

Context & Common Sense -compiled by sid nash, 11/13/2020

PRINCIPLE: "... my mind has been greatly stirred in regard to the idea, 'Why, Sister White has said so and so, and Sister White has said so and so; and therefore we are going right up to it.' God wants us all to have common sense, and he wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things." -Sister White, [3SM 217.2](#)

EXAMPLE: Here is counsel given in "Testimonies for the Church", volume 3, published in 1872.

Many children have been ruined for life by urging the intellect and neglecting to strengthen the physical powers. Many have died in childhood because of the course pursued by injudicious parents and schoolteachers in forcing their young intellects, by flattery or fear, when they were too young to see the inside of a schoolroom. Their minds have been taxed with lessons when they should not have been called out, but kept back until the physical constitution was strong enough to endure mental effort. Small children should be left as free as lambs to run out of doors, to be free and happy, and should be allowed the most favorable opportunities to lay the foundation for sound constitutions.

Parents should be the only teachers of their children until they have reached eight or ten years of age. As fast as their minds can comprehend it, the parents should open before them God's great book of nature. The mother should have less love for the artificial in her house and in the preparation of her dress for display, and should find time to cultivate, in herself and in her children, a love for the beautiful buds and opening flowers. By calling the attention of her children to their different colors and variety of forms, she can make them acquainted with God, who made all the beautiful things which attract and delight them. She can lead their minds up to their Creator and awaken in their young hearts a love for their heavenly Father, who has manifested so great love for them. Parents can associate God with all His created works. **The only schoolroom for children from eight to ten years of age should be in the open air amid the opening flowers and nature's beautiful scenery.** And their only textbook should be the treasures of nature. These lessons, imprinted upon the minds of young children amid the pleasant, attractive scenes of nature, will not be soon forgotten. [3T 137.1-2](#)

From the quote above, do we know why kids should be kept out of school until they are 8-10? Are there underlying circumstances that she didn't feel the need to mention? Could it be that the circumstances changed over time? These questions were answered by Ellen over 30 years later in the following condensed document. The full document is available at [3SM 214](#) and at [5Bio 312](#)

Report of a meeting of the Sanitarium [Cal.] Church School Board, held at "Elmshaven," Sanitarium, Cal., Thursday Morning, January 14, 1904. 3SM 214.1

Sister White spoke for a time, as follows: 3SM 214.2

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Mothers should be able to instruct their little ones wisely during the earlier years of childhood. If every mother were capable of doing this, and would take time to teach her children the lessons they should learn in early life, then all children could be kept in the home school until they are eight, or nine, or ten years old. 3SM 214.5

But many who enter the marriage relation fail of realizing all the sacred responsibilities that motherhood brings. Many are sadly lacking in disciplinary power. In many homes there is but little discipline, and the children are allowed to do as they please. Such children drift hither and thither; there is nobody in the home capable of guiding them aright, nobody who with wise tact can teach them how to help father and mother, nobody who can properly lay the foundation that should underlie their future education. Children who are surrounded by these unfortunate conditions are indeed to be pitied. If not afforded an opportunity for proper training outside the home, they are debarred from many privileges that, by right, every child should enjoy. **This is the light that has been presented to me.** 3SM 215.1

Those who are unable to train their children aright, should never have assumed the responsibilities of parents. But because of their mistaken judgment, shall we make no effort to help their little ones to form right characters? **God desires us to deal with these problems sensibly.** 3SM 215.2

... In all our sanitariums the standard is to be kept high. With these institutions should be connected, as physicians, managers, and helpers, only those who keep their households in order. The conduct of the children has an influence that tells upon all who come to these sanitariums. God desires that this influence shall be reformatory. And this can be; but care is required. The father and the mother must give special attention to the training of each child. But you know how the families are up on this hillside. The patients understand how it is. The way it is presented to me is that it is a shame that there is not the influence over the young children that there should be. Every one of them should be employed in doing something that is useful. They have been told what to do. If the father cannot be with them, the mother should be instructed how to teach them. 3SM 215.3

But since I have been here, the **light has been given me** that the very best thing that can be done is to have a school... But it would be best to have this school for those who can be instructed and have the restraining influence upon them which a schoolteacher should exert. We have a school here because the Word of God could not be taught in the other [public] school.. 3SM 216.1

... But here is a work that must be done for the families, and for the children that are **as old as seven** years and eight years and nine years. We should have a lower department, that is a second department, where these children could be instructed. They will learn in school that which they frequently do not learn out of school, except by association.... 3SM 216.2

Now, it seems that the question is about these children going to school. I want to know from the parents, every one of them, who it is that feels perfectly satisfied with their children, as they are, without sending them to the school—to a school that has Bible lessons, has order, has discipline, and is trying to find something for them to do to occupy their time. I do not think there is anyone, if they come to understand it, who will have objections. 3SM 216.3

... But when I heard what the objections were, that **the children could not go to school till they were ten years old**, I wanted to tell you that **there was not a Sabbathkeeping school when the light was given to me** that the children should not attend school until they were old enough to be instructed. They should be taught at home to know what proper manners were when they went to school, and not be led astray. The wickedness carried on in the common schools is almost beyond conception. 3SM 216.4

That is how it is, and **my mind has been greatly stirred in regard to the idea, "Why, Sister White has said so and so, and Sister White has said so and so; and therefore we are going right up to it."** 3SM 217.1

God wants us all to have common sense, and he wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things. 3SM 217.2

... **from the light that God has given me**, [declare that] if there is a family that has not the capabilities of educating, nor discipline and government over their children, requiring obedience, the very best thing is to put them in some place where they will obey. Put them in some place where they will be required to obey, because obedience is better than sacrifice. Good behavior is to be carried out in every family. 3SM 217.3

So, it seems that at least two circumstances changed in the preceding 30 years: 1) Parents, in this location, seem less likely to properly train their 7-10 year-old children. **2)** There is now(1904) a Sabbath-keeping school, at this location -- possibly the first...

Again, the **lesson to be learned** here is that, *"God wants us all to have common sense, and he wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things."* 3SM 217.2

Let us not ignore common sense and circumstances when we say, *"Why, Sister White has said so and so, and Sister White has said so and so; and therefore we are going right up to it."* 3SM 217.1