

Ellen G. White

Unwise Marriages

1 Few have correct views of the marriage relation. Many seem to
2 think that it is the attainment of perfect bliss; but if they could
3 know one quarter of the heart-aches of men and women that are
4 bound by the marriage vow in chains that they cannot and dare
5 not break, they would not be surprised that I trace these lines.
6 Marriage, in a majority of cases, is a most galling yoke. There
7 are thousands that are mated but not matched. The books of
8 heaven are burdened with the woes, the wickedness, and the
9 abuse, that lie hidden under the marriage mantle. This is why I
10 would warn the young who are of a marriageable age, to make
11 haste slowly in the choice of a companion. The path of married
12 life may appear beautiful and full of happiness; but why may
13 not you be disappointed as thousands of others have been? {RH
14 February 2, 1886, par. 1 }

15 This question of marriage should be a study instead of a matter
16 of impulse. Obedience to the last six commandments requires
17 this. Obedience to the fifth commandment also requires that the
18 young honor the judgment of their parents in the matter. Crimes
19 of every kind may be traced to unwise marriages; then why
20 should ignorant and inexperienced children be allowed to enter
21 the marriage relation blindly? Parents should feel their respon-
22 sibility to guard the interests of their children, when their own
23 mature judgment teaches them that should they marry unwise-
24 ly, life-long unhappiness would be the result. {RH February 2,
25 1886, par. 2 }

26 While there are weighty responsibilities devolving upon the
27 parents to guard carefully the future happiness and interests of
28 their children, it is also their duty to make home as attractive as

29 possible. This is of far greater consequence than to acquire es-
30 tates and money. Home must not lack sunshine. The home feel-
31 ing should be kept alive in the hearts of the children, that they
32 may look back upon the home of their childhood as a place of
33 peace and happiness next to heaven. Then as they come to ma-
34 turity, they should in their turn try to be a comfort and blessing
35 to their parents. They should not be too ready to leave the
36 parental roof and give their affections and services to a
37 stranger, at the very time when they are most needed at home.
38 {RH February 2, 1886, par. 3}

39 Parents are entitled to the love of their children; and if the chil-
40 dren would manifest in their words and acts more affection for
41 the parents, it would be a blessing to both. Every kind attention
42 is appreciated by parents. Before a marriage contract is made,
43 every young person should look carefully to see how his or her
44 absence from home will affect the happiness of the parents. Do
45 they in their age of feebleness need the help that you alone can
46 give them? Think carefully in regard to who has the strongest
47 claims upon you. {RH February 2, 1886, par. 4}

48 When so much misery results from marriage, why will not the
49 youth be wise? Why will they continue to feel that they do not
50 need the counsel of older and more experienced persons? In
51 business, men and women manifest great caution. Before en-
52 gaging in any important enterprise, they prepare themselves for
53 their work. Time, money, and much careful study are devoted
54 to the subject, lest they shall make a failure in their under-
55 taking. How much greater caution should be exercised in enter-
56 ing the marriage relation,—a relation which affects future gen-
57 erations and the future life? Instead of this, it is often entered
58 upon with jest and levity, impulse and passion, blindness and
59 lack of calm consideration. The only explanation of this is that
60 Satan loves to see misery and ruin in the world, and he weaves
61 this net to entangle souls. He rejoices to have these inconsider-
62 ate persons lose their enjoyment of this world and their home in
63 the world to come. {RH February 2, 1886, par. 5}

64 Many make light of the Heaven-appointed institution of mar-
65 riage, and after it has been entered into thoughtlessly, without a
66 true sense of its sacredness, the obligations it imposes are often

67 shamefully disregarded. Frequently a man who is entirely igno-
68 rant of the wants of one of the opposite sex, of the treatment
69 she should receive, takes her under his proposed protection
70 when his influence and his temperament are to her a desolating
71 hail, beating down her will and her aspirations, and leaving her
72 no freedom of mind or judgment. Ignoring her personal rights,
73 he becomes unkind and authoritative. Her individuality is lost
74 in his, and she becomes the slave of his caprice and passions, as
75 though she had naught to do but to obey his whims. {RH Feb-
76 ruary 2, 1886, par. 6}

77 He may even quote texts of Scripture to show that he is the
78 head, and that he must be obeyed in all things. He feels that his
79 wife belongs to him, and that she is subject to his order and
80 dictation. But who gives him the right to thus dictate and con-
81 demn? Is it the law of God, which commands him to love God
82 with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself? No; there is no
83 moral or religious defense for such unjust authority. The same
84 Bible that prescribes the duty of the wife, prescribes also the
85 duty of the husband. It says, "Husbands, love your wives, and
86 be not bitter against them." The husband is to be kind and af-
87 fectionate. He is to love his wife as a part of himself, and to
88 cherish her as Christ does his Church. {RH February 2, 1886,
89 par. 7}

