

Ellen G. White

Courtship and Marriage

1 January 26, 1886

2 In these days of peril and corruption, the young are exposed to many trials and
3 temptations. Many are sailing in a dangerous harbor. They need a pilot; but
4 they scorn to accept the much-needed help, feeling that they are competent to
5 guide their own bark, and not realizing that it is about to strike a hidden rock
6 that may cause them to make shipwreck of faith and happiness. They are infat-
7 uated with the subject of courtship and marriage, and their principal burden is
8 to have their own way. In this, the most important period of their lives, they
9 need an unerring counselor, an infallible guide. This they will find in the word
10 of God. Unless they are diligent students of that word, they will make grave
11 mistakes, which will mar their happiness and that of others, both for the present
12 and the future life. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 1}

13 There is a disposition with many to be impetuous and headstrong. They have
14 not heeded the wise counsel of the word of God; they have not battled with
15 self, and obtained precious victories; and their proud, unbending will has dri-
16 ven them from the path of duty and obedience. Look back over your past life,
17 young friends, and faithfully consider your course in the light of God's word.
18 Have you cherished that conscientious regard for your obligations to your par-
19 ents that the Bible enjoins? Have you treated with kindness and love the mother
20 who has cared for you from infancy? Have you regarded her wishes, or have
21 you brought pain and sadness to her heart by carrying out your own desires and
22 plans? Has the truth you profess sanctified your heart, and softened and sub-
23 dued your will? If not, you have close work to do to make past wrongs right.
24 {RH January 26, 1886, par. 2}

25 The Bible presents a perfect standard of character. This sacred book, inspired
26 by God, and written by holy men, is a perfect guide under all circumstances of
27 life. It sets forth distinctly the duties of both young and old. If made the guide
28 of life, its teachings will lead the soul upward. It will elevate the mind, improve
29 the character, and give peace and joy to the heart. But many of the young have
30 chosen to be their own counselor and guide, and have taken their cases in their
31 own hands. Such need to study more closely the teachings of the Bible. In its
32 pages they will find revealed their duty to their parents and to their brethren in
33 the faith. The fifth commandment reads, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that
34 thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."
35 Again we read, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." One
36 of the signs that we are living in the last days is that children are disobedient to
37 parents, unthankful, unholy. The word of God abounds in precepts and counsels
38 enjoining respect for parents. It impresses upon the young the sacred duty of
39 loving and cherishing those who have guided them through infancy, childhood,

40 and youth, up to manhood and womanhood, and who are now in a great degree
41 dependent upon them for peace and happiness. The Bible gives no uncertain
42 sound on this subject; nevertheless, its teachings have been greatly disregarded.
43 {RH January 26, 1886, par. 3}

44 The young have many lessons to learn, and the most important one is to learn
45 to know themselves. They should have correct ideas of their obligations and
46 duties to their parents, and should be constantly learning in the school of Christ
47 to be meek and lowly of heart. While they are to love and honor their parents,
48 they are also to respect the judgment of men of experience with whom they are
49 connected in the church. A young man who enjoys the society and wins the
50 friendship of a young lady unbeknown to her parents, does not act a noble
51 Christian part toward her or toward her parents. Through secret communica-
52 tions and meetings he may gain an influence over her mind; but in so doing he
53 fails to manifest that nobility and integrity of soul which every child of God
54 will possess. In order to accomplish their ends, they act a part that is not frank
55 and open and according to the Bible standard, and prove themselves untrue to
56 those who love them and try to be faithful guardians over them. Marriages con-
57 tracted under such influences are not according to the word of God. He who
58 would lead a daughter away from duty, who would confuse her ideas of God's
59 plain and positive commands to obey and honor her parents, is not one who
60 would be true to the marriage obligations. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 4}

61 The question is asked, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" and
62 the answer is given, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." The
63 young man who makes the Bible his guide, need not mistake the path of duty
64 and of safety. That blessed book will teach him to preserve his integrity of char-
65 acter, to be truthful, to practice no deception. "Thou shalt not steal" was written
66 by the finger of God upon the tables of stone; yet how much underhand stealing
67 of affections is practiced and excused. A deceptive courtship is maintained, pri-
68 vate communications are kept up, until the affections of one who is inexperi-
69 enced, and knows not whereunto these things may grow, are in a measure with-
70 drawn from her parents and placed upon him who shows by the very course he
71 pursues that he is unworthy of her love. The Bible condemns every species of
72 dishonesty, and demands right-doing under all circumstances. He who makes
73 the Bible the guide of his youth, the light of his path, will obey its teachings in
74 all things. He will not transgress one jot or tittle of the law in order to accom-
75 plish any object, even if he has to make great sacrifices in consequence. If he
76 believes the Bible, he knows that the blessing of God will not rest upon him if
77 he departs from the strict path of rectitude. Although he may appear for a time
78 to prosper, he will surely reap the fruit of his doings. {RH January 26, 1886,
79 par. 5}

80 The curse of God rests upon many of the ill-timed, inappropriate connections
81 that are formed in this age of the world. If the Bible left these questions in a
82 vague, uncertain light, then the course that many youth of today are pursuing in
83 their attachments for one another, would be more excusable. But the require-
84 ments of the Bible are not half-way injunctions; they demand perfect purity of
85 thought, of word, and of deed. We are grateful to God that his word is a light to
86 the feet, and that none need mistake the path of duty. The young should make it

87 a business to consult its pages and heed its counsels; for sad mistakes are al-
88 ways made in departing from its precepts. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 6}

