

## Chapter 5

# **The Christian Spouse's Behavior**

**No Thought of Divorce**—If the wife is an unbeliever and an opposer, the husband cannot, in view of the law of God, put her away on this ground alone. In order to be in harmony with the law of Jehovah, he must abide with her, unless she chooses of herself to depart.—Letter 8, 1888.

**A Christian Wife's Obligations**—I have some things to say to you from the Lord.... The Lord has a work for you to do; it is not a public work, but a very important one, a work in your own home, to be true to your position as a wife and mother. No other can do this, your work.

The Spirit and the Word of God agree. Remembering this, let us read the words of inspiration from Jesus Christ through Paul to Titus. He is charged to speak “the things which become

sound doctrine: that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things: that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” [Titus 2:1-5].

**A Wife’s First Duty—Her Home**—With this Scripture before you, I ask, For what are you spending your time in Battle Creek? Has God called you to neglect your home? No, no. My sister, the Lord has shown me that you are mistaking your duty. Your husband needs you; your children need their mother. You have stepped out of the path where Jesus leads the way. He is saying to you, “Follow Me,” and He will lead you in your own home duties, which are now sadly neglected. The voice of the Lord has not bidden you to separate your interests from that of your husband and children. Your first duty is in the

home. The Spirit of the Lord has not given you a work, or qualified you to do a work, that is contrary to His own Word....

**Counsel to a Mother**—You have a great work, a sacred, holy calling to exemplify the Christian graces as a faithful wife and mother; to be lovable, patient, kind, yet firm, in your home life; to learn right methods and acquire tact for the training of your own little ones, that they may keep the way of the Lord. As a humble child of God, learn in the school of Christ; seek constantly to improve your powers to do the most perfect, thorough work at home, both by precept and example.

In this work you will have the help of the Lord; but if you ignore your duty as a wife and mother, and hold out your hands for the Lord to put another class of work in them, be sure that He will not contradict Himself; He points you to the duty you have to do at home. If you have the idea that some work greater and holier than this has been entrusted to you, you are under a deception. In neglecting your husband and children for what you suppose to

be religious duties, either to attend meetings or to work for others, to give Bible readings or to have messages for others, you are going directly contrary to the words of inspiration in the instruction of Paul to Titus. The religion of Christ never leads a wife and mother to do as you have done.

You may now cultivate the home-making qualities with good effect, for your children are of the age when they most need a mother. The restless spirit naturally inclines to mischief; the active mind, if left unoccupied with better things, will give heed to that which Satan may suggest. The children need the watchful eye of the mother. They need to be instructed, to be guided in safe paths, to be kept from vice, to be won by kindness, and be confirmed in well doing, by diligent training.

The Saviour discerns a value and dignity in every soul, because of the image of God which it bears. He died that your children might have the gift of eternal life. He looks upon them with divine compassion. Their souls may be saved unto eternal

life, and they are just as precious as the souls of others. The Lord has not called you to neglect your home and your husband and children. He never works in this way, and He never will. You have before your own door a little plot of ground to care for, and God will hold you responsible for this work which He has left in your hands. Through earnest prayer and study, you may become wise in your home, learning the different dispositions of your children and carefully noting their behavior. You may have at home a little school, of which you shall be the teacher. If you seek wisdom from the Lord to understand His way, and to keep it, He will lead you, not away from your home, but back to it.

**Poverty No Sin**—If you are one of those who are the light of the world, that light is to shine in your home. Poverty has been your lot, but this you could not help, and it was not sin. But your mind has been of that cast which has led you to view everything in too intense a light. Here you have lessons to learn at the feet of Jesus; you need to trust more to Jesus, and be less anxious; you need to have genuine faith in the promises of God. Yet

you are to be a laborer together with God, cultivating your mind, that you may bring to the education and training of your children a restful spirit, a loving heart, that you may imbue them with pure aspirations, [and] cultivate in them a love for things honest and pure and holy.

