

SECRETS
of a
HAPPY
MARRIAGE

Taylor G. Bunch

SECRETS OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE

By
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Foreword

ALL of us “fall in love” It is the natural thing to do, for love is deeply cradled in our nature. But when and where and how and with whom we are in love -these are considerations about which we should seek much counsel and instruction. The secrets of a happy marriage are all wrapped up in our acceptance of wise counsel.

In this book is to be found a generosity of thought and spiritual guidance not often available to Seventh-day Adventist youth. Received as it is meant to be, it will help our young people accumulate a bank account of wisdom about this most basic of human relations that is indispensable in this day when such a commodity is most needed.

Evident in this frank study are the directness and depth of understanding that characterize the works of this gifted author. He points the way to a true evaluation of life, a proper reverence for personality, and a sense of personal integrity and dignity.

The counsel of an upright man leads in the way of righteousness. Walk in this counsel through the pages that follow.

THEODORE LUCAS

Friendship's "If"

This world is full of what is known as friendship,
But when tested often proves untrue;
You tell me you are a friend most faithful,
So I dedicate this IF to you.

If you can see my faults and tell me of them,
And when I need you, lend a helping hand;
If you can trust me still when others doubt me,
Because my life they do not understand;

If you can hear reports when proof is lacking,
Refusing to believe until the truth you know;
If you can act the same through changing fortunes,
Whether I be rich or poor or high or low;

If you can stand unchanged through idle gossip,
Counting all as false until 'tis proven true;
If you can treat me as you would be treated,
Were you to take my place and I were you;

If you are just the same when I am absent,
As when we talk together face to face;
If I can count on you when others fail me,
Knowing you will help me win the race;

If you will always be to me a comrade,
Fighting by my side for what is right;
If you will lift me up when I fall wounded,
And as a brother make my burdens light;

If you will be to me as Jonathan to David,
As true as steel through life unto the end;
Then you have stood the tests that prove true friendship,
And you are my friend.

The Issues This Book Faces

THINGS AS THEY ARE

As a background for these studies on friendship, love, courtship, marriage, and the home let us look at a few statistics, which are really predictions of the future based on what has happened in the past. As Patrick Henry said, "I know of no way of judging the future but by the past"

Here are some of the predictions recently made by the Research Institute of America, which is composed of economists, psychologists, statisticians, methods engineers, and legal and financial experts who carry on a continuous study of every aspect of our increasingly complex society: "The divorce rate will reach a new high in 1976. But that won't be much higher than the 1946 record of 4.3 divorces per 1,000 population. The 1946 record was produced by hasty wartime marriages. The long trend is seen in an increase from 0.7 per 1,000 in 1900 to 2.5 in 1952. In 55 years the divorce rate has tripled. In the next 20 years, we can expect a rise because of the growing social acceptance of divorce and the increasing pressures of living that will make marital adjustments more difficult"

The Institute says: "These predictions are not the product of imagination. They are not science fiction. They are based on analysis of events that have already occurred and on the critical factors that have begun to shape the next twenty years"

"The rising divorce rate" the Institute continues, "will be considered a major social problem in 1976. New forces will emerge to counteract it. The increased membership in organized religions will serve as a brake on the trend. Churches will not only preach against divorce but will supply

marital counseling to hold couples together. By 1976, the trend toward younger marriages, which has continued for more than 60 years, will have reversed itself. Today, 20 is the age at which the largest number of girls marry, and 23 is the age at which the largest number of men marry. By 1965, it may be 19 for girls and 22 for men. In 1976, we again will be marrying at the age we are marrying now”

In view of these undisputable figures and the warning they bring of an alarming social problem, no apology need be offered for the re-emphasis this book provides On the abiding principles that are basic to a happy relationship in marriage and the ideals of a Christian home.

I wish to express my indebtedness to the writings of Ellen G. White for the quotations in this book that so pertinently set forth the ideal factors in human relations that underlie happiness and contentment in Christian marriage. The excerpts from her works are indicated by superior numbers that refer to the sources at the end of each chapter.

THE AUTHOR

Friendship

True friendship is a plant of slow growth, and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity, before it is entitled to the appellation.

-GEORGE WASHINGTON

Social Maxims

Friendship

THE MOST basic principle in the establishing of a happy home is love, but love must its beginning and foundation in friendship. This friendship or mutual esteem is the result of acquaintance and association, and develops into a unity of mind and interests leading to sympathy and helpfulness. One of the greatest compliments ever was paid to Abraham: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23). What could be more wonderful than to be a friend of God, the Ruler of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords? We all like to be able to say that certain persons are our friends, or that we are a friend of someone who is well known and admired.

But friendship in order to be valuable must be permanent and unchangeable. So much that is termed friendship in this life is fickle and temporary, because it is based on mere sentiment and human emotions. True friendship is based on principle and character. Therefore the best and most lasting friendships and associations are formed between genuine Christians. Through one of the Hebrew prophets the Lord used the expression, "Abraham my friend" (Isaiah 41:8), and one of Judah's greatest kings spoke to God in prayer concerning "Abraham thy friend for ever" (2 Chronicles 20:7). It was this kind of intimate and lasting friendship that the wise man had in mind when he said, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). Such is the sweet fellowship of

the members of the household of God from which develop those closer ties that climax in marriage.

Jesus also considered friendship as the happiest of relationships between Himself and His disciples. He said: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard of my Father I have made known unto (John 15:12-15). It would help us in our experience if we would always think Jesus as our Friend-in fact, our very best Friend.

The record in Exodus 33:11, "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" reminds us of the statement: "Prayer is opening of the heart to God as to a friend"¹ If prayer were that to all of us it would take on a new and more precious meaning. But that is exactly what prayer means. It is communion or conversation with God, which calls for speaking on the part of both parties. It is not a one-sided affair. We speak to God through prayer, and He speaks to us through His Word. But because of who He is, we should let Him do most of the speaking. Much study with little prayer often leads to formalism, while much prayer without the balance of scriptural knowledge results in fanaticism. The conversation must be kept properly balanced if we would be well-balanced Christians.

But to maintain this intimate relationship and friendship with God we must shun those things that separate us from Him and break the friendship tie. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). It is never safe for a Christian to flirt with the world if he expects to maintain his friendship with God. In this respect He is "a jealous God" but it is an unselfish jealousy, because it is based on that which is for our good. Human jealousy is always selfish and therefore a sin.

A basic principle in forming earthly friendships is set forth by the wise man: “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). Just as love begets love, so friendship begets friendship. Only the friendly attract friends as the flowers do the bees. In many of our schools and churches and other institutions there are lonely persons who think others are cold and unfriendly when the blame is with themselves. They fail to make friends because they do not show themselves friendly. It is the friendly person who is most popular.

There are friendships to be found that are even closer and more lasting than that of “a brother” or of blood kinship, because they are founded on more basic principles. From among these should be found the one chosen as a life companion. Daily fellowship and association with Christ, who is no especially indicated as He who “sticketh than a brother” will hallow and enrich other friendship.

One of the greatest of human friendships was of David and Jonathan, especially in the light the fact that they were rivals for the throne of Israel. After Jonathan's death David said, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women” (2 Samuel 1:26). What a notable example of unselfish friendship, which was far closer than the ties between David and his own brothers. Even though Jonathan knew that David would occupy the throne to which he was die natural heir, his love and friendship surpassed even “the love of women” The enduring quality of tenderness and unselfish regard, such as that exhibited by a mother in her devotion to her child, is suggested here.

A true friend is beautifully described in these words: “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). In other words, such a friendship is not affected by adversity. “Have thou a friend for every time, and let brethren be useful in distresses; for on this account are they born” is the rendering in the Septuagint. Commenting on this statement Wordsworth said: “Adversity will bring him forth. He comes as it were out of the womb of calamity, and seems to be born for it” “A friend in need is a friend indeed” is another way of stating it. The

following Greek truisms are to the point: “Thy friend's misfortune deem to be thine own” “The crisis tests a friend, as fire the gold” In fact, misfortune or a crisis is the only way in which pretended friendship can be tested.