89 If there is any subject that should be considered with calm reason and unimpas-
90 sioned judgment, it is the subject of marriage. If ever the Bible is needed as a
91 counselor, it is before taking a step that binds persons together for life. But the
92 prevailing sentiment is that in this matter the feelings are to be the guide; and in
93 too many cases love-sick sentimentalism takes the helm, and guides to certain
94 ruin. It is here that the youth show less intelligence than on any other subject; it
95 is here that they refuse to be reasoned with. The question of marriage seems to
96 have a bewitching power over them. They do not submit themselves to God.
97 Their senses are enchained, and they move forward in secretiveness, as if fear-
98 ful that their plans would be interfered with by some one. {RH January 26,
99 1886, par. 7}

100 This underhand way in which courtships and marriages are carried on, is the
101 cause of a great amount of misery, the full extent of which is known only to
102 God. On this rock thousands have made shipwreck of their souls. Professed
103 Christians, whose lives are marked with integrity, and who seem sensible upon
104 every other subject, make fearful mistakes here. They manifest a set, deter-
105 mined will that reason cannot change. They become so fascinated with human
106 feelings and impulses that they have no desire to search the Bible and come
107 into close relationship with God. Satan knows just what elements he has to deal
108 with, and he displays his infernal wisdom in various devices to entrap souls to
109 their ruin. He watches every step that is taken, and makes many suggestions,
110 and often these suggestions are followed rather than the counsel of God's word.
111 This finely woven, dangerous net is skillfully prepared to entangle the young
112 and unwary. It may often be disguised under a covering of light; but those who
113 become its victims, pierce themselves through with many sorrows. As the
114 results, we see wrecks of humanity everywhere. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 8}

115 When will our youth be wise? How long will this kind of work go on? Shall
116 children consult only their own desires and inclinations irrespective of the ad-
117 vice and judgment of their parents? Some seem never to bestow a thought upon
118 their parents' wishes or preferences, nor to regard their matured judgment. Self-
119 ishness has closed the door of their hearts to filial affection. The minds of the
120 young need to be aroused in regard to this matter. The fifth commandment is
121 the only commandment to which is annexed a promise; but it is held lightly,
122 and is even positively ignored by the lover's claim. Slighting a mother's love,
123 dishonoring a father's care, are sins that stand registered against many youth.
124 {RH January 26, 1886, par. 9}

125 One of the greatest errors connected with this subject is that the young and in-
126 experienced must not have their affections disturbed, that there must be no in-
127 terference in their love experience. If there ever was a subject that needed to be
128 viewed from every standpoint, it is this. The aid of the experience of others,
129 and a calm, careful weighing of the matter on both sides, is positively essential.
130 It is a subject that is treated altogether too lightly by the great majority of peo-
131 ple. Take God and your God-fearing parents into your counsel, young friends.
132 Pray over the matter. Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of
133 character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny. The step you

134 are about to take is one of the most important in your life, and should not be
135 taken hastily. While you may love, do not love blindly. {RH January 26, 1886,
136 par. 10}

137 Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy, or inharmonious
138 and wretched. Let the questions be raised, Will this union help me heavenward?
139 will it increase my love for God? and will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in
140 this life? If these reflections present no drawback, then in the fear of God move
141 forward. But even if an engagement has been entered into without a full under-
142 standing of the character of the one with whom you intend to unite, do not
143 think that the engagement makes it a positive necessity for you to take upon
144 yourself the marriage vow, and link yourself for life to one whom you cannot
145 love and respect. Be very careful how you enter into conditional engagements;
146 but better, far better, break the engagement before marriage than separate after-
147 ward, as many do. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 11}

148 True love is a plant that needs culture. Let the woman who desires a peaceful,
149 happy union, who would escape future misery and sorrow, inquire before she
150 yields her affections, Has my lover a mother? What is the stamp of her charac-
151 ter? Does he recognize his obligations to her? Is he mindful of her wishes and
152 happiness? If he does not respect and honor his mother, will he manifest re-
153 spect and love, kindness and attention, toward his wife? When the novelty of
154 marriage is over, will he love me still? Will he be patient with my mistakes, or
155 will he be critical, overbearing, and dictatorial? True affection will overlook
156 many mistakes; love will not discern them. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 12}

157 The youth trust altogether too much to impulse. They should not give them-
158 selves away too easily, nor be captivated too readily by the winning exterior of
159 the lover. Courtship, as carried on in this age, is a scheme of deception and
160 hypocrisy, with which the enemy of souls has far more to do than the Lord.
161 Good common sense is needed here if anywhere; but the fact is, it has little to
162 do in the matter. {RH January 26, 1886, par. 13}

163 If children would be more familiar with their parents, if they would confide in
164 them, and unburden to them their joys and sorrows, they would save them-
165 selves many a future heart-ache. When perplexed to know what course is right,
166 let them lay the matter just as they view it before their parents, and ask advice
167 of them. Who are so well calculated to point out their dangers as godly parents?
168 Who can understand their peculiar temperaments so well as they? Children
169 who are Christians will esteem above every earthly blessing the love and ap-
170 probation of their God-fearing parents. The parents can sympathize with the
171 children, and pray for and with them that God will shield-and guide them.
172 Above everything else they will point them to their never-failing Friend and
173 Counselor, who will be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. He who
174 was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, knows how to succor
175 those who are tempted, and who come to him in faith. {RH January 26, 1886,
176 par. 14} Basel, Suisse.

177 *This discussion guide was developed by Path2Prayer Ministries. Find more re-*
178 *sources like this at discipleheart.com.*