

RELATIONSHIPS

A YOUNG ADULT'S ENCOUNTER WITH ELLEN WHITE *. . . ON RELATIONSHIPS*

I was involved in a relationship that was not right. Some things are “gray issues,” but there are times we really do know that something is wrong. I had the “definitely wrong” conviction about my recent relationship with my boyfriend. Yes, he was a Christian, and I even had some friends who told me we were good for each other. But deep down I knew that this was not where God was leading me.

There were other clues, too, such as the fact that the people closest to me—my family and longtime friends—didn’t approve. They were impressed (as I was but didn’t admit to them) that it was not God’s plan for me to be in this relationship. Foolishly, I listened to those who told me what I wanted to hear because this was what I wanted. I didn’t leave God. I kept praying and tricking myself into thinking this was His will, even though I knew it wasn’t, because I thought this was “true love.”

*During this same time I was taking a marriage and family psychology class at one of our Seventh-day Adventist universities. Two of the books the professor used were *The Adventist Home and Messages to Young People*. This was my first time reading these books all the way through. With each page I turned, I was convicted of the truth that I already knew. I was forced to look beyond our dating relationship and all the mushy romantic stuff that I loved to*

what really mattered. Was this relationship to God's glory? No. I could answer that quite easily.

I'll be honest. I never intended it to go the way it did. You know how easy it is once you're "in love" with someone to let your physical relationship go farther than you want it to go.

I swore I would never do that. Even if you don't have sex, you very easily can go beyond what is pure and holy when you are together. Ellen White knew this. That's why, as I read her messages, my conscience was pricked. She didn't skip words that needed to be said, such as "Don't be sneaky," "Don't ignore your parents' counsel," "Don't be immodest, impure, or immoral," and "Out of control."

I may have scoffed before or thought that I was somehow "stronger" than temptation, but ultimately I found myself in sin. God told me once again through Mrs. White that my physical relationship had gone too far. Through her He also told me that He loves me still and wants to help me start over.

The writings that God gave to His prophet will never be outdated, even if they seem difficult to follow through on or, at times, even impractical. I know from experience that it's hard to actually carry out God's guidelines, but He offers us strength. It's easy to read those promises—or even say them—but when you are right there in the relationship, what do you do? You read something, you're convicted, and then what?

Even though I messed up so many times, the thing that brought me to victory in this relationship (having it end) was listening, and then making a choice. One practical principle I gleaned by reading Ellen White's counsel on relationships is Don't stay alone together at night. It's easy to rationalize, but eventually God spoke to me through Ellen White and through His Word about things that needed to happen to bring this relationship under His control.

No matter what society does, the wisdom about honoring God in our relationships by practicing purity is always applicable. Ellen White's counsel on relationships helped me finally see that.

—Stephanie, age 21

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It was my junior year in college when the love of my life told me that he no longer cared for me. My heart broke. I was certain no one had ever hurt as I did, and no one ever would again. I was still ill from a recent hospitalization and struggling with grades and career choice. God seemed far away.

One night, in total discouragement, I sat at my desk, ready to cry, when my hand, resting on my throat, felt the steady pulse of my heart. Instantly a favorite quote from Ellen White came to mind: "Every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom 'we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:28).⁸²

For a moment I sat in awe, feeling my pulse and hearing "I love you, I love you, I love you" whispered beneath my fingers from the God of the universe, knowing I was loved.

My sweetheart didn't come back, and I still struggled with my health, but I knew, overwhelmingly, that at least I did not face these things alone.

—Anne, age 30

A YOUNG ADULT'S ENCOUNTER WITH ELLEN WHITE**. . . ON RELATIONSHIPS**

Ever since I was 12 I have had the opposite gender on my mind, spending hours talking with my friends about who I was infatuated with at the moment. Until I started reading Ellen White, however, I did not fully realize what a high ideal God has for dating and marriage. I read Messages to Young People when a friend recommended it to me, and realized how inadequate was my view of a romantic relationship. A marriage and family class in high school required me to read Ellen White's principles for relationships and cemented my desire to follow God's plan for dating standards.

As a result, I am extremely thankful to God for the messages

He gave Ellen White that have helped me make moral choices that bring peace, not regret.

