted]. But those who neglected to do these things, He pronounced workers of iniquity. {13MR 86.1}

My brother and sister, you have developed a character which is an offense to God. You have put Jesus away from you in the person of His saint. That which you have done to your mother is registered in heaven as done unto Christ. Your cases have been presented to me. When Brother _____ adopts a certain course of action, he is very firm and will not be moved from his position. He has been prospered financially, and is in great danger of making shipwreck of faith. Brother _____ has not treated his wife in all respects as a Christian husband should, and Sister _____ has not acted like a Christian either, for she has tried to drive her husband to do certain things which she thought he ought to do, and she has failed. Both of you have a form of religion, but your prayers do not come up as fragrance before God, and you do not obtain answers in peace and mercy. {13MR 86.2}

You do not know your own spiritual condition. You are lacking in every heavenly grace. You should humbly and carefully examine your own hearts, your own individual characters. You need to open your hearts that light may shine upon your darkness, that you may see and understand your motives. The apostle's injunction is, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" [2 Cor. 13:5]. What is the character of your thoughts, your spirit, your purposes, your words and actions? Compare them with the Scripture, and see whether you represent the character of Christ. Go to Jesus humbly, and break your hearts hardened by feelings of bitterness and hatred. Let the grace of Christ soften and melt you that you may put away everything that is destructive of your peace. If you do not see your hearts in the light of Jesus Christ, self love will prompt you to have a much better opinion of yourselves than you deserve; for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. {13MR 87.1}

You have both pursued a course that is displeasing to God, for you have cherished unchristian feelings toward each other. Under the influence of selfishness you have committed the great sin of casting your mother out of your home. Brother _____, God is not pleased with you, and if you are not transformed in character you will go on in the sparks of your own kindling and lie down in darkness. Let not one of you boast over the other, for you have both had a wrong spirit. God is giving you another opportunity of being converted, to be trained and disciplined, educated for usefulness, and fitted for immortality.

Sister _____ has been at disagreement with her mother, and she has thought she has had provocation, but if she had been truly converted she would have borne with the little annoyances that arose. Sister _____ has talked too much to others of her home trouble, and has obtained sympathy and advice which have been an injury to her. As a professed daughter of the heavenly King she should have borne the perplexities with meekness and self-control. {13MR 88.1}

Sister _____, you have thought that you had difficulties to bear at home, but could you not bear them in the spirit of Christ? You have had a hard, unruly spirit, and have felt that you were wronged by your husband. You have committed great wrongs against your own soul, and have made yourself very unhappy. You have never had a happy disposition; you have ever been determined to have your own way. The warmth of pure affection has been chilled, and now you have taken a step in utter disregard of the fifth commandment. {13MR 88.2}

We are all subject to trials and difficulties and earth-born sorrows, but the grace of Christ has been given to us that we may endure temptation and not fall under the trial of our faith. If you think you see selfishness and avariciousness in your husband, it should drive you to your Saviour. If your husband deals unjustly with you, according to your idea, remember that you have not his sin to answer for but can well afford to pity and pray for him. If you think you have a correct idea of his wrong, you are the one to feel deeply for his soul instead of thinking you should have sympathy and commiseration. You are not the one who needs the most sympathy, and if you had more of the milk of human kindness in your heart, you would pursue an entirely different course.

Both of you need to be transformed in character or you will experience pain and remorse. You must feel your own sinfulness and nothingness, and when the grace of Christ is revealed to you you will no longer live to self but for God and for humanity. Will not the exhibitions of the love of Jesus, His self-denial, His self-sacrifice, make you ashamed of anything like selfishness? Sister _____, God is not pleased with your loveless life. Take all your deep-drawn sighs, your much-talked-of neglect and wrong, to the Burden-bearer. Break your heart before God in the presence of your family, and before your mother, who ought to find a pleasant home of peace with you, and let the sunlight of God's love into your home. Your own course of action has manufactured the irritating yoke that you are wearing. {13MR 89.1}

The whole Christian life is to be a preparation for the future, immortal life; and under whatever circumstances you may be placed you may be happy if you are true to God and to yourselves. Money cannot bring the peace which Christ can give you. Seek the hidden pearl, the jewels of truth, and let not worldly ambitions ruin your prospects of heaven. Satan is ready to present the worldly

bribe. He says to you. "All this will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me." But will you do it? Will you give Satan the supreme affection of your heart? The apostle says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" [James 1:14]. He is turned from the true path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord because he has fixed his heart upon some attractive object of the earth. He catches at Satan's bait and is entrapped in his snare. {13MR 89.2}

As we near the end, temptations will be stronger and more seductive, but we need not yield to them, we need not open the door of the heart and invite Satan to enter. There is no power in earth or hell to compel either of you to sin and dishonor your holy faith as you have done. {13MR 89.3}

I advise you to make a halt, to turn around and decide that it is best to be Christians in the full acceptance of the term,. Submit your will to God, that you may choose the path of righteousness and truth. Let not your passions sway your reason, and iniquity triumph over truth. {13MR 90.1}

Sister _____, never plead that you cannot get along with your mother. It is a shame to you to say this and make an excuse for breaking the fifth commandment. Your test has come, and you should confess in the name of Christ that you have sinned against your mother and against God. Thank God with your whole heart that your mother still lives, that you can confess to her that you have acted the part of an unnatural child, and from this moment seek to make restitution by your faithful loving-kindness and devotion. Let not her grave cover your unconfessed neglect of duties. Make everything right with your mother before it is everlastingly too late. Your wrong course must be abandoned, and you must choose the way of the Lord. "Thy word," said one of God's chosen, "have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" [Ps. 119:11]. {13MR 90.2}

The church has had reason to lose confidence in you as Christians, but you can regain their confidence by pursuing a humble course and doing your duty in the fear of the Lord. You have entered into temptation, and for a long time have remained insensible to your sin. You have been blinded and deceived by Satan. You have betrayed Jesus, your Saviour. You have grieved the Holy Spirit of God. You have brought reproach upon the cause of God, and have enshrouded your soul in midnight darkness. Now, Oh now, with tears, not of sympathy for yourself, but with tears of contrition, in an agony of penitential grief, urge your case to the throne of grace. God will hear your confession. The Lord will answer your petition, and He will heal your backslidings and make you strong to do and to suffer His will.--Letter 18b, 1891. (Written from Battle Creek, Michigan, Feb. 15, 1891.)