**God's Care for Children**—Never for a moment suppose that God has given you a work that will necessitate a separation from your precious little flock. Do not leave them to become demoralized by improper associations and to harden their hearts against their mother. This is letting your light shine in a wrong way altogether. You are making it more difficult for your children to become what God would have them and win heaven at last. God cares for them, and so must you if you claim to be His child.

In time past you have erred in having too great an anxiety for your children. Your trust has not been fully in God, and you have indulged them more than was for their good. And now you leave them to themselves. What sort of experience is

this? Certainly it has not God and truth for its source. You are offending God in claiming to be led by Him and yet neglecting your duty to your children....

**Rights of Husband and Children**—When we give ourselves unreservedly to the Lord, the simple, commonplace duties of home life will be seen in their true importance, and we shall perform them in accordance with the will of God. Oh, my sister, you may be bound about with poverty, your lot in life may be humble, but Jesus does not forsake you because of this, neither does He lead you to forsake your family for this or for any other cause. God has made you a trustee, a steward, in your home. Seek to educate yourself for this work, and He will be by your side to bless all your endeavors, that by and by, when the reckoning time for the administration of your trust shall come, He may say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Your husband has rights; your children have rights; and these must not be ignored by you.

Whether you have one talent or three or five, God has given you your work. Parents are fearfully neglectful of their home duties. They do not meet the Bible standard. But to those who forsake their homes, their companions, and children, God will not entrust the work of saving souls, for they have proved unfaithful to their holy vows. They have proved unfaithful to sacred responsibilities. God will not entrust to them eternal riches....

Letters have come from mothers, relating their trials at home and asking my counsel. One of these cases will serve to represent many. The husband and father is not a believer, and everything is made hard for the mother in the training of her children. The husband is a profane man, vulgar and abusive in his language to herself, and he teaches the children to disregard her authority. When she is trying to pray with them he will come in and make all the noise he can, and break out into cursing God and heaping vile epithets upon the Bible. She is so discouraged that life is a burden to her. What good can she do? What benefit is it to her children for her to remain at home? She has felt an earnest



desire to do some work in the Lord's vineyard, and has thought that it might be best to leave her family, rather than to remain while the husband and father is constantly teaching the children to disrespect and disobey her.

In such cases my advice would be, Mothers, whatever trials you may be called to endure through poverty, through wounds and bruises of the soul, from the harsh, overbearing assumption of the husband and father, do not leave your children; do not give them up to the influence of a godless father. Your work is to counteract the work of the father, who is apparently under the control of Satan.—Letter 28, 1890.

**Counsel to the Wife of an Unbelieving Husband**—We receive many letters soliciting advice. One mother says her husband is an unbeliever. She has children, but they are taught by the father to disrespect the mother. She is deeply burdened for her children. She does not know what course she can pursue. She then expresses her anxiety to do something in the cause of God, and

inquires if I think she has a duty to leave her family, if she is convinced she can do no good to them.

I would answer: My sister, I cannot see how you could be clear before the Lord and leave your husband and your children. I cannot think you would feel that you could do this yourself. The trials you may have may be of a very trying character. You may be often pained to the heart because disrespect is shown you, but I am sure that it must be your duty to care for your own children. This is your field where you have your appointed work. It may be rocky and discouraging soil to work, but you have a Companion in all your efforts to do your duty unflinchingly, conscientiously, notwithstanding all the discouraging circumstances. Jesus is your helper. Jesus came into our world to save lost and perishing souls, and you are to consider that in this work you are a laborer together with God.

**Home Trials for Jesus' Ear Only**—Do not shirk your responsibilities. Be a daily home

missionary. Not only teach your children from their babyhood, but train them. Keep a steady, firm hold upon your children. You must not only tell them what to do, but, to the very best of your ability, make their surroundings favorable and sow your precious seed in the love and spirit of Jesus. Because Satan uses the father of your children to counteract your work, do not be discouraged; do not give up the conflict. Do as you wish them to do. Treat your husband with kindness at all times and on all occasions, and bind your children to your heart with the cords of love. This is your work; this is the burden you have to bear. Talk not your home trials to anyone but Jesus; pour them into His ear.

