

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(33) Home Influences (pages 388-394)

Summary:

The focus of this chapter is on the “atmosphere” of the family. It can be a place of cheerfulness, courtesy, love, happiness and peace.

Thoughts:

While the mother is again the focus of this chapter, there is considerable focus also on the father and how the relationship of mother and father affects the atmosphere of the home.

Young children need companionship and rarely can enjoy themselves alone. The mother, therefore, needs to spend a great deal of time with them, enter into their feelings, and direct their amusements and employments. By patient, watchful love she can turn their minds in the right direction and guard them against becoming dependent and self-absorbed. If children don't find companionship in the family, they will look elsewhere for it, and mind and character may be endangered there. (388-389)

Mothers must avoid becoming so busy with home duties (particularly extra sewing in pursuit of fashion) that they handle the children in an arbitrary fashion and don't give them the companionship, even-handedness and direction they need. (389-390)

The father is to be the law-maker of the household, enforcing the sterner virtues of energy, courage, diligence and practical usefulness, with an eye to God's Word (such a sentence can be abused, so explore with caution). But he must avoid discouraging the children. He is to combine affection with authority and sympathy with firmness and restraint. He is to particularly cultivate friendship with his son. And no matter how stressful employment becomes, he is to always enter the home with smiles and pleasant words. He is also the priest of the family, who leads in family worship. (390-393) Strict distinction of parenting roles was part of the culture in the Victorian era. Some of this language comes off uncomfortably in today's world, but the idea of parents playing “good cop/bad cop” roles does connect today, although maybe not so strongly gender related as expressed here. Today women are expected to be more assertive and men more nurturing than was the case in the late 19th Century.

The relationship between husband and wife is also critical to how the children turn out. At the root of parental guidance is gaining the victory over self. That includes studying each other's happiness and never failing in the small courtesies that brighten the life. They should be united in their child raising and not make the work more difficult for each other. The children need to see that the parents love them and will do all in their power to make each other and the children happy. (393-394) Parenting is challenging under the best of circumstances and parents need all the encouragement they can get.

Under the wise and loving guidance of a true home, evil and other companionships will not attract the children. (394)

At least three realities of today's home are not addressed in this counsel and make it difficult to carry out. First, it does not address a home in which the mother is often gone in pursuit of income or the mission of the church (though Ellen White's home was exactly like that, she does not offer that kind of home as an option). And it also does not address a home with

media options such as television and the internet. And today mother's spends next to no time at all in the making of clothes, a major issue in the chapter and related ones. How does the counsel of this chapter apply to today's home?

Science today strongly supports the importance of structure and calm in the lives of children, particularly those with ADD or autism.

Something not expressed in this chapter, but consistent with Ellen White's counsel elsewhere, is that in situations where parents are uncertain as to the best course of action toward children it is best to err on the side of mercy, love, cheerfulness and courtesy rather than authority, firmness and restraint (where one has to choose).

Quotable Quotes:

"The home should be to the children the most attractive place in the world, and the mother's presence should be its greatest attraction. Children have sensitive, loving natures. They are easily pleased and easily made unhappy. By gentle discipline, in loving words and acts, mothers may bind their children to their hearts." (388)

"The father should enforce in his family the sterner virtues--energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. And what he requires of his children he himself should practice, illustrating these virtues in his own manly bearing." (391)

"In a sense the father is the priest of the household, laying upon the family altar the morning and evening sacrifice. But the wife and children should unite in prayer and join in the song of praise. In the morning before he leaves home for his daily labor, let the father gather his children about him and, bowing before God, commit them to the care of the Father in heaven. When the cares of the day are past, let the family unite in offering grateful prayer and raising the song of praise, in acknowledgment of divine care during the day." (392-393)

"Home should be a place where cheerfulness, courtesy, and love abide; and where these graces dwell, there will abide happiness and peace. Troubles may invade, but these are the lot of humanity. Let patience, gratitude, and love keep sunshine in the heart, though the day may be ever so cloudy. In such homes angels of God abide." (393)

"Parents, let your children see that you love them and will do all in your power to make them happy. If you do so, your necessary restrictions will have far greater weight in their young minds." (394)

"Brought up under the wise and loving guidance of a true home, children will have no desire to wander away in search of pleasure and companionship. Evil will not attract them. The spirit that prevails in the home will mold their characters; they will form habits and principles that will be a strong defense against temptation when they shall leave the home shelter and take their place in the world." (394)

Tweets of Healing:

The home should be to the children the most attractive place in the world. (388)

If children don't find companionship in the family, they will look elsewhere for it. (388-389)

What the father requires of his children, he should himself practice. (391)

Regardless of business perplexities, the father should enter his home with smiles and pleasant words. (392)

Let the husband and wife study each other's happiness, never failing in the small

courtesies and kindly acts. (393)

Where cheerfulness, courtesy, and love abide there will be happiness and peace. (393)

At the root of parental guidance is gaining the victory over self. (393-394)

Parents should be united in their child raising and not make the work more difficult for each other. (393-394)

Parents, let your children see that you love them and will do all in your power to make them happy. (394)