The best and most lasting friendships are formed among Christians. “Better than all the friendship of the world is the friendship of Christ's redeemed,”⁴² wrote Ellen G. White. This is only natural because real Christians are the most sincere, honest, and genuine people in the world. They are free from the sham, pretense, and hypocrisy so prevalent in modern society. And such friendships are not temporary, but last through time and eternity. Those that begin here will continue in the world to come and ripen through the eternal ages. Multiplied thousands of other friendships of the same variety will be formed in the kingdom of glory. In fact, this will be one of the chief rewards of the redeemed. Young people are wise who begin just as many of these lasting friendships as possible in this life.

The best places in which to form such friendships are our churches, schools, and other institutions. In fact, one of the chief benefits and blessings of a Christian education is the opportunity of making friends and eventually selecting from among them a life companion. With this happy end in view, the more friendships that are formed the better, and therefore young people should never become attached exclusively to chums or cliques or small circles, because this always has a narrowing influence on the character. Having a host of friends has a broadening influence in character development. It is always difficult to have to move to a new locality and leave one's friends, but in doing so a person meets others he wouldn't have missed for anything in the world.

It is to be strongly urged that young people keep their associations with the opposite sex on a strictly friendship basis for a considerable length of time in-fact, until they reach maturity and the marriageable age -before permitting the development of a love interest. In most cases this will take them through the academy days and the first two years of college. During this period wise young people will not permit themselves

to become tied to any one person in a love relationship, but will form as many friendships as possible out of which a later love relationship can develop.

Such a program is wise for several reasons. First of all, it affords opportunity for a young person to meet and become acquainted with many young men or women on a friendly basis without the restrictions and obligations accompanying a confession of love. We must ever remember that there are many millions of eligible young men and women in the world we have never met and never will meet, and therefore it is wise to meet as many of them as possible before deciding to make one of them a partner for life. In this selection divine guidance is imperative. God alone knows who would be your best helpmeet or life companion, and therefore His counsel should be sought. George Washington advised, "Be courteous to all but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence: true friendship is a plant of slow growth"

In the second place, remember that there can be no friendship or love at sight. It is true that two people may be mutually attracted at first sight, but true friendship and love are possible only through acquaintance and association covering a period of time. In this respect we cannot trust the eyesight alone, or the feelings and emotions, or even the judgment. No right decision can be made until the evidence is all in, and that requires time and experience -more than is generally realized. Character is not discernible at a glance, and character alone is the basis of Christian friendship and pure love.

As the friendship progresses, the young man should by some means discover whether the young woman is neat, tidy, and clean at home as well as in public. Marital happiness demands that the mistress of the home be a good housekeeper, especially if the young man came out of a well-ordered home. This information may be difficult to obtain while you are in school, and it may be necessary to visit her home on various occasions to discover, as far as possible, what training she has received in neatness and orderliness. No normal man can be happy in an untidy home, especially if

his mother is a good housekeeper. This information is imperative before friendship is permitted to develop into love, for then it may be too late to escape an unhappy future.

It is also of vital importance for the young man to discover the cooking ability of a potential wife, for this is more essential to happiness than for her to have good looks or to be a good dresser. At their first meal in their new home a weeping bride said to her companion, who was trying hard to eat one of her preparations, "I do not understand what is wrong, because there are good things in it" Just throwing together the proper food elements isn't enough to make a happy home. The food must also be appetizing.

No young man, especially if his mother was a good cook, can long be happy living with a mere can opener. Love may cover a multitude of sins and faults, but tasteless preparation of food is one that cannot be covered very long. In such a situation "be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). In these days of readily available instruction there is really no excuse for very long remaining a poor cook, but the change should be made before marriage.

Continued happiness also demands that both partners in the home be economical so that they can live within their income. There is a close relation between freedom from debt and family contentment and happiness. Debt is one of the great joy killers. This applies particularly to the so-called "easy payment" plan, which is misnamed, for no debt payments are easy. Even when it is necessary to purchase a home or a car on the installment plan, the monthly payments should never be permitted to total a very large percentage of the income. Living as far as possible on a cash basis contributes to the happiness of a home. Each should learn all he can about the financial habits of his friend before love is permitted to enter the picture. Much of this information can be obtained by observing the daily habits, including the manner in which all obligations, including school accounts, are handled.

It is also important that young people be mated intellectually, so that they can advance together and enjoy the same things. They should enjoy

reading and studying together. The happiness of many homes has been diminished because one is a reader and a student and the other is not. Intellectual and educational equality is so important that the couple must make sure of it before their friendship culminates in marriage. Too many make the discovery of their inequality when it is too late.

One of the essentials to the maintenance of strictly friendship relations is to refrain from the bestowing of affections that belong only to the love stage of the road to marriage and happiness. In fact, the ideal is to reserve the kiss until the wedding day, which a few have done, so that the intimacy is sacredly kept for the chosen one. But at least such affectionate demonstrations should be reserved through friendship for the time when it develops into love. Old-fashioned as this counsel may seem, those who have followed it have never regretted it later in life. Curbing of intimacies during the period of preparation for marriage offers a sound basis for marital happiness.

Only a few of the many reasons have been given here why a long friendship period is wise before love enters the picture and the couple begin to make definite plans for a life partnership. Ellen G. White, whose counsel in these matters cannot be ignored, wrote: "There is not one marriage in one hundred that results happily, that bears the sanction of God, and places the parties in a position better to glorify Him. The evil consequences of poor marriages are numberless. They are contracted from impulse. A candid review of the matter is scarcely thought of, and consultation with those of experience is considered old-fashioned."³ "It is only in Christ that a marriage alliance can be safely formed. Human love should draw its closest bonds from divine love. Only where Christ reigns can there be deep, true, unselfish affection."⁴

This counsel points up the necessity for the development of patience on the part of young people as they wait for the maturing of love. One of the advantages of waiting through adolescence and the early twenties is the opportunity it affords for widening the circle of acquaintances, from which a better choice of a life partner can be made. The thrill of the love attraction overpowers too often the good sense and best intentions of

young people, and hasty alliances are made that prove tragic when the novelty of being together becomes commonplace, and they face the problems of homemaking. One marriage counselor has therefore wisely said, “If I could give young people the priceless gift, it would be the talent for waiting.”

1) Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 257.

2) *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 374.

3) *Testimonies*, vol. 4. p. 504.

4) *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 358.

Love

O, there is nothing holier, in this
life of ours, than the first consciousness
of love, -the first fluttering of its silken
wings.

-LONGFELLOW

Hyperion

Love

THE INFLUENCE of associations on character development is far more powerful than can be realized. "It is natural to seek companionship. Everyone will find companions or make them. And just in proportion to the strength the friendship, will be the amount of influence which friends will exert over one another for good or for evil. All will have associates, and will influence and be influenced in their turn. The link is a mysterious one which binds human hearts together, so that the feelings, tastes, and principles of two individuals are closely blended. . . . The influence may be unconscious, yet it is no less powerful. ... Those who associate with men and women of questionable morals, of bad principles and practices, will soon be walking in the same path. The tendencies of the natural heart are downward....

"Let all who would form a right character choose associates who are of a serious, thoughtful turn of mind and who are religiously inclined.... There is an inclination with the youth to associate with those who are inferior in mind and morals. What real happiness can a young person expect from a voluntary connection with persons who maintain a low standard of thoughts, feelings, and deportment? Some are debased in taste and depraved in habits, and all who choose such companions will follow their example....

"There are persons who have for some time made a profession of religion, who are, to all intents and purposes, without God and without a sensitive conscience. They are vain and trifling; their conversation is of a low order. Courtship and marriage occupy the mind to the exclusion of

higher and nobler thoughts. The associations chosen by the workers are determining their destiny for this world and the next....

