

Chapter 3

Individuality

Individuality of the Wife—A woman that will submit to be ever dictated to in the smallest matters of domestic life, who will yield up her identity, will never be of much use or blessing in the world, and will not answer the purpose of God in her existence. She is a mere machine to be guided by another's will and another's mind. God has given each one, men and women, an identity, an individuality, that they must act in the fear of God for themselves.—Letter 25, 1885.

Separate Identity of Husband and Wife—I was shown that although a couple were married, gave themselves to each other by a most solemn vow in the sight of heaven and holy angels, and the two were one, yet each had a separate identity which the marriage covenant could not destroy. Although bound to one another, yet each has an influence to exert in the world, and they should not

be so selfishly engrossed with each other as to shut themselves away from society and bury their usefulness and influence.—Letter 9, 1864.

A Passive Wife—Let the wife decide that it is the husband's prerogative to have full control of her body, and to mold her mind to suit his in every respect, to run in the same channel as his own, and she yields her individuality; her identity is lost, merged in that of her husband. She is a mere machine for his will to move and control, a creature of his pleasure. He thinks for her, decides for her, and acts for her. She dishonors God in occupying this passive position. She has a responsibility before God, which it is her duty to preserve.

When the wife yields her body and mind to the control of her husband, being passive to his will in all things, sacrificing her conscience, her dignity, and even her identity, she loses the opportunity of exerting that mighty influence for good which she should possess, to elevate her husband.—The Review and Herald, September 26, 1899.

Love for Christ, Love for Each Other—

Neither the husband nor the wife should merge his or her individuality in that of the other. Each has a personal relation to God. Of Him each is to ask, “What is right?” “What is wrong?” “How may I best fulfill life’s purpose?” Let the wealth of your affection flow forth to Him who gave His life for you. Make Christ first and last and best in everything. As your love for Him becomes deeper and stronger, your love for each other will be purified and strengthened.

The spirit that Christ manifests toward us is the spirit that husband and wife are to manifest toward each other. “As Christ also hath loved us,” “walk in love.” “As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.”

No Arbitrary Control—Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel

each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient and forbearing, considerate and courteous. By the grace of God you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do.—The Review and Herald, December 10, 1908.

I was then shown his daughter-in-law—She is beloved of God, but held in servile bondage, fearing, trembling, desponding, doubting, and very nervous. This sister should not feel that she must yield her will to a godless youth who has less years upon his head than herself. She should remember that her marriage does not destroy her individuality. God has claims upon her higher than any earthly claim. Christ has bought her with His own blood. She is not her own. She fails to put her entire trust in God, and submits to yield her convictions, her conscience, to an overbearing, tyrannical man, fired up by Satan whenever his satanic majesty can work effectually through him to intimidate this trembling, shrinking soul. She has so many times been thrown into agitation that her nervous system is shattered, and she is merely a

wreck.

Is it the will of the Lord that this sister should be in this state and God be robbed of her service? No. Her marriage was a deception of the devil. Yet now she should make the best of it, treat her husband with tenderness, and make him as happy as she can without violating her conscience; for if he remains in his rebellion, this world is all the heaven he will have. But to deprive herself of the privilege of meetings, to gratify an overbearing husband possessing the spirit of the dragon, is not according to God's will. He wants this trembling soul to flee to Him. He will be a covert to her. He will be like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Only have faith, trust in God and He will strengthen and bless. All three of her children are susceptible to the influences of the truth and Spirit of God. Could these children be as favorably situated as are many Sabbathkeeping children, all would be converted and enlist in the army of the Lord.—Testimonies for the Church 2:99, 100.

The Head of the House—Mary, ... I wish in all

sisterly and motherly kindness to kindly warn you upon another point. I have often noticed before others a manner you have in speaking to John in rather a dictating manner, the tone of your voice sounding impatient. Mary, others notice this and have spoken of it to me. It hurts your influence.

We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband. He is the head, and our judgment and views and reasonings must agree with his, if possible. If not, the preference in God's Word is given to the husband where it is not a matter of conscience. We must yield to the head.—Letter 5, 1861.

