

# Helpful People

by J.R. Miller

---

*The true measure of living is usefulness, and we become most like God when we serve and help others.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16, Galatians 5:22

**Topics:** "Service", "Fruitfulness in Christian Life"

---

## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that the true measure of living is usefulness, as demonstrated by the fruitfulness of a Christian life that blesses and helps others. He argues that fruit is not for mere appearance but serves to satisfy the needs of others, highlighting the importance of small acts of kindness and encouragement. Miller illustrates that true helpfulness is not about monetary aid but about instilling strength and hope in others, fostering their growth and character. He encourages a life of service, reflecting the nature of God and Jesus, who came to serve rather than be served. Ultimately, a life dedicated to helping others enriches both the giver and the receiver, creating a cycle of love and support.

---

## Transcript

Usefulness is the true measure of living. Our Lord made fruit--the test of discipleship. What is fruit? Is it not something which the tree bears to feed men's hunger? In discipleship, then--fruit is something that grows upon our lives--which others may take and feed upon. It is anything in us, or that we do--which does good to others. A fruitful Christian life is one, therefore, which is a blessing to men--one that is useful and helpful.

No one cares for a tree to be covered with fruit, merely to make a fine appearance; the object of fruitfulness, is to feed hunger, to satisfy men's cravings. Our Lord does not ask us to have lives full of fruit--merely to be looked at, merely to realize a certain standard of spiritual completeness. He does not want marble statues, however perfect in their cold whiteness. Moral excellence is not character merely, however faultless it may be. The stern old Puritan was right when, finding the silver images standing in dusty niches and learning that they were the twelve apostles, he directed that they should be taken down and coined and sent out to do good. Charles Kingsley said, "We become like God--only as we become of use."

Fruit, therefore, is usefulness. We are fruitful when our lives in some way feed others, when we are personally helpful. It may be by our words; the ministry of good words is very wonderful.

He who writes a BOOK full of living, helpful thoughts, which goes into the hands of the young, or of the hungry-hearted, carrying inspiration, cheer, comfort or light--does a service whose value never can be estimated!

He who uses his gift of common SPEECH, as he may use it, to utter brave, helpful, encouraging, stimulating words wherever he goes--is an immeasurable blessing in the world.

He who writes timely LETTERS to people who need sympathy, consolation, commendation, wise counsel or thoughtful word of any kind--puts secret strength into many a spirit, feeds as with hidden manna--many a struggling soul.

He who little deeds of KINDNESS: sends a few flowers to a sick-room or a little fruit to a convalescent friend, or calls at the door to ask after a neighbor who is ill, or remembers the poor in some practical way, or is kind to a bereft one--is scattering blessings whose far-reaching influence for good--no eye can trace!

These are chiefly little ways of helpfulness, and are suggested because they are such as are possible to nearly everyone!

Not only are these little helpfulnesses possible to all--but they are the things that people need. Now and then a large thing must be done for another--men have sacrificed all in trying to help others--but, while at rare times very costly services are required, ordinarily it is the little kindnesses that are needed--and that do the greatest good.

Then the ministry of helpfulness, as a rule, is one that the poor can render--as well as the rich. People do not very often need money; at least a thousand times oftener--they need love more than money. It is usually much better to put a new hope into a discouraged man's heart, than to put a coin into his pocket. Money is good alms in its way--but, compared with the divine gifts of hope, courage, sympathy and affection--it is paltry and poor. Ofttimes monetary aid hinders more than it helps. It may make life a little easier for a day--but it is almost sure to make the recipient less manly and noble, less courageous and independent.

The best way to help people--is not to lighten the burden for them--but to put new strength into their hearts that they may be able to carry their own loads. That is the divine way. We are told to cast our burden upon the Lord--but the promise is not that the Lord will carry the burden for us--but that he will strengthen our hearts--that we may be able to bear our own burden.

The aim of the divine helpfulness, is not to make things easy for us--but to make something of us. We need to keep this divine principle in mind in our helping of others. It is usually easier to give relief--than it is to help another to grow strong. Yet in many cases, relief is the poorest help we can give; the very best is inner help--that which makes one stronger, purer, truer, braver, that which makes one able to overcome. Someone has said, "To help another is the divinest privilege one can have. There are many who help us in mechanical things; there are a few who help us in our outside duties; there are perhaps only two or three who can help us in our most sacred sphere of inner life."

Yet it is the latter kind of help that is most valuable. The help that in a lifetime counts for most in real blessing--is an uninterrupted flow of little ministries of word, of act, of quiet influence--kindness done to everyone according to the need of each at the moment. To live fifty years of such life, though not one conspicuous thing is wrought in all that time--leaves an aggregate amount of good done, vastly greater

than fifty years of selfish living with one great and notable public benevolence, reared like a monument of stone at the close of a man's days!

Of helpful people, the true Christian home presents the best illustrations. There each one lives for the others, not merely to minister in material ways and in services of affection, but to promote the growth of character into whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely.

A true husband lives to be helpful in all ways to his wife, to make her happy, to brighten the path for her feet, to stimulate her spiritual life and to foster and encourage in her every noble aspiration.

A true wife is a helpmate to her husband, blessing him with her love and doing him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.