“The young are in danger; but they are blind to discern the tendencies and result of the course they are pursuing. Many of them are engaged in flirtation. They seem to be infatuated. There is nothing noble, dignified, or sacred in these attachments; as they are prompted by Satan, the influence such as to please him. Warnings to these persons unheeded. They are headstrong, self-willed, defiant.”¹

This is timely counsel and the truly wise will take it to heart; the foolish will ignore it to their eternal ruin.

It is during the period of friendship that young people learn the characteristics of their companions, including their faults and shortcomings. This should enable them to reduce the number of potential candidates for marriage to a smaller circle of more intimate friends preparatory to a still further reduction to the life companion. The information, in regard to the habits and practices of a possible mate, discussed in the chapter on friendship should by all means be obtained as far as possible before friendship matures into love, for then it may be too late.

There is a saying that “love is blind” because so often it obscures to the lover the faults of the loved one, which are so plain to everyone else. But the love the Scriptures commend covers “a multitude of sins” It is the kind that helps husbands and wives to overlook one another's faults and failings. Such love, in fact, must begin before any permanent planning is made for living together. For if two young people attracted to each other find faults or habits in each other distasteful and irritating before marriage, they may have to be tolerated through life in a fellowship that cannot be terminated, even though one or the other would give almost anything in the world if he could escape. The sensible thing to do is to recognize and contemplate each other's faults while they are visible, and after making allowance for the fact that no one can be perfect in every detail, decide whether the pattern of conduct and daily habits in the other can be lived with in contentment. These objectionable traits may even be

freely discussed together in an honest attempt to correct matters and adjust or conform to the other's wishes.

Our faults and failings are chiefly throwbacks from childhood, characteristics implanted and fixed before the age of ten, or possibly five. There are few changes that take place in later life except that of development. Of course, we must not overlook the power of the gospel, but it operates within the realm of individuality. It is indeed tragic for a person to wake up too late and discover that he or she is tied up for life to a spoiled baby or a pampered darling, with seemingly no possibility of change for the better.

This is the chief reason for the wisdom of becoming acquainted with the entire family of the admired one during the friendship period so as to determine whether it is desirable to become a member of it through marriage. For after all, in a sense one marries the whole family whether he likes it or not. In fact some of them may move in on him someday and make their home with him and expect him to take care of them. Young men should never forget the statement in Ezekiel: "As the mother, so is her daughter" (Ezekiel 16:44), "Like father like son" is likewise true, although some believe that the mother has the greater influence over her offspring. There are of course a few exceptions to this rule.

It is therefore the part of wisdom for a young person to size up his prospective mother-in-law and father-in-law as well as the other relatives, and to remember that his contemplated life companion may in later years be a duplicate of the parent fifteen or twenty years later, in size, character, and disposition. And the time to get this information during the days of casual friendship, while there is opportunity to avoid a situation that would later bring regrets. It has often been urged that heredity is far more powerful than environment. A great deal of unhappiness in marriage comes from in-law problems.

And young people should be able to distinguish between love and its counterfeit, infatuation. "To infatuate" is defined by Webster as "to make foolish; to affect with folly; to weaken the intellectual powers of, or to deprive of sound judgment" Another has defined it "To excite to folly or

foolish extravagance of feeling or action; inspired with passion too obstinate to be controlled by reason or so strong as to deprive one of ordinary judgment”

This accounts for the foolish conduct of so many young people in their associations together. This counterfeit of love has been responsible for more tragic mistakes in marriage than all else combined. Infatuation is based on feelings and emotions and sentimentality, but genuine love is a principle. We are told that “pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle.”² It is never something to be ashamed of or embarrassing to those who behold it.

The messenger of the Lord also points out: “The infatuation on the part of both young men and women in thus placing the affections upon each other during school days shows a lack of good judgment. . . . Blind impulse controls reason and judgment. Under this bewitching delusion the momentous responsibility felt by every sincere Christian is laid aside, spirituality dies.”³ Satan makes people “believe that they must be married in order to be happy.... But this is one of the alluring snares of the last days, in which thousands are ruined for this life and the next. Imagination, love-sick sentimentalism, should be guarded against as would be the leprosy.”⁴

“The thought of marriage seems to have a bewitching power upon the minds of many of the youth. Two persons become acquainted; they are infatuated with each other, and their whole attention is absorbed. Reason is blinded, and judgment is overthrown. They will not submit to any advice or control, but insist on having their own way, regardless of consequences. Like some epidemic, or contagion, that must run its course, is the infatuation that possesses them; and there seems to be no such thing as putting a stop to it. . . . They are wholly infatuated with each other, and the duties of life are neglected, as if they were matters of little concern.”⁵ Such persons cannot even pursue their studies, and they neglect the ordinary duties of life.

Love is based on character attractions, while infatuation is based chiefly on physical charm and beauty, which is only skin deep and

therefore temporary. With acquaintance, those who are physically homely but who have noble characters become more and more attractive. Likewise physical beauty soon fades in those whose characters are unattractive. A person can look much longer at a beautiful character than at a beautiful face. Infatuation is declared to be a species of idolatry, and many of the modern love songs are nothing more or less than hymns of praise to creature gods, and therefore blasphemous.

Love is the most beautiful and lasting relationship that can exist between human beings, or between man and God. Henry Drummond called love “the most wonderful thing in the world” This is true especially when it is preceded by the apprenticeship of a lengthy friendship so that there is a molding of common interests and a clarifying of ideals. This kind of love will be possible if the selection of the life companion is carefully and prayerfully made. This may be illustrated by the work of a nominating committee that reduces the list of potential eligibles to the one person selected for the position. A comparable process should guide a young person to his final choice.

In the selection of a life partner the necessity of divine guidance cannot be overemphasized. God alone can read the mind and know the heart and motives, as well as the future. If He is given His way in the life, no mistakes can be made.

In his old age S. D. Gordon wrote a tract entitled *What God Hath Joined*, in which he tells the story of divine leadership in the choosing of his companion with whom he had lived happily for more than fifty years. He asked God in his youth to select and prepare his future wife and then bring them together and help them to recognize each other as the one chosen by the Lord. He found later that the young woman had been praying for similar guidance, and their prayers were marvelously answered. They met at a religious convention a thousand miles from each of their homes and the friendship that began there ripened into a love that resulted in a very happy marriage.

Thousands of married people today would give a great deal if they had taken God into partnership in the formation of this most important

relationship of life. Since human beings cannot see the future, they need the guidance of One who can. Far more serious thought is usually given to the formation of a partnership in business than in marriage. And while a business can be dissolved without incurring the displeasure of God, a marriage cannot. It involves a moral issue that affects not only this life but also the life to come. Marriage is indissoluble except by death or moral infidelity. The arrival of children in the home adds greatly to the problem and increases the responsibility of both parties to the marital contract.

The expression “falling in love” is rather unfortunate because true love is never a fall. Those who experience it really ascend from the state of friendship into the higher sphere of love. In fact, the Scriptures reckon the loss of love as a fall. Christ severely reproved the early church for losing or relaxing their first love experience and urged them to remember the height from which they had fallen or He would have to withdraw their privilege of being His witnesses. The loss of love in the home is the first step toward the divorce court and tragedy. If the couple would only think and talk enough about their earlier love relationship, they would never be satisfied until it was restored and the former happiness regained.

There are deep emotions in true love, but they are under the control of reason and good judgment. In the first love experience there are thrills and ecstasies that are indescribable. Some become disappointed because these same ardent emotions do not continue through married life and therefore come to the conclusion that love is waning. But this is not necessarily true. When a fire is first kindled the blaze is large and often accompanied by crackling noise and roar, but there is little heat generated until it dies down into a steady and less spectacular blaze. Then it produces warmth and comfort and satisfaction. This is a parable of love as it passes from the first to its later stages.

Love and religion are inseparable. Only those who learn to love God with all the affections of the heart, all the reasoning of the intellect, all the devotion of the soul, and all the powers of the physical being, can love others as they love themselves. Only those who experience supreme love for God can know the fullness of human love so that they can practice the

golden rule in their treatment of each other. Herein lies true happiness in the home. There is no other possible formula. The apostle John wrote: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.... Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.... God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:7-16).

