

Getting Along With People.

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of learning to live with others, practicing patience, the spirit of love, and the spirit of service, and making our life a blessing to others.

Scripture: Proverbs 15:1, Matthew 7:12, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 2:3-4, Colossians 3:13, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 4:8

Topics: "Christian Living", "Relationships"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of getting along with others, highlighting that living harmoniously requires self-denial, patience, and a spirit of service. He notes that while some individuals may thrive in solitude, true growth and Christ-likeness come from navigating relationships with love and grace. Miller encourages the practice of thoughtfulness, good temper, and inspiring others to bring out their best, as these qualities foster a peaceful coexistence. He asserts that the challenges of living with others are opportunities for character development and spiritual growth. Ultimately, the goal is to live sweetly and lovingly with all, reflecting the love of Christ in our interactions.

Transcript

One of the earliest experiences of life, is the realizing that there are other people. It comes to the child when it first discovers that its freedom is limited by the will of another. It cannot always have its own way. It finds its will opposed, and its pleasure interrupted. Other people have something to say about the carrying out of its little plans.

At every point as we go on into the thickening experiences of life -- the lesson of living with others meets us. It is not always easy to accept gracefully these contacts with others, and to enter into kindly relations with them.

There are some people who seem to be very good alone, while no one comes near them, while no other life touches theirs, when they have to think of no one but themselves -- who make wretched business of living when they come into personal relations with others! Then they are selfish, tyrannical, despotic, willful, exacting. They will not yield to any other one's desire or needs. They must have their own way; and they drive their life like a rough plow-share right through the comfort, the desire, the feelings, of others!

It seems almost a pity there could not be a few corners fenced off in this great world for such people as these, where they could live altogether alone, with no one ever to interfere with their rights or liberties, or

to impinge upon their comfort in any way.

But this is not God's ordinance for human lives. We are to live together in families, in communities, in friendship's circle. Indeed, no worse fate could befall us than to be doomed to live alone.

We might thus be absolved from the duties of love,

we could then have our own way,

we would not be required to think of anybody but ourselves, and

there would be no call for self-denial or sacrifice.

But, meanwhile, we would be growing into monsters of selfishness!

We never can learn love's lessons, except in life's school, where the lessons are set for us in actual human relationships.

It is certainly hard to live with other people. We have to give up many of our own preferences to please them. We have to deny ourselves many enjoyments, so as not to give them pain. The price of living with others sweetly and harmoniously -- is self-forgetfulness, and self-effacement. But this cost is the very gold of life. It is the only antidote for selfishness. It is the way of Christ-likeness. People are means of grace to us in many ways, and not in the smallest degree through the self-denials which we are required to make in living with them. It is the self-discipline of friendship and home and human fellowship which makes men and women of us, which makes us like Christ.

I used to pity those whom I saw in circumstances in which they were compelled to bear heavy burdens for others, to serve, to sacrifice, to deny themselves, in fulfilling love's duties; but I have learned to look upon such people with deep interest -- as privileged scholars in Christ's school. If the lessons set for them are hard, the mastering of the lessons advances them in the rank of character. That is God's way of making Christly men and women.

But the problem before us now, is how to get along with other people. There are instances in which there is scarcely any problem here at all; the other people have learned the patience and love of Christ so well, that anybody could live with them. They will not quarrel, they never stand up for their rights, they would rather suffer almost any wrong than resist. Even a selfish and tyrannical man could get along with them, for they meekly let him have his own way.

But usually the problem is not so easily solved. Other people want our recognition, claim their rights, resist encroachments, demand of us attention, respect, service. Then some people are touchy, easily provoked, always watching for slights, like tinder only waiting for a spark to start the fire. Some are obstinate and unyielding, heady, unwilling to give up their own opinion or their own way. The average people are probably like ourselves -- a little better, or little worse, or about as hard to live with as we are -- probably no harder.

The lesson set for us teaches us that we must not only live with people -- but must live lovingly with them. This applies to all sorts and conditions of men, not the gentle and peaceable only -- but the rude and quarrelsome as well. We are to love our enemies, and to do good to those who treat us unkindly. The problem of Christian living is always to keep . . .

the heart sweet,

the manner gracious and loving, and

the hand outstretched for service, wherever we may be.