Ellen White has especially influenced my relationships throughout college as I gave my future love life to God. I am now seriously dating the most wonderful man, and Letters to Young Lovers has been invaluable to me in evaluating our relationship. As Ellen White intimates, I can look back and see God choosing for me, and leading my boyfriend and me closer to Him and to each other. We have been encouraged greatly by Mrs. White's suggestions, definitely finding in God a sure counselor, and in our parents wonderful confidants and advisors.

I am reading ideas in Ellen White's books about what a woman should look for in a husband and the true love that God promises to weave in our hearts, and I am finding that God is fulfilling His Word more and more in my life. I praise God for speaking to me through Ellen White's words of wisdom about relationships. I am finding exquisite joy in following where He leads.

—Rahel, age 23

A YOUNG ADULT'S ENCOUNTER WITH ELLEN WHITE

. . . ON RELATIONSHIPS

I am indebted to God for His messages to me through for His holy Word and Mrs. White's writings, and to my family for their counsel in the area of romantic relationships. In Patriarchs and Prophets, in the chapter titled "The Marriage of Isaac," Mrs. White lays out the principle that has led to so much joy and fulfillment in my own relationship. That principle? Isaac believed God Himself would direct in the choice of his wife-to-be. His simple trust is my inspiration and my model.

In my early years of dating I would have been wiser to follow Isaac's example of trust in his parents regarding his future spouse. However, my parents' prayers for me paid off when God used my mistakes to bring me to the realization that I must leave my relationship hopes and dreams completely in His hands.

God is teaching me through His biblical principles and in Mrs. White's writings concerning the matter of my future wife and the importance of both of us being totally committed to Him. Because of our unconditional commitment to Him, and our faith that God Himself is directing all our choices, my girlfriend and I relish searching together for relationship principles, in both the Bible and in Ellen White's writings. The trust we're learning as we see God's providence and direction has allowed us to experience increasing joy in the freedom and purity of His holy law.

Ellen White's writings have been an invaluable guiding light in the formation of my "philosophy of relationships."

—Kirk, age 23

SCRIPTURE

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22).

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14).

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God. . . . For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).

Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no pro-

vision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Romans 13:13, 14).

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God (Matthew 5:8).

For your maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer (Isaiah 54:5).

So the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 51:11).

ELLEN G. WHITE LETTER 51, 1894

Norfolk Villa, Prospect Street

Granville, New South Wales, Australia

August 9, 1894

Dear Nellie:

I am thankful to God that you love the truth and that you love Jesus. I am anxious that you should press your way forward and upward in order that you shall reach the standard of Christian character that is revealed in the Word of God. Let the Word of God be your guidebook that in everything you may be molded in conduct and character according to its requirements.

You are the Lord's property; He created you and He redeemed you. You may be a light in your home and a positive influence. When the truth of God is in the heart, its saving influence will be felt by everyone in the house. You have a sacred responsibility, one that requires you to keep your soul pure by consecrating yourself to be wholly the Lord's.

Your friends who are totally opposed to spiritual things are not under the leadership of Christ but under the black banner of the prince of darkness. To associate with those who neither respect nor love God—unless you associate with them for the purpose of winning them to Jesus—will be a detriment to your spirituality. If you cannot change their attitudes, their influence will corrupt and taint your

own faith. It's good to be kind to these persons, but not good for you to continually try to be with them and do the things they do; for if you choose the atmosphere that surrounds them, you will forfeit the companionship of Jesus.

From the light that the Lord has given, I warn you that you are in danger of being deceived by the enemy. You are in danger of choosing your own way and of not following the counsel of God and not walking in obedience to His will. The Holy One has given rules for the guidance of every person so that no one need miss their way. These directions mean everything to us, for they form the standard to which every son and daughter of Adam should conform.

You are just entering upon womanhood, and if you seek Jesus, you will grow in grace, become wiser by experience, and as you advance from light to greater light you will become happier. Remember your life belongs to Jesus, and that you are not to live for yourself alone.

Shun those who are irreverent. Shun one who is lazy; shun the one who scoffs about sacred things. Avoid becoming close friends with those who use profanity or who are addicted to even one glass of alcohol. Don't fall for the proposals of a man who has no realization of his responsibility to God. The pure truth which sets you apart for a holy purpose will give you courage to cut yourself loose from even a handsome, caring man whom you know does not love and respect God and knows nothing about the principles of true rightdoing. We should always be patient with a friend's failings and with his ignorance, but never with his degrading habits.

