

Chapter 7

Admonition to Walter's Second Mother-in-law

Dear Sister: [Written August 26, 1895, to the mother of Walter C's second wife.] In regard to the marriage of your daughter with Walter C, I see where you are troubled. But the marriage took place with your consent, and your daughter, knowing all about him, accepted him as her husband; and now I can see no reason why you should carry any burden over this matter. Your daughter loves Walter C, and it may be that this marriage is in the order of God in order that both Walter and your daughter may have a richer Christian experience and be built up where they are deficient. Your daughter has pledged herself to Walter C in marriage, and to break her marriage vows would be far from right. She cannot now disannul her obligations to him.

You say that Walter was engaged to some

young lady in Topeka. I cannot speak concerning this, for I have not heard Walter's reasons for breaking his engagement, if he did so. But I had a personal knowledge of his former relations with his first wife, Laura. Walter loved Laura far too well, for she was not worthy of his regard. He did all in his power to help her, and sought in every possible way to retain her as his wife. He could not have done more than he did do. I pleaded with her, and tried to show her the inconsistency of her course, and begged her not to obtain a divorce; but she was determined and willful and stubborn, and would have her own way. While she lived with him she sought to secure all the money possible from him, but she would not treat him kindly as a wife should treat her husband.

A Right to Happiness—Walter did not put his wife away. She left him, and put him away, and married another man. I see nothing in the Scripture that forbids him to marry again in the Lord. He has a right to the affection of a woman who, knowing his physical defect, shall choose to give him her love. The time has come when a sterile condition is

not the worst condition to be in. I see wives who have borne large families of children, and they are unable to give them proper care. These women do not have time to recover from the weakness of bearing one child before they are with child again.

Many of these women are the wives of poor men who have not sufficient means to support their increasing families, and I am at the present time helping them to feed and clothe and educate their children. But notwithstanding their inability to support their offspring, children are brought into the world as fast as possible. But God is not in this kind of doing.

The husbands of these women seem to think that their wives are for no other purpose than to gratify their lustful passions. Children are brought into the world so rapidly, responsibilities accumulate so speedily, that the wives and mothers have no chance for the cultivation of their minds, no time or opportunity to devote to religious work. God is not glorified in such families.

Many of our young women missionaries marry, and in a few months' time they have children to care for and are taken out of the missionary field. You may rejoice that your daughter will not be thus hindered in her work for the Master. She can accompany her husband in his travels and be a help to him, and when she is left at home she can work for the Lord as though she were unmarried. This is my view of the matter.

I have confidence in Walter and believe that he is a Christian. I had occasion to know something of the temper of his spirit when he was going through his trial with his first wife. She tried to extract money from him when she saw she had the advantage of him, and he was willing to do tenfold more for her than it was her right to expect, or his duty to do. He had sore and hard trials on her account. I have tried to help him all that I could.

I have tried to enable Laura to see and understand her duty. But as she has taken the course that she has, I cannot see that this new union should be disturbed. It is a serious matter to part a

man and his wife. There is no Scriptural ground upon which to take such a step in this case. He did not leave her, she left him. He did not marry again until she had obtained a divorce. When Laura divorced herself from Walter he suffered most keenly, and it was not until Laura had married another man that Walter married again. The one he has chosen, I feel certain, will be a help to him, and he can be a help to her.

Walter is not perfect in character—He has some objectionable characteristics. He has been entrusted with means, and he does not always put it to the very best account. Sometimes he is very lavish of his money, and sometimes very narrow in its use, and severely economical. But a good God-fearing woman at his side will be able to advise him not to move impulsively, and counsel him to place his money in the treasury of the Lord.

Walter is in a responsible position, but if the members of the family to which he has allied himself in marriage will prove true to him, they will influence him to become a wise steward of his

Lord's goods. Then he will bestow his means as if in the view of the whole universe of heaven. He will not participate in any unlawful scheme for making money but will move with an eye single to the glory of God. He will eschew all petty tricks and avoid all mean, dishonest devices, and will do nothing that will [in] any way work against the cultivation of true piety. He will realize that all his business transactions lie within the domain of God.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the steward is to trade with his Lord's goods, and that he is handling a sacred responsibility. The Bible requires that men buy and sell and transact all their business with as keen a sense of their religious obligation as they have when offering up petitions to their heavenly Father, asking for strength and grace. The Lord has not left anyone to do as he pleases with his goods, and to give as impulse shall dictate, or as friends may demand. The money he handles is not his, and is not to be expended unnecessarily, for the vineyard of the Lord is to be worked, and its working requires the expenditure of means.