How can we do this? To begin with, we must have the spirit of love. We need to get the true definition of love, too, that we may know what it requires. Love is not an transient sentiment. To love, according to the New Testament, is a very costly duty. Love suffers long and is kind. Love seeks not its own, is not provoked, takes no account of evil, bears all things, endures all things. We may break up the lesson into parts:

We need patience in living with others. Patience implies suffering -- keeping quiet and sweet when it is not easy to do so, enduring pain without repining or murmuring, accepting wrong and injustice without resentment. Impatience never can get along peacefully with other people; but patience moves amid the greatest complexity of tastes, dispositions, and feelings -- undisturbed. We all know someone who carries out this spirit. Perhaps it is in a home where it is not easy to practice the lesson of love; but there this gentle spirit dwells with almost angelic sweetness -- quiet, suffering long. The more there is to suffer -- the sweeter is this patient spirit.

The spirit of SERVICE is another secret of living together happily. One who demands that others must show him deference, doing things for him, serving him -- has not learned the true art of living with others. If he assumes this attitude to those around him -- they will assume the same attitude toward him. The result at the best will be a sort of armed neutrality. But if one assumes toward others the spirit of loving service, the desire to help and serve -- he has solved the problem. It was thus that Jesus himself lived among men -- he came "not to be served -- but to serve." His thought of others was, not what he might have them do for him -- but what he might do for them, how he might help them, how he might advance their interests, how he might give them comfort or relief. If we relate ourselves to others in this way, we shall get on happily with them. Love begets love. Serving softens other's hearts and changes lives.

Another secret of getting on well with others is to INSPIRE them -- to expect noble and beautiful things of them, to set as our aim to bring out the best that is in them. To do this we do not need to flatter others, to appeal to their vanity by saying always complimentary things; and yet there is fine grace in having a pleasing word to say to everyone, a word that will uplift him, and also inspire him to do beautiful things. The best way to do a man good, is to expect good of him. If we always call on others for their best, we also make it easier to live with them; for we see them through kindly eyes, and are patient with their faults and frailties.

THOUGHTFULNESS is another of the secrets of happy living with others. Most young people begin life without this grace. Being selfish themselves, they do not naturally think of others, or modify their own conduct for the sake of others. A boy goes through the house wearing his heavy boots, singing at the top of his voice, utterly heedless of the fact that his mother is sick in her room, and that his noise almost kills her.

Thoughtfulness has to be learned -- but when it is learned it is a marvelous sweetener of life. Thoughtful people never speak the careless word which cuts to the heart. They avoid the unpleasant theme of conversation. They are careful not to say anything that would excite anger or resentment. They are ready ever with the right word at the right time, and they come always with their sympathy and kindness when

the need is greatest. We never can get on well with others, without thoughtfulness; but with this beautiful grace, we are prepared to live in almost any condition without friction or irritation.

Another essential is GOOD TEMPER. Love is not easily provoked. It bears all things, and always keeps sweet. Some people have a reserve of good nature which serves them well when others are disposed to get angry. They say some pleasant word which proves to be the soft answer that turns away wrath.

Put two touchy people together -- and they will not easily learn the lesson of living in companionship. They will learn it if they are Christians; but it will not be done easily, nor without much cost and pain to both.

In any case, however, a happy, cheerful temper is a wonderful sweetener of fellowship. We all are human; and there are few of us who at best, do not say words, or do things, which give pain to those closest to us. Even true love is not always just and kind. Then it is that love must outdo love -- the one who has been hurt must show love's long-suffering, overcoming evil with good.

These are mere suggestions concerning the problem of how to live sweetly in relations with others. Young people are sometimes rash and hot-headed; and it is not so easy for such to live together in love, as it is for those who are older, who have learned more lessons, whose hearts have been softened by life's experiences. The young are less ready to yield their own

way. They are apt to be willful and hasty. There is all the more reason, therefore, why young people should take up this lesson as one that must be learned, if they would make much of their life. For if it is said of anyone that other people cannot live with him -- then it is evident that something is seriously wrong with his life. It should be the aim of all, as much as lies in them, to live peaceably with all others. They should practice self-restraint, humility, self-renunciation, the law of loving service, patience, good temper, and all the Christian graces -- so that their life shall be a blessing to all whom they touch.

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