

CHAP. 16 - OUR CAMP MEETINGS

"I have been shown that some of our camp meetings are far from being what the Lord designed they should be. The people come unprepared for the visitation of God's Holy Spirit. Generally the sisters devote considerable time before the meeting to the preparation of garments for the outward adorning, while they entirely forget the inward adorning, which is in the sight of God of great price. There is also much time spent in needless cooking, in the preparation of rich pies and cakes and other articles of food that do positive injury to those who partake of them. Should our sisters provide good bread and some other healthful kinds of food, both they and their families would be better prepared to appreciate the words of life and far more susceptible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. {5T 162.2}

"Often the stomach is overburdened with food which is seldom as plain and simple as that eaten at home, where the amount of exercise taken is double or treble. This causes the mind to be in such a lethargy that it is difficult to appreciate eternal things; and the meeting closes, and they are disappointed in not having enjoyed more of the Spirit of God. {5T 163.1}

"While preparing for the meeting each individual should closely and critically examine his own heart before God. If there have been unpleasant feelings, discord, or strife in families, it should be one of the first acts of preparation to confess these faults one to another and pray with and for one another. Humble yourselves before God, and make an earnest effort to empty the soul temple of all rubbish--all envyings, all jealousies, all suspicions, all faultfindings. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." {5T 163.2}

"The Lord speaks; enter into your closet, and in silence commune with your own heart; listen to the voice of truth and conscience. Nothing will give such clear views of self as secret prayer. He who seeth in secret and knoweth all things will enlighten your understanding and answer your petitions. Plain, simple duties that must not be neglected will open before you. Make a covenant with God to yield yourselves and all your powers to His service. Do not carry this undone work to the camp meeting. If it is not done at home, your own soul will suffer, and others will be greatly injured by your coldness, your stupor, your spiritual lethargy. {5T 163.3}

"I have seen the condition of the people professing the truth. The words of the prophet Ezekiel are applicable to them at this time: "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols." {5T 164.1}

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“If we love the things of the world and have pleasure in unrighteousness or fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness we have put the stumbling block of our iniquity before our face and have set up idols in our heart. And unless by determined effort we put them away we shall never be acknowledged as the sons and daughters of God. {5T 164.2}

“Here is a work for families to engage in before coming up to our holy convocations. Let the preparation for eating and dressing be a secondary matter, but let deep heart searching commence at home. Pray three times a day, and, like Jacob, be importunate. At home is the place to find Jesus; then take Him with you to the meeting, and how precious will be the hours you spend there. But how can you expect to feel the presence of the Lord and see His power displayed when the individual work of preparation for that time is neglected? {5T 164.3}

“For your soul's sake, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of others, work at home. Pray as you are not accustomed to pray. Let the heart break before God. Set your house in order. Prepare your children for the occasion. Teach them that it is not of so much consequence that they appear with fine clothes as that they appear before God with clean hands and pure hearts. Remove every obstacle that may have been in their way,--all differences that may have existed among themselves or between you and them. By so doing you will invite the Lord's presence into your homes, and holy angels will attend you as you go up to the meeting, and their light and presence will press back the darkness of evil angels. Even unbelievers will feel the holy atmosphere as they enter the encampment. Oh, how much is lost by neglecting this important work! You may be pleased with the preaching, you may become animated and revived, but the converting, reforming power of God will not be felt in the heart, and the work will not be so deep, thorough, and lasting as it should be. Let pride be crucified and the soul be clad with the priceless robe of Christ's righteousness, and what a meeting will you enjoy. It will be to your soul even as the gate of heaven. {5T 164.4}

“The same work of humiliation and heart-searching should also go on in the church, so that all differences and alienations among brethren may be laid aside before appearing before the Lord at these annual gatherings. Set about this work in earnest, and rest not until it is accomplished; for if you come up to the meeting with your doubts, your murmurings, your disputings, you bring evil angels into the camp and carry darkness wherever you go. {5T 165.1}

“I have been shown that for want of this preparation these yearly meetings have accomplished but little. The ministers are seldom prepared to labor for God. There are many speakers, --those who can say sharp, crank things, going out of their way to whip other churches and ridicule their faith,--but there are but few earnest laborers for God. These sharp, self-important speakers profess to have truth in advance of every other people, but their manner of labor and their religious zeal in no way correspond with their profession of faith. {5T 165.2}

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“I looked to see the humility of soul that should ever sit as a fitting garment upon our ministers, but it was not upon them. I looked for the deep love for souls that the Master said they should possess, but they had it not. I listened for the earnest prayers offered with tears and anguish of soul because of the impenitent and unbelieving in their own homes and in the church, but heard them not. I listened for the appeals made in the demonstration of the Spirit, but these were missing. I looked for the burden bearers, who in such a time as this should be weeping between the porch and the altar, crying, Spare Thy people, Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach; but I heard no such supplications. A few earnest, humble ones were seeking the Lord. At some of these meetings one or two ministers felt the burden and were weighed down as a cart beneath sheaves. But a large majority of the ministers had no more sense of the sacredness of their work than children. {5T 165.3}

“I saw what these yearly gatherings might be, and what they should be--meetings of earnest labor. Ministers should seek a heart preparation before entering upon the work of helping others, for the people are far in advance of many of the ministers. They should untiringly wrestle in prayer until the Lord blesses them. When the love of God is burning on the altar of their hearts, they will not preach to exhibit their own smartness, but to present Christ who taketh away the sins of the world. {5T 166.1}

“In the early church Christianity was taught in its purity; its precepts were given by the voice of inspiration; its ordinances were uncorrupted by the device of men. The church revealed the spirit of Christ and appeared beautiful in its simplicity. Its adorning was the holy principles and exemplary lives of its members. Multitudes were won to Christ, not by display or learning, but by the power of God which attended the plain preaching of His word. But the church has become corrupt. And now there is greater necessity than ever that ministers should be channels of light. {5T 166.2}

“There are many flippant talkers of Bible truth, whose souls are as barren of the Spirit of God as were the hills of Gilboa of dew and rain. But what we need is men who are thoroughly converted themselves and can teach others how to give their hearts to God. The power of godliness has almost ceased to be in our churches. And why is this? The Lord is still waiting to be gracious; He has not closed the windows of heaven. We have separated ourselves from Him. We need to fix the eye of faith upon the cross and believe that Jesus is our strength, our salvation. {5T 166.3}

“As we see so little burden of the work resting upon ministers and people, we inquire: When the Lord comes, shall He find faith on the earth? It is faith that is lacking. God has an abundance of grace and power awaiting our demand. But the reason we do not feel our great need of it is because we look to ourselves and not to Jesus. We do not exalt Jesus and rely wholly upon His merits. {5T 167.1}

-Children of Light-

“Would that I could impress upon ministers and people the necessity of a deeper work of grace in the heart and more thorough preparation to enter into the spirit and labor of our camp meetings, that they may receive the greatest possible benefit from these meetings. These yearly gatherings may be seasons of special blessing or they may be a great injury to spirituality. Which shall they be to you, dear reader? It remains for each to decide for himself. {5T 167.2}