Love for God and love for human beings are inseparable. Love places those who experience it in a heavenly realm, in a little paradise on earth. In fact, in this heavenly atmosphere difficulties seem like trifles and time never becomes monotony. Of the experience of Jacob in the home of Laban, we read: "Rachel was beautiful and lovely.... So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her" (Genesis 29:17-20, R.S.V.). Rachel was both beautiful in appearance and had a lovely character, and their love for each other was genuine. Because of the trickery of Laban, Jacob had to serve a second period of seven years before she was really his, but on the basis of his deep and devoted affection he did not count the price too great.

When friendship ripens into love the couple are translated into a new world where almost all things become new. Everything takes on a new meaning and all plans and decisions are made in the light of the new relationship. Neither makes a love of importance without the knowledge and consent of the other. Wisdom dictates that no exhibitions of attention be manifested which cannot be carried over into the marriage state. The couple should not bestow presents or write letters with a frequency that cannot be maintained after they are married, for such a change in practice might leave the impression that love is waning. Just as friendship is the preparatory school for love, so love is the apprenticeship for marriage, and there should be an ascending experience in happiness.

Paul's description of love can hardly be surpassed: "If I can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but am destitute of Love, I have but become a loud-sounding trumpet or a clanging cymbal. If I possess

the gift of prophecy and am versed in all mysteries and all knowledge, and have such absolute faith that I can remove mountains, but am destitute of Love, I am nothing. And if I distribute all my possessions to the poor, and give up my body to be burned, but am destitute of Love, it profits me nothing.

“Love is patient and kind. Love knows neither envy nor jealousy. Love is not forward and self-assertive, nor boastful and conceited. She does not behave unbecomingly, nor seek to aggrandize herself, nor blaze out in passionate anger, nor brood over wrongs. She finds no pleasure in injustice done to others, but joyfully sides with the truth. She knows how to be silent. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of patient endurance. Love never fails. ... And so there remain Faith, Hope, Love -these three; and of these the greatest is Love” (1 Corinthians 13;1-13, Weymouth).

This unparalleled analysis of the love that should exist between man and God applies with equal force to the love relationship between a man and a woman. With this kind of love in the home, the couple will be very happy and the home will indeed be a little heaven on earth. May God be permitted to bring to the youth of the Second Advent Movement such a happy experience.

1) Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 587-589.

2) *Messages to Young People*, p. 435.

3) *Testimonies*, vol. 5. p. 110.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 123.

5) *Messages to Young People*, pp. 456, 457.

Courtship

If I am not worth the wooing,
I surely am not worth the winning.

-LONGFELLOW

The Courtship of Miles Standish

Courtship

COURT IS the principal part of the word *courtesy*, which means “courtliness” or the way a person should act in the presence or court of a king, in kindness, politeness, and proper conduct. Courtship is defined as (1) the act of courting or wooing, (2) the relations of wooer and wooed prior to betrothal, (3) courtliness and elegance of manners; courtesy.

Courtship is therefore the winning of favor by methods of politeness, courtesy, and the cultivated manners practiced in kingly courts, which should set the pattern for society in general. It should be characterized by the highest possible type of human behavior. True love is always sensible and discreet and dignified, and, as Paul says, “doth not behave itself unseemly” or “unbecomingly” (1 Corinthians 13:5). It is infatuation that is silly and foolish and indicates weakness and light-mindedness. You can judge by the conduct of the couple whether theirs is true love or its dangerous counterfeit.

Courtship is the period that follows casual friendship and precedes marriage. During this time the young man and woman complete the process of winning each other's favor and confidence in a love relationship, which is sealed and made permanent by the wedding ceremony. It is a period of special friendship and comradeship during which they become more intimately acquainted, and in which the final decisions are made for or against marriage. During this time the couple should recognize the attitudes and characteristics that set the pattern for a

happy married life. They should ask themselves the question, “Do we love each other enough to become partners for life”

During courtship the lovers should, if possible, spend some time in each other's home, not only in order to become acquainted with the entire family, but also to see each other in work clothes and under the ordinary circumstances, where life is real as it will be in their own home after marriage. Altogether too many couples marry after they have seen each other only in their best clothes and under the most favorable circumstances, and they imagine that things will always be the same.

During this period of more intimate acquaintance all matters pertaining to the necessary adjustments to a happy married life should be frankly discussed. The following are some of the things each should seriously consider in the other. The questions are here asked and answered from the viewpoint of the young woman, but most of them both ways.

1. Is your prospective life companion willing limit his intimate friendship to you only as his acknowledged preference? If not, you may safely confide that he is either not yet fully satisfied with you, or that he cannot be trusted and may divide his affections after marriage, and thus bring tragedy your home. Be sure there are no divided affections on the part of either of you.

2. Can he discuss controversial questions without becoming upset and boisterous and angry? If not, it is practically certain that this same disposition will grow with the years. If you quarrel frequently during courtship, you will most certainly quarrel much more frequently and violently after marriage.. Discover whether he was reared in an atmosphere of strife and contention. Would you want a home where quarreling, bickering, fault-finding, and misunderstandings are the order of the day? Think it over carefully, for a tendency toward quarrelsomeness tends to grow worse and not better.

3. Can he bear to have his faults mentioned without resentment? Such an attitude will carry over into married life, when his shortcomings are more noticeable than during courtship days. Life with a sensitive

person is virtually intolerable. There is a disease called proud flesh, so called because it is sensitive and touchy. Happiness with such a person would be impossible.

4. Does he receive advice in a kindly and gracious spirit? Or does he never acknowledge himself in the wrong? A man of experience said to a younger man who had brought some severe troubles upon himself, "I hope you profit by your past mistakes" The younger man retorted, "I never make mistakes" You cannot possibly be happy with such an egocentric person, to whom meekness and humility are utter strangers.

5. Does he have a tendency to insist on always having his own way in everything? If so, it might indicate that your marriage would be a dictatorship rather than a partnership. In such a home you would be virtually a slave. Do you want a totalitarian form of government in your home, or a democracy? Domineering husbands sometimes attempt to find in the Scriptures an excuse for their conduct and remind their companions that they are divinely appointed as the head of the house, and that Abraham was said to "command his children and his household after him" (Genesis 18:19). The husband is the head of the house only in the sense that a chairman is the head of a committee or a convention, and Abraham's commands were cheerfully obeyed because he had won the respect of his entire household. The assuming of undue authority on the part of some husbands reminds us of the observation by Shakespeare, "Man ... drest in a little brief authority, ... plays such fantastic tricks ... as make the angels weep" And dictatorship by the wife is still more obnoxious and tragic.

6. Is he conservative and stable and well balanced emotionally? Or is he by nature extreme and fanatical in religion, diet, and everything else? Do not marry a fanatic unless you also are one, and then by all means marry into your own clan, or you may ruin the life of some sensible person. Extremists give plenty of evidence that they are unbalanced in judgment, and therefore cannot be expected to act rationally and naturally. They are erratic and abnormal. Such persons often are very religious and "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2).

Their zeal and enthusiasm are not under the control of sound reasoning and good sense. One who is traveling in the middle of the road cannot live happily with an extremist.

7. Is he naturally of a cheerful, happy, and optimistic disposition, or is he inclined to be gloomy, morose, critical, and pessimistic? In a gloomy atmosphere happiness cannot exist. If you want your home to be a little heaven on earth, it must have in it a heavenly atmosphere and be a place of love, joy, and good will. What a life to be tied in marriage to a grouch and thus be always in a depression!

8. Is your lover the kind you are proud to introduce to your relatives and friends? Are you glad to be seen in his company anywhere? Do you feel that he is your equal or even your superior? Or do you feel apologetic and somewhat ashamed of his language, manners, and conduct? If so, the chances are that your embarrassment will increase during married life.

9. Is he naturally cooperative in working with others or is he a personnel problem with his employer? If so, he is almost certain to be such a problem in his home and family. This is an important consideration, because his job, and therefore your very living, are at stake, as well as your future happiness. You are running a risk if you marry a man who cannot long hold a job.