Now is our day of trust, and the day of reckoning is yet to come. The Lord has entrusted means to His stewards to be used wisely, for all are moral agents and are required to bear responsibilities. Our varied trusts are given in proportion to our ability to use, but we are not to use God's means merely for the gratification of selfish desires, and as inclination may dictate.

Walter C has failed at times in the past in handling his Lord's goods, and has not always considered whether he was using the money entrusted to him in a way that would please his Master and advance the cause of truth. He must give an account of how he disposes of the means given in trust to him. He cannot study his own will in this matter. He must seek wisdom from God. I do not desire Walter to bestow one dollar in this destitute field unwillingly, for unwilling offerings are not accompanied with the blessing of God. I have no urging to do and do not wish to force money from anyone even for the work of God.

God has a work to do, and I am using all the means that I can spare, and provide myself with home, livelihood, and common conveniences. There are others who gladly and willingly help me in this part of the Lord's vineyard. If all do their duty according to the measure of their responsibilities, the amount entrusted to them will be doubled. He who gives back to God His own will be honored for his fidelity and will hear the Master say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." But it is not proper for persons to give just as the notion may strike them. Christ has a right to all that we have.

You must not be surprised that Walter does not feel free to help your son. If your son has not appreciated the opportunities and privileges he has had, if he has misapplied his own powers, and wasted his God-given talents, the question is, will he do better upon a second trial? Has he learned the lesson that God wills he should learn? There are many precious souls who would be so glad of a chance to obtain an education, who will not sow wild oats, but will use every capability in obtaining

knowledge with which to do good.

I am surprised that Walter did not at once accede to your request, as you were the mother of his wife whom he loves. It may be that he is learning caution, and is taking the lesson of the past to heart. He has helped many whom it was not his duty to help. You should take his refusal to give you money as an evidence of his sincerity in that he will not compromise himself to win your favor. I am sure that Walter means to do his duty. The mistakes he made in bestowing his money on his first wife's family have probably taught him not to repeat the experiment. I hope that his refusal to give you means to enable your son to go to Battle Creek or to Union College will not cause you to become prejudiced against him. It should have no such influence.

If your daughter loves Walter C, I see nothing in the Word of God that would require her to separate from him. As you have asked my advice, I will freely give it to you. If Walter had given you the money you asked for, would it not have been

something like trying to buy your favor? Would it not be much more fitting for your son to go to work and secure money for himself, and educate himself, rather than to be dependent upon anybody for such a favor? There is such a thing as giving unwise help to our children.

Those who work their way through college appreciate their advantages more than those who are provided with them at someone else's expense, for they know their cost. We must not carry our children until they become helpless burdens. Educate your son to be diligent, able to sustain himself, and to help others.

God is the proprietor of the universe. Every man, woman, and child, with all the time and talents that have been bestowed upon them, belongs to God. He has given ability to men that they may use it to His glory and thus have increased ability, wisdom, and understanding. God has a claim upon every soul, and we are responsible agents, and should give Him constant service. Body, soul, and spirit, we should

consecrate ourselves to His service, and do those things that will forward His cause in the earth. We are to do His will upon the earth. Our pleasure is not to be consulted, nor permitted to be the governing impulse.

Now, my dear sister, I will send you this letter, and also forward a copy of it to Walter C. I desire to act the part of a mother to him. In times of affliction he has needed a mother. Every penny he has placed in my hands has been used for the saving of perishing souls, and in time to come may it be his experience to hear from the lips of the Master, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

I am truly sorry that you have taken upon yourself unnecessary burdens. Do you not see that in separating Walter and your daughter, you would create two evils instead of curing one? Your daughter has married Walter, and there is no reason why she should be separated from him. You have no just excuse for desiring them to cease living and working together as man and wife. You may give

publicity to the evil reports that may come to you, and be the means of making yourself, your daughter, and her husband miserable. Let these two, as children of God, unite their interests as their marriage vows require them to do, let them consecrate themselves to God to do His will, to be vessels unto honor, meet for the Master's use.

On your part, act as a faithful mother should. Be wise to counsel and help them in every way that lies in your power. Knowing that you all belong to God, deal justly and lovingly with each other. Be frank, be kind, cultivate whole-souled integrity, and you will win a crown of life that fadeth not away. Have perfect trust in God, and He will bless you, and give you peace and rest.—Letter 50, 1895.