An Overbearing Husband—I have a few words to say in regard to your marriage, not by revelation but permission. Yes, I feel compelled by the Spirit of the Lord to say to you [that] I have had less confidence in your integrity since your marriage than I have had heretofore. My heart was greatly burdened. I knew you were not qualified to make a proper husband for Sister Drake. If you had permitted her to lay her case before us, we could

have advised her according to the light God has given us of your case. You knew this, therefore you were unwilling to have us consulted. Brother R, I believe that your motives in this marriage were purely selfish. I do not believe you had a thought of the good of Sister Drake or the glory of God. You urged yourself upon her without consulting those who knew you best. You hurried this matter off with your own hasty spirit that you have ever possessed.

Stewardship of Means—Your course since your marriage, in taking possession of and controlling the means of her [whom] you had made your wife, shows your motives to be wrong. All these things are against you and show on your part very deep selfishness and a dictatorial spirit which God would not have her submit to. Her marriage does not make null and void her stewardship. It does not destroy her identity. Her individuality should be preserved if she would glorify God with her body and spirit, which are His. Her individuality cannot be submerged in you. She has duties she owes to God which you have no right to

interfere with. God has claims upon her which you cannot meet. In the providence of God she has become His steward, and this she should refuse to yield to you or any other one.

You have not wisdom more exact and perfect than hers which should lead her to give to you the stewardship of her means. She has developed a far better character than yourself, and has a better balanced mind than yourself. She can manage this means in her hands more wisely, more judiciously, and more to the glory of God than yourself. You are a man of extremes. You move by impulse and are most of the time more directly under the control of evil angels than the angels of God.—Letter 4, 1870.

Improper Motives—I need not tell you I deeply regret your marriage. You are not the man that can make your wife happy. You love yourself too well to be kind, attentive, patient, affectionate, and sympathizing. How tenderly you should now treat her whom you have married. How carefully you should study to make her not regret that she

has united her destiny with yours. God looks upon the course you have pursued in this matter, and you will be without excuse for the course you have taken. God reads your motives. You now have an opportunity to exhibit your true self, to demonstrate whether you were actuated by true love or deep, selfish interest in your marriage. You married, I have no doubt, thinking you would come in possession of property and have the handling of it as you pleased.

Importance of Love and Tenderness—You have no right to dictate to your wife as you would a child. You have not earned a valuable reputation of goodness that would require reverence. You need, considering your failures in the past, to take a humble position and divest yourself of a dignity you have not earned. You are too weak a man to require submission to your will without an appeal. You have a work to do to govern yourself....

You should never set yourself above your wife. She needs kindness and love, which will be reflected back to you again. If you expect her to

love you, you must earn this love by manifesting love and tenderness in your words and actions for her. You have in your keeping the happiness of your wife. Your course says to her, In order for you to be happy, you must yield your will up fully to mine; you must submit to do my pleasure. You have taken special delight in exercising your authority because you thought you could do so. But time will show that if you pursue the course your own temperament would lead you to do, you will not inspire in the heart of your wife love, but will wean her affections from you, and she will in the end despise that authority, the power of which she has never felt before in her married life. You are certainly making hard and bitter work for yourself, and you will reap what you are sowing.

A Mother's Responsibility to Her Child—I dare not do otherwise than speak to you plainly. The case demands it. How is the marriage of Sister Drake to you improving her condition? Not a whit; but your course is making her life a bitterness, her lot almost unbearable. I knew how it would be as soon as I heard of your marriage. She thought she

was to have one to help her take care of her boy, but you would tear the mother from her son, and require her to yield her parental care and affection for her son to you who have only your marriage to plead why this should be so. You have done nothing to earn this great sacrifice. You have not pursued a course to even gain her confidence. Yet you demand this great sacrifice, the separation of the mother from her son. You may plead that you understand the case, while we plead [that] you know but little about it. Instead of your feeling it to be your duty to be patient and affectionate, and judiciously manage the case of this her son, you take a course that a heartless, unfeeling tyrant would pursue.

I would advise the mother to move in the fear of God and not allow a comparative stranger to come in, claiming the title of husband, and separate her child from her affection and care. God has not released that mother from her responsibility because she has married you. You do not possess true love. You are not acquainted with the pure article. If you were, you would never have pursued

the course you have.—Letter 4, 1870.