10. Does he bear responsibility so that he faithfully attends to the details of his daily duties? Or is he naturally lazy, following the way of least resistance? Industry is essential to a well-regulated and operated home, and indolence will surely mar its happiness. One of the commonest causes of misery in marriage is a lack of financial responsibility.

11. Are his background and living environments, social standing, and financial status similar to your own? Remember that if the marriage partners have an entirely different inheritance and environmental background there may be a strain upon the marriage. The proper adjustments are sometimes very difficult when the young man and woman are reared in different countries. This matter should be carefully and prayerfully considered.

12. Does he expect you to continue your present employment or seek another position after marriage, so as to help support the home and family, even after children arrive? Although this is not wrong, and in fact has become almost the order of the day, it should be frankly discussed and an understanding arrived at before marriage. Do not forget that if this is the plan, you will have two jobs instead of one, and for the second, that of housekeeping, you will receive no salary. Also when you both arrive home weary and hungry, your added duties can easily double the danger of irritations. When children arrive, the strain may be even greater. So think it over and discuss it together before you enter into the marriage contract.

13. Is he careful in his finances, meeting his obligations promptly and saving for future needs and emergencies, so that you are assured of his being a good provider as well as a good manager of the business firm of the home? Remember that the home is a very important business institution, and that your happiness is involved in the manner in which it is operated. Here is the source of much unhappiness in married life. Do not be deceived or blinded by great liberality during courtship days unless you are certain that he can keep up the same pace of spending after you are married. You are safer in marriage to one who is especially careful with his money than with a spendthrift. Be sure that he is strictly honest in all his dealings and a man of integrity and sincerity.

14. Find out, if possible, what his attitude will be toward his parents after marriage. Is he his mother's pet? Is he tied to her apron strings? Will he feel that he still belongs to her more than to you, or that his first obligation is to his parents? Does he believe the words of Scripture that when a man marries he should "leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24)? No home is large enough for two families or even to be shared with a part of another family. Only selfish parents insist on living with a married son or daughter. Only under rare conditions should it be done. Parents who are unselfish and have the best interests of son or daughter at heart will prefer living in their own home, or in a rest home with others of their own age with whom to visit and associate. It is only natural that parents should want to live near their

children, but it is always a happier arrangement when they live in separate dwellings. Where it is evident that responsibility for parents will be involved in the marriage plans, a clear understanding should be reached beforehand as to how the problem will be handled.

15. Do either of you have any physical defect or experience that might bring embarrassment break confidence if not known until after marriage? This includes a previous marriage, or scandal, or love affair, which some gossip is sure to reveal to your companion if you fail to do so, and in an exaggerated form. If there is a skeleton in the closet, show it to your companion before marriage or another will drag it out as the remains of a giant. No secret should be permitted to destroy confidence or bring embarrassment.

16. Having seen and recognized his faults, can you love him in spite of them? Are they the kind that can be overcome because they are minor, or are they basic and perhaps permanent? Is it safe to presume that these faults will disappear with the marriage ceremony by effort, miracle, or magic, so that he will be a perfect husband? Remember that such a creature does not exist in this world, and also do not forget that you have some failings of your own. Therefore be kind, considerate, and charitable. You can help each other improve with the passing of happy years together.

17. Is your prospective life companion religious, not in a formal way, or in order to win you, but by nature? And is his religion the same as yours? This is of vital importance, for happiness depends on your being equally yoked together in religious unity and equality as well as in all other areas. The Scriptures contain many warnings against marriage of saints with unbelievers. Of the relationship of the Israelites with the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, Moses said, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them.... The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:3-6). The apostle Paul gave similar instruction when he declared that Christians should not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14), and then gave the reasons.

We have been given the same instructions and warnings through the Spirit of prophecy: "Many imperil their own souls, and bring the curse of God upon them, by entering into the marriage relation merely to please the fancy. I have been shown the cases of some who profess to believe the truth, who have made a great mistake by marrying unbelievers. The hope was cherished by them that the unbelieving party would embrace the truth; but after his object is gained, he is further from the truth than before. And then begin the subtle workings, the continued efforts, of the enemy to draw the believing one from the faith....

"It is a dangerous thing to form a worldly alliance. Satan well knows that the hour that witnesses the marriage of many young men and women. closes the history of their religious experience and usefulness. They are lost to Christ. They may for a time make an effort to live a Christian life, but all their strivings are made against a steady influence in the opposite direction.... Hundreds have sacrificed Christ and heaven in consequence of marrying unconverted persons."¹

"It is disobedience to God that fills so many hearts and homes with misery. My sister, unless you would have a home where the shadows are never lifted, do not unite yourself with one who is an enemy of God."² "The Lord commanded ancient Israel not to intermarry with the idolatrous nations around them.... In the New Testament are similar prohibitions concerning the marriage of Christians with the ungodly.... Though the companion of your choice were in all other respects worthy ... , yet he has not accepted the truth for this time; he is an unbeliever, and you are forbidden of heaven to unite yourself with him. You cannot, without peril to your soul, disregard this divine injunction."³

This is all true, even though there have been infrequent exceptions where the Christian has won the unbeliever. If young people could only listen to some of the heart-rending confessions that are made to ministers they would heed the instructions and warnings given.

It is an established fact that the greatest safeguard against an unhappy home and the divorce court is religion. Recently a sociological survey was made in a typical American city. It revealed that when husband

and wife attended the same church and made religion the center of their home interests there was a 600 per cent better chance of keeping the home together, proving that religion is the best of all marriage insurances. In another survey It was found that only one divorce in every fifty-seven marriages took place when the family went to church regularly, and that only one divorce in five hundred marriages occurred where there was regular daily Bible reading and prayer in the home.

Jesus made it plain that only those who obey the first table of the Decalogue by loving God with all the affections of the heart, all the reasoning of the intellect, all the strength of the devotional life, and all the powers of the physical being, can obey the commandments in the second table and love others as they love themselves. There can be no happiness in the home or church without obedience to the golden rule. Human love is secondary to and dependent on divine love. Therefore only in Christ can a marriage alliance be safely formed, and only where He reigns can there be deep, unselfish affection. Once more, let it be remembered, that pure and holy affection is not a feeling but a principle, and those who are actuated by it are neither unreasonable nor blind.

Do not forget that courtship is the final preparation for marriage. During this time both parties should get any information regarding each other that was not discovered during the friendship period, and with the evidence all in mind should make a final intelligent decision either to become partners for life or to sever their close friendship. Courtship is really a probationary period when each is on trial before the other, and both must render a decision on the basis of the evidence of fitness for each other. Though the friendship be far advanced, it is not too late to change one's mind and seek elsewhere for a mate. Because of all that is involved both are in special need of divine guidance in coming to a decision so vital to their future happiness and eternal welfare.

The messenger of the Lord has said: "It is only in Christ that a marriage alliance can be safely formed. Human love should draw its closest bonds from divine love. Only where Christ reigns can there be deep, true, unselfish affection. Love is a precious gift, which we receive

from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love are neither unreasonable nor blind....

“Let those who are contemplating marriage weigh every sentiment and watch every development of character in the one with whom they think to unite their life destiny. Let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose to please and honor God. Marriage affects the afterlife both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will make no plans that God cannot approve.... Make Christ your counselor. Study His word with prayer. Under such guidance let a young woman accept as a life companion only one who possesses pure, manly traits of character, one who is diligent, aspiring, and honest, one who loves and fears God.”⁴

1) Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 4. pp. 504-507.

2) *Messages to Young People*, p. 440.

3) *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 363, 364.

4) *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 358, 359.

Marriage

The voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest wedding-day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not passed away.

Still in the pure espousal
Of Christian man and maid,
The holy Three are with us,
The threefold grace is said.

