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Susan E. Murray  
*Andrews University*

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## Ministry at Home

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

**M**y first glimpse of Ellen White as a real person was when I was a young mother and on Andrews University's campus the summer of 1975. My husband was participating in a workshop, and I had an afternoon to myself. I went to the library and found the vault in the basement where Ellen White's writings and other early documents are kept for safekeeping.

When the woman on duty learned I was a mother of two young children, her face lit up and she scurried to find something she wanted me to see. When she returned, she showed me a handwritten letter on rather fragile paper. It was from Ellen White to her son, Willie. Written September 26, 1859, while she was on a long trip, Ellen shared words of warmth, love and encouragement. She also wrote of her longing to be with him and the rest of the family. Right in the middle of the paper, there was a round depression. Imagine, after all these years, there was still a remnant of a peppermint candy she had tucked in for her "Dear Little Willie."



At the General Conference Session in Toronto, more than a decade ago now, I bought a book entitled *Ellen White: We Never Really Knew You*. It was written by Bernadine Irwin, a psychologist, who we first met as college students years ago. This book touched my heart in a very special way. George Knight's book, *Walking with Ellen White: Her Everyday Life as a Wife, Mother, and Friend*, is another one I enjoyed reading. Again, I was touched because it revealed more to me about the woman, wife and mother she was.

Yes, she was a real woman with a real ministry, living in a real world, who wrote for real people. *The Ministry of Healing*, written by Ellen White for real families, contains these gems about the Christian family:

"The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred,

of any on earth. It is designed to be a blessing to mankind" (p. 356).

"The mission of the home extends beyond its own members. The Christian home is to be an object lesson, illustrating the excellence of the true principles of life. Such an illustration will be a power for good in the world. Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives" (p. 352).

"If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life, we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life and beauty and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth" (p. 355).

"Though difficulties, perplexities, and discouragements may arise, let neither husband nor wife harbor the thought that their union was a mistake or a disappointment. Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love" (p. 360).

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Susan E. Murray is an associate professor of family studies who teaches behavioral science and social work at Andrews University. She is a certified family life educator and a licensed marriage and family therapist.

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To learn more about Ellen White, visit <http://www.whiteestate.org/about/egwbio.asp>