Parents live for their children. In all this world there is no nearer approach to the divine helpfulness than is found in true parental love. The Jewish Rabbis said, "God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers."

Brothers and sisters, also, where they realize the Christian ideal of their relation to each other, are mutually helpful in all ways. True brothers shield their sisters, protecting them from harm; they encourage them in their education and in all their culture of mind and heart. True sisters, in turn, are their brothers' guardian angels; many a young man owes to a sweet and gentle sister--a debt he can never repay. Especially to older sisters, are the brothers in countless homes indebted. Many a man honored in the world and occupying a place of influence and power--owes all that he is, to a sister perhaps too much forgotten or overlooked by him, worn and wrinkled now, her beauty faded, living lonely and solitary, unwedded, who in the days of his youth--was a guardian angel to him. She freely poured out for him then, the best and richest of her life, giving the very blood of her veins--that he might have richer life, denying herself even needed comforts that he, her heart's pride, might have books and might be educated and fitted for noble and successful life. Such brothers can never honor enough, the sisters who have made such sacrifices for them.

There is a class of women in every community whom society flippantly and profanely denominates "old maids." The world ought to be told what uncrowned queens many of these women are, what undecorated heroines, what blessings to humanity, what builders of homes, what servants of others and of Christ. In thousands of instances, they voluntarily remain unmarried for the sake of their families. Many of them have refused brilliant offers of marriage--that they might stay at home to toil for younger brothers or sisters, or that they might be the shelter and comfort of parents in the feebleness of their advancing years.

Then there are many more who have freely hidden away their own heart-hunger, that they might devote themselves to good deeds for Christ and for humanity. A glance over the pages of history--will show many a woman's name which shines in the splendor of such self-sacrifice.

Then in every community and neighborhood is one whose hand has not felt the pressure of the wedding-ring, because home-loved ones, or the work of the Master, seemed to need her hallowed love and her gentle service. We should learn to honor these unmarried women, instead of decorating their names with unworthy epithets. Many of them are the true heroines of neighborhood, or of household, the real Sisters of Charity of the communities in which they live. Those who sometimes speak lightly or flippantly of them, who jest and sneer at their spinsterhood, ought to uncover their heads before them in reverence and kiss the hands--wrinkled now and shriveled--which never have been clasped in marriage.

No ambition could be higher, than that which seeks to be worthy of a ministry of personal helpfulness. Every disclosure of heavenly existence that has been made to us in this world, shows a life devoted to unselfish serving of others. We have in the Scriptures, many glimpses of angels, and these radiant beings are presented to us as ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation. Their holiness manifests itself in love and pity, and their adoration of God leads them to serve in behalf of fallen men.

Every disclosure of the character of God himself, reveals in him the same quality. His name is Love, and love is not love--which does not serve. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh, and he said of his own mission that he came, "not to be served--but to serve." Thus it is in serving and in helping others--that we become most like angels, and most like God himself! No one has begun to live--who has not begun to live for others. Life is never so rich and so beautiful, as when it is giving itself out the most lavishly in act and sacrifice of love. No one living in pampered self-indulgence, though wearing a jeweled crown--is half so royal in God's sight--as the lowly one, obscure and untitled among men, who is living to serve.

There is an Oriental story of two brothers, Ahmed and Omar. Each wished to perform a deed whose memory should not fail--but which, as the years rolled on, might sound his name and praise far abroad. Omar with wedge and rope lifted a great piece of marble on its base, carving its form in beautiful devices and sculpturing many a wondrous inscription on its sides. He left it to stand in the hot desert and cope with its gales--his monument. But Ahmed, with deeper wisdom and truer though sadder heart, dug a well to cheer the sandy waste, and planted about it tall date-palms to make cool shade for the thirsty pilgrim and to shake down fruits for his hunger.

These two deeds illustrate two ways in either of which we may live. We may think of SELF and worldly success and fame, living to gather a fortune or to make a splendid name--as the tall sculptured marble--but as cold and useless to the world. Or we may make our life like a well in the desert, with cool shade about it, to give drink to the thirsty and shelter and refreshment to the weary and faint!

Which of these two ways of living is the more Christlike, it is not hard to tell. Our Master went about doing good; his life was one of personal helpfulness wherever he went. If we have his spirit, we shall hold our lives and all our possessions not as our own--but as means with which to serve and bless our fellow-men. We shall regard ourselves as debtors to all men, owing to the lowest--the love that seeks not its own, that strives to do good to all. Then we shall consider our white hands as none too fine--to do the lowliest service, even for the most unworthy.

With this spirit in us, we shall not have to seek opportunities for helpfulness. Then every word we speak, every smallest thing we do, every influence we send forth, our mere shadow, as we pass by, falling on need and sorrow--will prove sweet, blessed ministry of love and will impart strength and help! Such living is twice blessed: it blesses others; it enriches and gladdens one's own heart. Selfishness is a stagnant pool; loving service is a living stream that in doing good to others--blesses itself as well, and remains ever fresh and pure.

"How many gentle, lovely lives,

And fragrant deeds that earth has known,

Were never writ in ink or stone,

And yet their sweetness still survives."

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/helpful-people/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**