90 While women want men of strong and noble characters, whom
91 they can respect and love, these qualities need to be mingled
92 with tenderness and affection, patience and forbearance. The
93 wife should in her turn be cheerful, kind, and devoted, assimi-
94 lating her taste to that of her husband as far as it is possible to
95 do without losing her individuality. Both parties should culti-
96 vate patience and kindness, and that tender love for each other
97 that will make married life pleasant and enjoyable. {RH Febru-
98 ary 2, 1886, par. 8}

99 Those who have such high ideas of the married life, whose
100 imagination has wrought out an air-castle picture that has
101 naught to do with life's perplexities and troubles, will find
102 themselves sadly disappointed in the reality. When real life
103 comes in with its troubles and cares, they are wholly unpre-
104 pared to meet them. They expect in each other perfection, but

105 find weakness and defects; for finite men and women are not
106 faultless. Then they begin to find fault with each other, and to
107 express their disappointment. Instead of this, they should try to
108 help each other, and should seek practical godliness to help
109 them to fight the battle of life valiantly. Their daily prayer
110 should be, {RH February 2, 1886, par. 9}

111 “Help us to help each other, Lord,

112 Each other’s woes to bear.” {RH February 2, 1886, par. 10}

113 Self-denial must be practiced in the home. Every member of
114 the family should be kind and courteous, and should studiously
115 seek by every word and act to bring in peace, contentment, and
116 happiness. All members of the family do not have the same dis-
117 position, the same stamp of character; but through self-discip-
118 line, and love and forbearance one for another, all can be bound
119 together in the closest union. In many families there is not that
120 Christian politeness, that true courtesy, deference, and respect
121 for one another that would prepare its members to marry and
122 make happy families of their own. In the place of patience,
123 kindness, tender courtesy, and Christian sympathy and love,
124 there are sharp words, clashing ideas, and a criticising, dictator-
125 ial spirit. In every family where Christ abides, a tender interest
126 and love will be manifested for one another; not a spasmodic
127 love expressed only in fond caresses, but a love that is deep and
128 abiding. True love is a high and holy principle, and is altogeth-
129 er different in character from that love that is awakened by im-
130 pulse, and which suddenly dies when tested and tried. {RH Fe-
131 bruary 2, 1886, par. 11}

132 My heart is drawn out for the young. God has given them tal-
133 ents, which, if improved, would be of great service in his cause.
134 Satan knows this, and therefore seeks in every possible way so
135 to occupy their minds that they will have no time or inclination
136 to devote themselves to the service of God. There needs to be a
137 great change in the home life of some. They need to overcome
138 the defects in their characters, if they would become useful
139 workers for God and useful members of society. They do not
140 realize that the inconsistencies in their characters are great
141 drawbacks to their usefulness, and that unless they war against

142 those tendencies which have controlled them to a greater or less
143 degree, they will surely fail of attaining the future life. {RH Fe-
144 bruary 2, 1886, par. 12}

145 Many are seeking for happiness, but they know not how to ob-
146 tain it. If such would find true happiness, their minds must first
147 receive the right discipline. They must learn to have faith and
148 confidence in God. Those who have not learned to subdue self,
149 to control impulse, and to bring themselves into obedience to
150 the principles of the law of God, will not, cannot be happy, or
151 at peace and rest. They need the meekness and lowliness of
152 Christ. They need to learn daily in his school, to wear his yoke,
153 to lift his burdens, to deny inclination, to sacrifice a seeming
154 present good for a future good, a personal advantage for a gen-
155 eral advantage. The fountain of content must spring up in the
156 soul. He who seeks happiness by changing his outward sur-
157 roundings without changing his own disposition, will find that
158 his efforts will produce only fresh disappointments. He carries
159 himself with him wherever he goes. His unrest, his impatience,
160 his uncontrollable thoughts and impulses, are ever present. The
161 great trouble is in himself. Self has been cherished. He has nev-
162 er fallen upon the Rock and been broken. His will has never
163 been trained to submit; his unyielding spirit has never been
164 brought into subjection to the will of God. {RH February 2,
165 1886, par. 13}

166 There are many youth, who, because they cannot find happi-
167 ness in plans of their own devising, will not accept it in God's
168 appointed way. They wonder over their unhappiness, and count
169 their best friends, those who discern and point out their defi-
170 ciencies, their enemies. They cling with tenacious grasp to their
171 impressions, and their ideas of what they must have and what
172 they must do in order to be happy; but they lose sight of the
173 fact that it is the Lord who rules, and that it is he who shapes
174 circumstances. He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts,
175 neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher
176 than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my
177 thoughts than your thoughts." Finite beings should be humble
178 and submissive in their desires, realizing that God uses many
179 influences which it is beyond their power to control. It is for

180 them to subdue self, bringing it under the control of intelligent
181 reason. And in faithfully doing this work, peace, rest, and hap-
182 piness will surely come. “Learn of me,” says the Great Teacher,
183 “for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto
184 your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” {RH
185 February 2, 1886, par. 14}