Jesus “came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” [John 1:11-13].

**Value of a Christlike Life—Grace is not**

inherited. A very bad father may have a godly son; a Christian father a profligate son. Let mothers take up the burdens made doubly heavy for them by the course of the head of the household. This makes your work plain, to let your light shine in the household where Satan is at work to secure your children to himself. Shall he have them? Let the missionary spirit rise to the emergency and say, “No, no; my children, although they have a godless father, are the purchase of the blood of Christ. I am their mother. I will seek the Lord in faith, in humility, that He will not only save my children, but [also] their father, to repentance.” Talk not and plead not for the sympathy of your husband and your children, but simply live the life of Christ. In words, in spirit, in character, in meekness, in patience and forbearance, in cheerfulness, be a signpost pointing out the way, the path that leads heavenward.

**Be a witness for Christ**—Exemplify the strength of the Christian’s hope, which is cast into that within the veil. Reveal that the anchor holds you under all circumstances. Let your home be

made pleasant and cheerful. Jesus—you must rely on Jesus every moment. Draw your strength from Jesus. He will give you that which you ask in sincerity. If you seek Him with your whole heart, He will be found of you.

**Home Missionary Work by Mother**—God does not call mothers away from home missionary work which will leave their children under the control of influences that are demoralizing and ruinous to the soul. Are not her children in need of missionary labor? Are not her children worth earnest and prayerful effort? Shall she neglect home missionary work for a larger field? Let her try her skill in her own home—take up her appointed, God-given work. If she has utterly failed, it is because she has not had faith or may not have presented the truth and lived the truth as it is in Jesus. Let her, after years of apparent failure, try again other methods, seeking counsel of God. Present His promises on your knees before Him. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith,

nothing wavering” [James 1:5, 6].

### **Cheerfulness Better Than Complaining—**

Have you felt your lot was hard, and complained and murmured? Then as you received no help in this line, begin another course of action. Speak kindly; be cheerful. Because you have Jesus as your helper, break forth in songs of praise. When tempted, when reviled, revile not again; and labor with your children while there is one out of Christ. Sow the seed, the living seed, deep into the soil of the heart. Let your words be wisely chosen. Consider yourself as God’s appointed missionary, to be the light of your home.

Again I say, It is not like the works of God to call the mother away from her husband and from her children to engage in what she considers higher work. Take right hold of the duties lying directly in your path.

**Post of Duty at Home**—I am pained when I receive letters from mothers who have children inquiring, “Shall I leave my children to do

missionary work?” In the fear and love of God I say, Become a home missionary. Educate yourself in Bible ways and means, that you may be a successful worker in your own home, for, you see, they need to be saved, for they are sinners. Do not forsake your post of duty because of the unpleasantness of it. There are many living martyrs today who suffer in silence, who trust in God when they are abused with the tongue and who are tantalized, who are hurt and wounded by coarse, harsh denunciations, whose lot seems to be to live and to suffer, receiving comfort only from Jesus who is the Source of their strength. Such souls are missionaries. They are Christ’s noble ones, and their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Remember, Jesus knows it all—every sorrow, every grief; He will not leave you to sink, for His arms are beneath you. You may be an enlightenment to a whole neighborhood if you are indeed patient, kind, forbearing. In this, my sister, consider your questions answered.—Ms 9, 1868.

**Secure in God’s Promises**—It is essential for

you to put your trust in God. I am sorry that in the place where you live you have so little encouragement in religious lines. There are many who will give you words of sympathy, but they do not bring comfort to the longing, hungry soul, which is bruised and wounded and which needs the healing balm. Never forget that your Saviour lives and reigns. Your grasp on the divine promises must be strong. Human teachers in Christian faith are few.