Be cautious every step that you take; you need Jesus at every step. Your life is too precious to be treated as of little worth. Calvary testifies to you of your value. Consult the Word of God in order to know how you should live your life that was purchased for you at such immense cost. As a child of God you are permitted to marry only in the Lord.

Be sure that you do not follow your own heart alone, but make choices based on your respect for God.

If believers associate with unbelievers for the purpose of winning them to Christ, they will witness for Christ, and then withdraw in order to breathe again in a pure and holy atmosphere. When you are with unbelievers, remember that you are a representative of Jesus Christ; don't speak shallow and superficial words or participate in cheap conversation. Keep in mind the value of every person. Remember that it is your privilege and your duty to be working together with God in every possible way. You are not to lower yourself to the same level as that of unbelievers, and joke and laugh at crude or vulgar conversation.

The Lord will help you and, if you trust Him, will bring you up to a high standard. Through the grace of Christ you can make right use of your spiritual gifts and become an agent for good in winning persons to Jesus. Every talent you have should be used on the right side.

My dear young friend, I have written to you because I love you, and I urge you to hear my words. I have more to write to you when I can find time.

With Christian love,
Ellen White⁸³

ELLEN G. WHITE LETTER 23, 1886

Great Grimsby, England
September 23, 1886

Dear Rolf:

While at Basel I had some conversations with Edith in regard to your attentions to her. I asked her if she were sure she loves you well enough to marry you. She answered that she wasn't quite certain. I told her she should really know what she was doing, that she should give no encouragement

to the attentions of any young man, showing him preference, unless she loved him. . . .

I told her she should consider the goal of a marriage with you, whether by such a step you could both glorify God, whether you would be more spiritual, and whether your lives would be more useful. Marriages that are impulsive and selfishly planned generally do not result well, but often turn out miserable failures.

I had reason to think that she doesn't enjoy household tasks, and I knew you should have a wife who could make your home happy. I asked her if she had any experience in household management. I asked her these questions because it had been presented to me that she needed special education in practical duties of life, but that she really had no interest in those things.

Now, Rolf, I cannot say that it is my business to say that you should not marry Edith, but I will say that I have an interest in you. Here are things that should be considered: Will the one you marry bring happiness to your home? Is Edith financially stable, or will she, if married, not only use up all her own earnings but all of yours to gratify vanity, a love of appearance? Are her principles correct on this subject?

I do not think Edith knows what self-denial is. If she had the opportunity she would find ways to spend even more money than she has done. With her, selfish spending has never been overcome, and this natural self-indulgence has become a part of her life. She desires an easy, fun time.

I must speak plainly. I know, Rolf, that should you marry her you would be mated but not matched. There would be something missing in the one you make your life partner. And as far as Christian devotion and spiritual life is concerned, that can never grow where so great selfishness possesses the soul.

I am writing to you, Rolf, just as I would write to my

son. There is a great and important work lying just before us, and the part we will act in this world depends wholly upon our aims and purposes in life. We may be following impulse. You have the qualities in you to make you a useful man, but if you follow inclination, this strong current of stubbornness will sweep you away. Set a high goal and focus on reaching it.

Let your ruling purpose be to grow to a complete man in Christ Jesus. In Christ you can have courage to make a difference; without Christ you can do nothing as you should. You have a determination to achieve your goals. This is not an objectionable feature in your character if all your powers are surrendered to God. Please, think about this: you don't have the freedom to be an impulsive lover. Christ has purchased you with a price that is infinite. You are His property, and in all your plans you must take this into your thinking.

Especially in your marriage planning, be careful to get a partner who will stand shoulder to shoulder with you in spiritual growth.

Rolf, I want you to consider all these things. God help you to pray over this matter. Angels are watching this struggle. I leave you with these things to consider and decide for yourself.

Ellen White⁸⁴

(For additional reading on this subject, we recommend *Messages to Young People*, *Letters to Young Lovers*, and *The Adventist Home*.)

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What two or three basic human needs are satisfied by a Christian marriage relationship?
2. Identify several biblical principles that should lead in the choice of a life companion.

3. What do you think it means to be “mated, but not matched”? (See p. 77.)
4. How will the commitment to sexual purity before marriage increase personal happiness afterward?