-JOHN KEBLE

Holy Matrimony

Marriage

BIRTH, CONVERSION, marriage, death are the four greatest events of life. We have absolutely no control over the first and last, the other two depend on our own decisions. As moral agents with the power of choice we can decide for or against conversion, and we can determine largely whether marriage will be a success or a failure.

The importance of marriage is emphasized in words: "There is not one marriage in one hundred that results happily, that bears the sanction of God, and places the parties in a position better to glorify Him. The evil consequences of poor marriages are numberless. They are contracted from impulse. A candid review of the matter is scarcely thought of, and consultation with those of experience is considered old-fashioned."¹ How urgent it is, then, that young people obtain all the wisdom and counsel they can get, and that they especially seek divine guidance.

Conversion and marriage should be closely related, for the chances for a happy married life are far greater when the contracting parties are both genuine Christians. Recently compiled statistics show that the ratio of divorces in non-Christian homes is more than seven times greater than in Christian homes. In other words, the Christian home is seven times more likely to succeed. Conversion and a deep spiritual experience are therefore vitally important in marriage. No husband and wife can possibly love each other as they love themselves until they first love God supremely. The lesser love flourishes best in the atmosphere of the greater

love. If the golden rule is applicable and practicable in business affairs, it is still more needed in keeping a happy marital relationship.

The proper age for marriage has been pretty well established by experience and research. "The highest percentage of happy marriages result when the groom is not less than twenty-four and the bride not less than twenty-two years of age" writes Dr. Harold Shryock. In my judgment the man should be from two to six years older than the woman. Many unhappy marriages result when the wife is a great deal older than the husband. The disadvantages of such a match become especially apparent in the later years. There are not many exceptions to this rule.

Attorney Samuel G. Kling, of Baltimore, Maryland, who has written several books on marriage, declares that happy marriages are the exception rather than the rule. Speaking of the fact that one out of every four marriages ends in divorce, he said: "And of the three remaining marriages, only one is really happy. The other two are marriages that are merely tolerated for one reason or another. Some couples remain unhappily wed because of religious scruples, some for the sake of children, others for sheer inertia, some because of cowardice or lack of gumption, some for reasons of vanity, status or prestige" He then gave early marriages as one of the contributing factors in this sorry situation: "The grim fact is that in a marriage where both parties are 20 or younger the divorce rate is even 14 per cent higher than the normal rate" Ellen G. White wrote: "A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person as young as himself to be his companion for life."² This is timely warning and counsel.

There are several reasons why early marriages are unwise. Years of observation and experience prove that it is not best for teen-agers to marry. In the first place, they are not mature enough in experience and judgment to make such an important decision, or to assume such heavy responsibilities. In the second place, their education is incomplete and plans for future scholastic training are difficult to carry out when unexpected circumstances interfere, including financial difficulties and the arrival of children.

In the third place, financial stability and security are not yet established. The operating of a home is always expensive. In fact, it is an important business institution requiring careful management. The saying that “two can live cheaper than one” is an exploded myth. Many marriages go on the rocks over financial difficulties. Note this: “Many who can but barely live when they are single, choose to marry and raise a family when they know they have nothing with which to support them”

In the fourth place, teen-agers have not yet formed a large enough circle of friends from which to make the choice. It is tragic indeed when one of them in later years thinks he has met the true mate, as sometimes happens. On the subject of early marriages the following divinely given counsel is very timely: “Before assuming the responsibilities involved in marriage, young men and young women should have such an experience in practical life as will prepare them for its duties and its burdens. Early marriages are not to be encouraged. A relation so important as marriage and so far-reaching in its results should not be entered upon hastily, without sufficient preparation, and before the mental and physical powers are well developed.”³

Quick marriages are also dangerous, as they often are based on mere infatuation. There has not been proper time for friendship and acquaintance. Two years for the periods of friendship and courtship would be a desirable minimum. Experience shows that a large percentage of premature marriages result in unhappy homes. We should never forget that there can be no love at sight, for love is based on extended acquaintanceship, and that requires time.

“In consequence of hasty marriages, even among the professed people of God, there are separations, divorces, and great confusion in the church. This kind of marrying and giving in marriage is one of Satan's special devices, and he succeeds in his plans almost every time.... When it is too late, they [those who refuse counsel] find that they have made a mistake, and have imperiled their happiness in this life and the salvation of their souls. . . . If counsel had been received, they might have saved themselves years of anxiety and sorrow. But advice is only thrown away on

those who are determined to have their own way. Passion carries such individuals over every barrier that reason and judgment can interpose. love is a plant of heavenly origin. It is not unreasonable; it is not blind. It is pure and holy.”⁴

According to Numbers 36:6, the lord gave command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, “let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry” This is also good counsel to the sons and daughters in modern Israel, to marry within their own tribes in spiritual Israel, because the chances for happiness are greater when the likes and dislikes and dispositions and characteristics of the couple are similar. This can easily be determined during friendship and courtship days.

How long should be the period of engagement? Webster defines courtship as “the relations of wooer and wooed prior to a formal betrothal” This indicates that the engagement should be delayed till near the end of the courtship period, or just before marriage. Authorities differ in their counsel as to the proper length of the engagement. The recommended period varies from six months to two years. Personally I believe it should be short and not entered into until it appears reasonably clear that there will be no hindrance or obstacle to the marriage.

Many a person has reluctantly gone through with an unwise marriage because he or she did not know how to escape from such an engagement promise..Of course it is far better to break an engagement than to be married to the wrong person. Solemn as is the betrothal promise, the marriage vow is even more sacred. Says the lord's messenger: “Far better take back such a promise, in the fear of God, than keep it and thereby dishonor your Maker”.

Courtship is not a trial marriage, and even though engaged, both man and woman should maintain a “thus far and no farther” attitude toward intimacies that belong alone to the marriage state. Prof. Frank W. Hoffer, who taught a class in courtship and marriage at the University of Virginia, said: “When a boy who has no sincere feelings toward a girl tempts her to... pet, he is simply offering her a price tag of cheapness to

hang around her neck -for that is his evaluation of her. If she accepts and wears the price tag, that is her evaluation of herself” Young people of integrity will not demand or yield to premature privileges, for such persons are poor risks in terms of future fidelity -an essential to a happy home. Premarital indiscretions are sure to raise questions that will affect trust and confidence, even for years to come. And remember not to begin even good and proper attentions during courtship if you cannot or will not keep them up after marriage, or your companion may conclude that your love is waning.

For instance, how common it is for young people to write to each other ardently every day if separated by distance before the wedding takes place, only to lapse into fitful and brief correspondence when for business or other reasons they are obliged to be apart after they are married and life has settled down to a patterned. routine. The same difference is also seen in the sending of flowers and the giving of presents. The laxity in these matters is often so pronounced after the vows have been said at the altar that one or the other or both attribute it to growing coldness in their relationship.

The wedding should be planned and announced and known by others far enough in advance to prevent the suspicions and gossip that sometimes result from a quick or secret marriage. Elopements and hasty marriages have caused regrets that marred the future happiness of the home. Those who follow such a course are taking a foolish risk.

The wedding is one of the most important events of life, especially to the bride, who should have the most to say in its planning. She should be able to look back upon a church or home wedding with great satisfaction and pleasure. The relatives and close friends should be present. In fact, the wedding should be such an important and memorable event that the couple will find delight in celebrating the anniversary through life. The wedding service is sacred, and should be characterized by a dignified simplicity that is the very essence of culture and good taste. Extravagance and display should be avoided. It is interesting to note that extravagance is often indulged in by those who can least afford it. We must not forget that

it is a religious service, especially when conducted in a church, and should therefore be characterized by simplicity and reverence. "There is no reason why we should make great parade or display, even if the parties were perfectly suited to each other; but that remains to be tested."

In a church wedding only religious music is appropriate. Love songs should be reserved for the reception. The following are a few appropriate hymns: "The Lord's Prayer" "Bless This House" "Happy Home" "O Perfect Love" "O Happy Home" "The Pledge" "The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden"

Seventh-day Adventists do not use the ring ceremony, because the ring has no value whatever in binding or holding the couple together. Counsel has been given that "not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married."⁷ This applies not only at the wedding but also during married life. In most countries it has ceased to be a protection, even to the wife.