You may have felt almost discouraged, and may have yielded to the temptation to neglect your religious duties, to shun the cross-bearing life of a Christian; you may have consented to be governed by worldly principles and sentiments; you may have neglected prayer, neglected to confess Christ. If you have done this, do so no more. Remember the words of Christ, “Ye are My witnesses.” Your light may have been flickering, but, thank God, it is not too late, even now, to acknowledge the claims the Lord has upon you.

**Trust in the Merits of Christ—**You are the



property of Jesus Christ. He has purchased you at an infinite cost to Himself. His you are by creation and by redemption. Although to you your hope of heaven may be at times uncertain, yet you know in whom to trust. Your hope of heaven is found alone in the merits of Jesus Christ. You may now gain a living experience in the things of God. Looking unto Jesus by faith, trusting in His merits, doubts of His love will vanish as dew before the morning sun.

**Steadfast in Surrender to Christ**—Let your surrender to God be full and complete; wait not one day or hour. Make the most now of your probationary time, be it longer or shorter. Just as soon as you cast yourself unreservedly upon Jesus Christ, He accepts you. Do not in any way conceal the fact that you have chosen truth and all the inconveniences that this choice will involve....

Never, under any circumstances, even in appearance, consent to leave the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. Be steadfast, immovable to Christian obligations and to your

God....

**Sabbathkeeping With the Angels**—I urge upon you to fulfill your Christian obligations to God. If there is no one within a hundred miles of you who observes the Sabbath, the whole universe of heaven is in sympathy with you. Christ your Saviour and the heavenly angels are round about you. If you will call upon God in every time of need, He will be your helper. Practice the truth in your home. “Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord.”

**The Witness of a Christian Mother**—But I am not able to write you more. If you love the father of your children, live the life of a Christian at all times and under all circumstances. If you had done this, God would have worked in your behalf. But when you please yourself, and displease your heavenly Father, how can the Lord work in your behalf?

May the Lord help you, my poor, dear, tempted one, to choose the right way just now. May He help you to give your husband and children a testimony

that you are a Christian in practice, that you love God, that you love Jesus, who gave His life for you. And as your day is, so shall your strength be. [See Deuteronomy 33:25.]—Letter 76, 1896.

**The Winning of a Non-Christian Companion**—My sister, our Saviour is a present help in every time of need. Do not distrust Him. Do not take your troubles to human beings; take them to the Lord. You may think that others should sympathize with you in your downcast feelings, but you will sometimes be disappointed. Jesus never disappoints one who comes to Him for help.

Are you one that makes mistakes? Go to Jesus, and ask Him to forgive you, and then believe that He does. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 John 1:9]. Ask the Lord to pardon your errors, then rejoice in Him. It will not help you in the least to keep mourning over your defects. Say, “Lord, I cast my helpless soul on Thee, and Thee alone. I will not worry, because Thou hast said, ‘Ask, and ye shall receive.’”

Believe that you do receive. Believe that your Saviour is full of compassion, full of tender pity and love. Let not little mishaps trouble you. Small mistakes may be ordered by the Lord to save you from making larger mistakes.

**No Argument With Satan**—Act your part in helping yourself, as all must do who would be blessed. Believe that Christ helps you. Refuse to speak a word of unbelief. When the enemy tells you that the Lord has forsaken you, tell him that you know He has not, for He declares, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Jesus says, “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out” [John 6:37]. Then, my sister, dismiss the enemy. Tell him that you will not dishonor God by doubting His mercy, His goodness, His love. Never argue with Satan, for he has wonderful powers of deception. If, when he went to Adam and Eve, they had kept repeating the words of God, saying “He hath said, and I believe His word, I will not distrust Him,” they would not have been overcome.