186 Time is valuable. Now is our time of probation. There is an
187 eternity of bliss to gain, a perdition to shun. Do not, my young
188 friends, fritter away your God-given opportunities by trying to
189 accomplish your own desires. Up to duty and to work for the
190 Master! Many of you have lessons to learn that you have not
191 yet dreamed of. The books of heaven reveal many things that
192 you can have blotted from their pages by coming to God with a
193 truly repentant heart, and exercising faith in the blood of Christ
194 as the atoning sacrifice. The life that was once lived to the flesh
195 must now be lived by faith on the Son of God. You may now be
196 passing through a critical experience; but, I entreat of you, be
197 not hasty, be not discouraged, but submit your case to God.
198 Wait upon the Lord and do his will, and in this hour of trial he
199 will work for you, and you will obtain a precious experience.
200 Lie low at the foot of the cross. Give God a chance to work,
201 and he will teach you precious lessons. {RH February 2, 1886,
202 par. 15}

203 Ask yourselves the questions, What education am I receiving at
204 the present time? What advancement am I making in the divine
205 life? Some are training in the school of vice and deception, re-
206 ceiving an education that will unfit them for this life and for the
207 future immortal life. Others are educating themselves for lofty
208 positions where they may receive the praise and honor of men.
209 Still others are educating themselves in Christ’s school, seeking
210 goodness and truth, aiming to meet God’s great moral standard
211 of righteousness, and fitting for the high school above. Every
212 day we are learning lessons in good or evil. Every thought
213 cherished, every impulse indulged, leaves its impression on the
214 mind. {RH February 2, 1886, par. 16}

215 We are under obligations to God to be constantly learning of
216 Christ how to guide and control our thoughts, our feelings, and
217 our passions. Oh, how fearfully lax we are in our duty to our-

218 selves, in allowing our ideas to be molded by our own faulty
219 will, and in allowing ourselves to be controlled by circum-
220 stances. We must study the pattern Jesus Christ. Self-culture
221 and divine grace will strengthen us in moral power. Every fac-
222 ulty should be employed to make of us all that Christ has made
223 provision that we should become. How many are losing the
224 balance of their minds for want of heart culture! All goodness
225 commences in the heart. {RH February 2, 1886, par. 17}

226 God has intrusted the young with the ability to do a good work
227 for the Master, if they will consecrate themselves wholly to his
228 service. But there must first be a transformation of character, an
229 overcoming of obstinacy and self-sufficiency, and a cultivation
230 of kindness and affection. The critical and censorious spirit that
231 is ever ready to find occasion for reproof and condemnation in
232 others, shows a narrow mind, and plainly reveals that its pos-
233 sessor has never carefully studied and correctly read the pages
234 of his own heart. {RH February 2, 1886, par. 18}

235 Our home here on earth is the place in which to prepare for the
236 home above. If there are such temperaments in the family that
237 they cannot live in harmony here, they would not, unless con-
238 verted, be in harmony in the heavenly family. There is altogeth-
239 er too much careless talking, censoring, fault-finding, in fami-
240 lies that profess to love and serve God. The unkind words, the
241 irreverence and disrespect, found in many families make angels
242 weep. What a record is made upon the books of heaven of un-
243 kind looks and words that bite and sting like an adder. And this
244 is not the record of one day in the year merely, but of day after
245 day. Oh that these families would consider that angels of God
246 are taking a daguerreotype of the character just as accurately as
247 the artist takes the likeness of the human features; and that it is
248 from this that we are to be judged! {RH February 2, 1886, par.
249 19}

250 All should cultivate patience by practicing patience. By being
251 kind and forbearing, true love may be kept warm in the heart,
252 and qualities will be developed that Heaven will approve. He
253 who goes forth from such a family to stand at the head of a
254 family of his own, will know how to advance the happiness of
255 the one whom he has selected as a companion for life. There

256 will be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Marriage, instead of
257 being the end of love, will then be as it were the very beginning
258 of love. {RH February 2, 1886, par. 20}

259 If those who are contemplating marriage would not have mis-
260 erable, unhappy reflections after marriage, they must make it a
261 subject of serious, earnest reflection now. This step taken un-
262 wisely is one of the most effective means of ruining the useful-
263 ness of young men and women. Life becomes a burden, a
264 curse. No one can so effectually ruin a woman's happiness and
265 usefulness, and make life a heart-sickening burden, as her own
266 husband; and no one can do one hundredth part as much to chill
267 the hopes and aspirations of a man, to paralyze his energies and
268 ruin his influence and prospects, as his own wife. It is from the
269 marriage hour that many men and women date their success or
270 failure in this life, and their hopes of the future life. {RH Feb-
271 ruary 2, 1886, par. 21}

272 Basel, Switzerland.

Find more information on marriage and family in the books *Ad-ventist Home*, *Messages to Young People*, *Letters to Young Lovers* and egwwritings.com.

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