No pictures should be taken in the church or any place else during the marriage ceremony to mar its beauty and sacredness. In some denominations it is not permitted in a church. Pastor O. A. Geisman, of the Grace Lutheran church, of River Forest, Illinois, wrote: "It is probable that every pastor with some years of experience has been terribly tempted to commit homicide by some of the photographers who carry on as though a marriage were particularly staged for their benefit to give them a chance to strut as prima donnas and to convert a solemn occasion into a commercial field day. If a close-up of the bridal couple is desired, they may arrange with the pastor beforehand to pose for the special purpose of taking a picture after the service is concluded and the guests have passed the receiving line in the narthex of the church" - *Pulpit Digest*, May, 1950. All pictures in the church should be taken after the wedding service. Better still, take them at the reception.

Also at church weddings the throwing of confetti or rice, labeling the bridal car, or tying to it old shoes or tin cans, together with shivarees, is out of place and beneath the dignity of Christians. The kidnaping of the bride of course is unthinkable and should be considered a criminal act.

After a simple, beautiful, and dignified church wedding, the remark was overheard: "What a beautiful wedding. All of it was in keeping with the best social and church standards" Thus should it ever be.

The honeymoon is the transition period between the wedding and the setting up of the home, at which time friendship and love reach their highest state and home life its beginning. It is the prologue and introduction to married life. It largely sets the pattern for the home, and should be characterized by courtesy, respect, and self-restraint, and the many other things that have to do with the highest form of happiness between human beings.

Speaking of marital intimacies during this period, Dr. Bernard Bell said: "Man is an animal which alone among the animals refuses to be satisfied by the fulfillment of animal desires" This should be remembered not only during honeymoon days but also through married life. In many cases the honeymoon virtually kills the love that brought the couple to the altar. If it is what it ought to be, "marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be only its beginning"

In the ideal honeymoon the bride and groom are absolutely alone and none of the time is spent visiting relatives or friends. All by themselves they can best adjust themselves to a new and almost revolutionary experience in life. If they are wise, they will avoid long and tiresome trips, which produce fatigue or strain. The period should never be less than a week and from two to four weeks is better for such an important adjustment. The wedding if necessary should be postponed until it and the honeymoon can be made a real success, for the future happiness is involved.

One of the first acts of the couple, even on the first day of their honeymoon, should be the setting up of the family altar as the center of home life. One writer said: "There should be three parties to the marriage bond..-the man, the woman, and Christ. Christ should be the head, the guide, the mediator, the unseen partner at all times" If they need Christ to prepare each for the other and bring them together, they also need Him to hold them together in a happy love relationship.

A study of twenty-two thousand marriages showed that although there is one divorce to every six marriages in this country, among active Christians there is less than one divorce to every fifty marriages. Another survey showed that marriages without religious ceremonies are more than twice as likely to end in divorce as those performed by ministers. A young Christian husband said: "Praying out loud together is the thing that means most in our marriage. When we do this at night, we just can't go to bed angry"

Since each person has an individuality all his own, and no two persons are alike or ever can be, there are bound to be differences of opinion between husband and wife, but these cannot divide or disrupt in the atmosphere of prayer. Years ago a circuit rider was on his way home on horseback one Sunday night after meeting two or three preaching appointments on the plains of Montana. His audiences were small and he was somewhat discouraged, even tempted to give up his work. As he was riding past a small house by the road the large window revealed a father and mother and a large family of children seated around a table. He stopped his horse and discovered that the father was reading from the Bible and conducting family worship. They all knelt around the table and each in turn offered prayer. With a happy heart the circuit rider said aloud, "There is hope, glorious hope for man" and with a smile on his face rode on into the night with new inspiration for his work in the ministry.

There is glorious hope for happiness in the home where the family gathers daily at the altar of prayer and keeps the home fires burning.

1) Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 504.

2) *Messages to Young People*, p. 452.

3) *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 358.

4) *Messages to Young People*, pp. 458,459.

5) *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 365.

6) *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 515.

7) *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 181.

The Christian Home

The beauty of the home is order,

The blessing of the home is contentment,

The glory of the home is hospitality.

-An ancient house motto

The Christian Home

TO EMPHASIZE the importance of a discussion of the home and some of the secrets of homemade happiness, I would remind you of the fact that in altogether too many cases, marriage is the end rather than the beginning of happiness.

While one and a half million couples appear at the marriage altar each year in the United States, during the same period nearly four hundred thousand other couples enter the divorce courts for a separation. It is estimated that as many more couples would like to have their marriage bonds dissolved if it were possible, but they are held together because of religious or financial considerations or because of their children. It is well known among Christians that the Scriptures allow but one reason for divorce and remarriage -that of moral unfaithfulness. This alone releases the marriage tie and frees the innocent party.

The average man does not realize what he is asking of a young woman when he proposes marriage, nor does the young woman dream of all that is involved in the acceptance. Suppose he should tell her that they will be happy together because he will do most of the work and make the living for the family, and that all she will have to do is keep house and take care of the home. If he knows, he does not tell her the results of a recent survey conducted by Bryn Mawr College, showing that the average wife on the farm works sixty-eight hours a week, the one in a small town seventy-seven hours, and in an urban community eighty hours. If she

holds down a job outside the home, these hours would doubtless be lengthened.

Whatever her accumulated hours of service, he might remind her that he expects her to always look and feel fresh and cheerful as she greets him each evening when he returns from his strenuous eight-hour day in the office or factory, and then to pamper him by attending to his every want. Suppose he should tell her that in caring for the household duties she would get only the needed exercise, which in a lifetime would perhaps be the equivalent of climbing the Washington Monument twelve thousand times. He might remind her that she would have to take only one step at a time.

He might also remind her that there would be a few dishes to wash and dry, without revealing the fact that during their life together this would amount to virtually 150,000 cubic feet of soiled dishes. He might console her with the promise to wipe them for her occasionally when he wasn't too tired. There would also be a few clothes to wash and iron, in fact enough to fill a clothesline forty-seven miles in length, with two miles added for each child. He could tell her she would have to wash and dry only one dish at a time, and wash and iron one piece of clothing at a time, and of course the babies would come only one at a time -usually!

These facts are not intended to discourage young women from accepting the marriage proposal, but rather to emphasize the importance of marrying the right man. The choice made determines whether life will be a delight or a drudgery, for love knows no burden or sacrifice. But regardless of what is involved in marriage, the home is nevertheless the most important institution on earth. In fact, it is the oldest, even antedating the church, for it was divinely instituted at creation.

As goes the home, so goes the church, the community, the State, the nation, and the world. The family is the most fundamental unit of society and government, and the most basic principles of law and order have their beginning in the home.

John Ruskin said: “The history of a nation is not the history of its wars, but the history of its households” Another has said: “The heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences” At Plymouth, Massachusetts, where the Pilgrims landed, there is a statue of Our Puritan Mother, erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution. The figure is of a sweet, modest woman with hooded and bowed head, buckled shoes, and a Bible in her hands. At the base is the inscription: “They brought up their families in sturdy virtue and living faith in God without which nations perish” One writer declared that “no nation rises higher than its best homes, or sinks lower than its worst homes”

Dr. Benjamin Jowett said of the home of the poet, novelist, and clergyman, Charles Kingsley, of England: “It was a home whose moral atmosphere was like the air of the Alpine Heights, a home in which, in all perplexities the only referendum was the Lord Himself” Would that this could be said of all our homes.

The divine pronouncement at the marriage of the parents of the human race in the Garden of Eden, that the two “shall be one” indicates that neither is complete without the other. Benjamin Franklin said: “It is the man and woman united that make the complete human being. Separate she lacks his force of body and strength of reason: he her softness, sensibility, and acute discernment. Together they are more likely to succeed in the world”

This makes the marriage institution essential to completeness. It is still “not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18), or the woman either, for they complement each other. Together they form a partnership. Eve was created to be the helpmate, companion, or perfecting half of Adam. “I must make a partner for him who is like him” is one translation. Eve was made from a rib taken from the side of Adam, to indicate that she was to be his equal. The bone was not taken from his head, indicating that she should rule over him; nor from his foot,

indicating that he should rule over her. They were to be partners on an equal with each other.