**Singing Better Than Bemoaning**—Instead of bemoaning your weakness and talking unbelief and feeling that you are hardly used, begin to sing. Talk of the mercy and love of God. To all who labor and are heavy laden Christ gives the invitation, “Come unto Me, ... and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” [Matthew 11:28-30]. This is the lesson that Christ desires you to learn, and in learning it you will find rest.

**Gentle Words**—When discouraging words are spoken to you, do not reply unless you can return a pleasant answer. When you are tried and tempted by unkind words, do not retaliate. Say to yourself, “I will not disappoint my Saviour.” Every man who is a Christian is a gentleman; and every woman who is a Christian is a gentlewoman. The law of kindness is ever on the lips of the Christian woman. She utters no hasty words. To speak gentle words when you feel irritated will bring sunshine

into your heart, and will make your path more smooth. A school girl, in answer to a question, said, “Meek people are those who give soft answers to rough questions.” Christ says, “Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.” They will be fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven, because they are willing to be taught.

You say that your husband is not yet converted to the truth. Show him in your life the advantage of taking Christ at His word. By patience, forbearance, and kindness you may win your husband to the Saviour.

**Life Not a Romance but a Reality**—In the power of God’s grace you may obtain most precious victories. You are not to treat your life as a romance, but as a reality. You are to be a laborer together with God in forming a character that He can approve. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Does the charge end there? No, no, thank God! “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” [Philippians 2:12, 13].

You are to be a co-worker with Him in the saving of your soul. You are to will to do the will of God. Then do not spend your time and strength in murmuring, in talking unbelief and finding fault with God. Encourage confidence in Him. Speak kindly of Him. Honor Him who “so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” [John 3:16].

**Discharge of Home Duties**—Be sure to perform your smallest duties in the fear and love of God, with faithfulness and cheerfulness. God declares, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” [Luke 16:10]. Faithfully discharge your home duties, and then leave yourself with God, saying, “I commit the keeping of my soul to Him. I will not take the ordering of my life out of His hands. I will leave myself in His keeping.”

Study the life that Christ lived while on this earth. He did not disregard the simplest, smallest

duty that fell to Him. Perfection marked all that He did. Look to Jesus for help, and this will enable you to perform your daily duties with the grace and dignity of one who is seeking for a crown of immortal life....

All that God expects of you and all other Christians is that you live out your profession. Show that Christ's word is true, that He can keep human beings from sin. Conform your life to His pure, beautiful, holy life. Obey His commandments. This will bring you practical godliness.

**Only One Life**—Do not dwell upon the hardships of the Christian life. Do not talk of your trials, for if you do, you will become more and more inclined to complain of God. Talk of the love of Christ, bringing it into your heart and life. Be thankful that the Lord has spared you, that you have not been cut off without having gained a preparation for entrance into the heavenly kingdom, where there is no sin, no sorrow. You have only one life in which to perfect a Christian



character. If you reveal the grace of God in your character, if the law of kindness is ever on your lips, if you constantly thank the Lord for His goodness to you, you are preparing to praise Him in the home above.—Letter 72, 1903.

### **The Husband's Wishes Regarding Food—**

The day we visited you we appreciated much the bountiful repast prepared for us. But you need to study how to prepare nutritious food in the most simple way. Your husband's wishes regarding the preparation of food should be respected, and still you may study to prepare appetizing dishes in as simple and healthful a way as possible, so that the fine nerves of the brain will not become weakened and paralyzed, making you excitable, nervous, and easily provoked....

My dear sister, you stand in a responsible position in your home. Hold the reins of government with a wise, even hand. Do not allow the members of your family to lose their love and respect for you. Bind them to your heart with the silken cords of love. This you can do if you live

close to Jesus. By beholding Him you will be changed into His image, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. God loves you; He loves your husband, and He is seeking to draw him to Himself. He desires to take his attention off mere earthly enterprises, and fix them on the eternal riches.—Letter 145, 1900.