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Truth Is Timeless

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

If you find yourself sharing information with someone who is not part of the problem or the solution, or if you are seeking information about a personal issue where you are neither part of the problem or the solution, ask yourself, "Why?"

Buried beneath volumes of contemporary writers' words of wisdom, valuable advice and research findings on how to build happy and successful partnerships, remains the counsel of Ellen G. White. In her book, *The Ministry of Healing*, published in 1905, there is a gem of a chapter: "The Builders of the Home." Ellen points couples to the family tie which she says is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any on Earth. She writes, "Around every family there is a sacred circle that should be kept unbroken. Within this circle no other person has a right to come" (p. 362).

A young woman, in her first year of marriage, recently told me of a dilemma she faces at lunchtime at her place of employment. During breaks and while eating lunch, her coworkers discuss their spouses in less-than-respectful ways. They joke and share negative things about their husbands and even their children. Becoming more and more uncomfortable with this kind of conversation, she admits it has actually shaken her faith in her own husband and their marriage. I suggest that these women are venting their frustrations in a "safe place" and are breaking what Ellen identified as a sacred circle.



as well, stating that she "had no right to enlist your sympathy as she has. She is more at fault than yourself in going to you with her family troubles" (*Manuscript #1263*).

Interestingly, Ellen wrote of the sacred circle many years earlier. In a compilation of counsels given to Adventist families throughout Ellen's years of ministry, titled *The Adventist Home*, the chapter "A Sacred Circle" contains excerpts from 11 manuscripts and letters, dating back to the mid-1880s. In a letter written in June 1863, from Otsego, Michigan, Ellen shared her concern for Brother Day who was overly involved with a woman, Sister Johnson, who eventually divorced her husband. Ellen's counsel is clear: "You moved unwisely in interesting yourself so much. ... You were stepping over that sacred circle which should debar you from the family of Sister Johnson, and preserve you exclusively to your own family." Her counsel is clear about the woman

your spouse, not involving yourself in harmless joking or complaining at the expense of your spouse or other family members. The other side is not getting involved in the troubles of others when you are not part of the problem or the solution. It's really a simple equation. You are either part of the problem or solution, or you are not. It's not complicated! Sadly, some use the concept of the sacred circle to build their case, believing that all marital problems should stay within the bounds of the marriage, and that seeking any type of assistance is wrong. This is unfortunate, since there are many appropriate ways to seek counsel.

I invite you to set some time aside to read Ellen's counsel from the two sources mentioned. I was reminded, once again, how powerfully she captured important family issues and how her counsel is as relevant to us today as it was more than 100 years ago.

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