The home life is the climax in a series of adjustments that we have already considered –friendship, love, courtship, marriage, and the honeymoon. Of all the adjustments to be made in a life partnership, the home life is the most difficult and important. With its arrival the entire picture changes. The flashing and sparkling fire of the first-love experience must settle down to a steady and normal blaze. The thrills and sensations of the former periods must merge into the practical affairs of daily life. The couple descend from the floating clouds of ecstasy to solid earth and stern reality characterized by hard work, careful economy, wise planning, hitherto unknown sacrifice, and a host of other things that held secondary place in the former relationship, but that now press to the front and demand attention.

The couple must now face the practical application of the marriage vows taken when they so readily, and in many cases glibly, pledged to love each other through life “in sickness and in health” “for better or for worse” “for richer or for poorer” “in prosperity and in adversity” How long? “Cleaving to each other till death do us part” Without a moment's hesitation the answer is “I do” or “I will” Very few fully realize what they promise. Every effort should be made to honor the pledges made before God and many witnesses at the nuptial ceremony.

What are some of the secrets of homemade happiness? Both partners should cultivate a cheerful outlook and a happy disposition, and especially a wholesome sense of humor. Learn to laugh, because “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). It is a sure cure for the blues and pessimism. It is the antidote for criticism. The only kind of jokes forbidden in the Scriptures are those “which are not convenient” (Ephesians 5:4), which means unbecoming to a Christian. This indicates that there are some pleasantries that are proper and appropriate. It is unfortunate that through mistaken ideals of Christian sobriety so many homes are lacking in the happy merriment that is reflected in Christian humor.

It is never wise to take oneself too seriously. In the midst of an argument a hearty laugh will win the debate and also the opponent. The couple may do some teasing and even play little practical jokes on each other, in order to make the home the center of joy and happiness. Troubles disappear and crises dissolve in the atmosphere of humor. Learn to be good sports, and to give and take. Play games together, and learn to lose graciously. Do not forget that there is no 38th parallel in marriage over which each clamors for his rights.

“let home be a place where cheerfulness, courtesy, and love exist. This will make it attractive to the children.”¹ Such a home will also be attractive to everybody else. “let the husband and wife study each other's happiness, never failing in the small courtesies and little kindly acts that cheer and brighten the life. Perfect confidence should exist between husband and wife. Together they should consider their responsibilities.”²

This “perfect confidence” in each other is essential to happiness, which cannot exist in the atmosphere of suspicions, questions, and jealousies. In trust and confidence there is no checking up on each other, nor demands for an accounting of the whereabouts and doings of the other party. This always shows a lack of confidence and loss of love. Husbands and wives should never open each other's private letters or disturb the other's private property without permission. Remember that trust begets trust, just as love begets love. Those who carefully avoid the things that would engender suspicion will not lose the confidence so essential to a happy home.

Do not nag, for happiness cannot live and grow under this blighting influence. One writer said: “Many a wife poisons the atmosphere of her home through continual nagging and faultfinding” love cannot flourish in a critical and complaining atmosphere. Both parties must practice tolerance, learning to bear and forbear, ever remembering that neither is perfect. Through sanctification, or spiritual growth, both can continue to improve and develop together until they measure up to the stature of Christ.

It is also important that each preserve his or her individuality. Under no circumstances should they be merged or lost in each other. Personality should be maintained, for that is what attracted them to each other in the first place. While heredity and environment are both important to success in marriage, complete surrender to the will of God transcends heredity and transforms environment. Although the husband is divinely declared to be the head of the house, the wife is the heart of the home. If he is the king, she is the queen. Theirs is a joint rulership.

The financial affairs of the home will always demand careful economy and keen business judgment on the part of both partners of the firm, and the children should early be taught the value and care of money. A recent writer declared that “it is quite generally admitted that the first fifteen years of marriage will be involved in economic and financial strain” An experienced marriage counselor said: “Approximately two out of every five of the family feuds I see have to do with money”

It is wise to work out a budget and divide the family income so that both parties are more or less financially independent, regardless of whether one or both are wage earners. If the wife enjoyed her own income before marriage, the husband should be careful not to embarrass her by making it necessary for her to ask for money. Her housework entitles her to a proper portion of his wage or salary.

No home is complete without children, for that is the divine plan, but it is better if their arrival is delayed until the husband and wife have time to become well adjusted before this new and entirely different relationship begins. It is also important that the children be mutually planned for and wanted. Of the parents we read: “They have no right to bring children into the world to be a burden to others. Have they a business that they can rely upon to sustain a family so that they need not become a burden to others? If they have not, they commit a crime in bringing children into the world to suffer for want of proper care, food, and clothing.”⁴³ In the phrase “burden to others” the “others” should certainly include the grandparents.

The bearing of children should be a subject earnest prayer. Children should be conceived in love rather than lust, and born into a family where they are eagerly wanted and heartily welcomed. An unwanted child can hardly escape having his character affected, for the parental influences are great on character development. Samuel was born in answer to earnest prayer, and before his birth his mother, Hannah, dedicated him to the service of the Lord. Much of the credit for his becoming a great Hebrew judge and prophet goes to an unselfish mother who faithfully fulfilled her pledge even though it deprived her of an association that meant much to her happiness.

John the Baptist was born in answer to the prayers of Zacharias and Elisabeth, who were “both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6). What a spiritual heritage! Is it any wonder that their son performed such an important role in the plan of God and was declared by Jesus to be “more than a prophet” (Matthew 11:9), and one of the greatest to be born of women? Such an inheritance of prayer and consecration will accomplish much in the character development of any child.

The importance of religion in the home as a binding and peace-making influence cannot be overemphasized. It is the greatest of all safeguards against divorce. In fact, the situation is fast approaching the crisis stage when the very destiny of the home, church, and nation is threatened. J. Edgar Hoover, in an article in *Woman's Day*, said: If there is to be hope for the future of America; if there is to be peace and happiness in our home -then we as a nation must return to God and to the practice of daily family prayer” The home that is saturated with the spirit of prayer and consecration is virtually impregnable to the assaults of Satan.

Judge Joseph Sabath, who had many years' experience in counseling husbands and wives and in helping them to settle their marital difficulties made the following Ten Rules for a Happy Marriage: “1. Bear and forbear. 2. Work together, play together, grow together. 3. Avoid little quarrels -the big ones will take care of themselves. 4. Use compromise. It is the antitoxin that destroys the poison of divorce. 5. Practice sympathy, good

humor, and mutual understanding. 6. Don't grouch before breakfast -or after it. 7. Respect your in-laws. 8. Establish your own home, even if in a one-room flat. 9. Fight for each other, but not with each other. 10. Build your home on religious faith, and never let a day close without a slate of forgiveness”

What can be more beautiful than for a band and wife to grow old together in the environment of that heavenly love that Paul says “never fails”? Booth Tarkington wrote: “It is love in old age, no longer blind, that is true love. For love's highest intensity doesn't necessarily mean its highest quality. Glamour and jealousy are gone: and the ardent caress, no longer needed, is valueless compared to the reassuring touch of a trembling hand. Passers-by commonly see little beauty in the embrace of young lovers on a park bench, but the understanding smile of an old wife to her husband is one of the loveliest things in the world”

Mrs. Isidor Straus was one of the few women who went down on the *Titanic*, in 1912. She could not bear to leave her husband, so she relinquished her seat in a lifeboat, and standing by his side said, “We have been long together. We are old now. Where you go, I will go” And they stood on the deck together hand in hand as the mighty ship plunged beneath the waves. A tragedy? No, a beautiful sunset.

1) Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 154.

2) *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 393.

3) *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 380.