

Helping With the Problems

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of helping young people think and choose for themselves, rather than solving their problems for them, and the need for wise older friendship in guiding them through life's challenges.

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 1:5, Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 22:6, Ecclesiastes 12:1, Isaiah 40:30-31, Matthew 7:7, Philippians 4:13, 1 Timothy 4:12, James 1:5

Topics: "Self-Reliance", "Guidance for Youth"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the myriad of problems faced by earnest young people as they navigate the complexities of life, highlighting their need for guidance and understanding. He stresses the importance of wise counsel from experienced individuals, who should inspire self-reliance rather than simply solving problems for the youth. Miller warns against overwhelming young people with too much advice, advocating instead for a supportive approach that encourages them to think critically and make their own decisions. He acknowledges that while older individuals can share their experiences, ultimately, each person must learn and grow through their own journey. The sermon calls for a balance of guidance and independence, fostering a deeper awareness of life's serious questions.

Transcript

Earnest young people have many problems. Life is all new to them. It is a voyage over new seas. It is a pilgrimage through a new country. At every point they are reminded, "You have not passed this way before!" Every day brings its new questions. At every step a new mystery arises, and they cannot rest until it has been solved for them. They are continually seeing things they have never before seen, and each new thing holds a new problem for them. They are meeting experiences through which they have never before passed; and they long to understand the meaning of them, and to know how to meet them.

The world seems familiar and commonplace to some who have been in it for a long time; but it is a world of exhaustless wonders to the young, whose hearts are alive and whose minds are alert. A child that asks no questions, is not a normal child; questions are signs of mental health and activity. A young person with no problems, is either too dull of mind to be moved by anything beautiful or new -- or too indolent to think or to try to answer the questions that evermore arise.

Young people's problems cover the whole of life. Beginning with the child's eager, curious questions about everything, they include the most serious matters of existence.

What am I?

Where did I come from?

Where am I going?

What am I in this world for?

What shall I do with my life?

How shall I treat other people?

What is my relationship to God?

How shall I overcome temptation?

How shall I contend against the evil influences which surround me on every hand?

How can I grow into sweetness and beauty of character?

These, and a thousand questions like these, are forever arising in the mind of the earnest, thoughtful young man and young woman. They are questions, too, which should be answered. The whole life and eternal destiny depends upon finding the right answers.

No more important service can be rendered to young people, than wise help in meeting and answering life's questions, great or small. It must indeed be wise help, to be valuable -- or else it were better not to try to help at all. Bad advice has wrecked many eternal destinies. It is important that those who are set for the guidance of the young, shall themselves know well the way, and shall be able to give wise counsel to such as seek it of them. Happy are the young people who are in natural, familiar relations with older friends of tried experience and sound judgment -- who are able . . .

to answer their questions,

to throw light upon their perplexing problems, and

to guide them wisely in this world's tangled paths!

Many go down in defeat and failure, for the lack of such true and safe help.

One of the dangers of such friendship, however, is too much advice. No doubt some young people are sorely hurt in this way. The very gentleness of the love that watches over them, becomes a peril to them. One of the mistakes of home-life in many families is too much government. The best way to help the young is not to solve their problems for them -- but thoughtfully to help them to consider and answer their own questions.

When a child brings home from school a hard problem in arithmetic, the worst help is to solve the problem for him. The same is true of all difficulties and perplexities of young people. It is unkindness to them to do their thinking -- choosing and deciding for them. It only makes them less able for meeting life's responsibilities when a little later they must face them alone, with no one who can give them counsel.

Our best friend is not he who does the most things for us -- but he who makes us self-reliant, who helps us to think and choose for ourselves, who inspires us ever to do our best. One of the tasks and tests of wise older friendship is self-restraint, self-repression, in the matter of advising and leading younger people. We are not to be dictators -- but inspirers.

Of course, if we have had longer or wider experience, we have learned much about life and about the world, which should fit us for guiding others. But the help which others can get from our experience is limited. Really every one must learn his lesson for himself, from his own experience. He must make his own experiments, must be taught by his own mistakes, must grow wise through his own reading, thinking, and living.

Young people must, in the end, work out their own problems; and he is very foolish who, even in kindness of heart, tries to do it for them. Yet there is a way of giving them help which is wise and may do good. We may stimulate, encourage, suggest, cheer, strengthen -- and thus make their lives nobler and richer.

In proposing to consider young people's problems, the writer has no thought of doing much more than help his readers to consider their own problems. Some young people probably fail to do even this. They seem not to realize that there are any problems in living. They never think below the surface of things. They are ruled by the present moment, and by passing impulses and impressions. They have never learned to think through the questions which arise -- but are content to let others think for them, or to follow blindly the moods of the passing experience.

For such as these, the best service that can be given will be their awakening to the consciousness of the seriousness of life. For life is most serious. We hear much said about how serious a thing it is to die; but really it is a much more serious thing to live. The dead are through with life's struggles; but for those who still remain in this world, there must be continuous struggle, toil, and burden-bearing. Life is very serious, and should be met with earnest thought.

There are many young people, however, who already understand how important it is to give deep thought to life's questions, so as to make wise decisions and right choices. They wish to make the most they can of their life, to avoid mistakes, and to find the best things. Perhaps it may be possible to give true brotherly help to some of these, if not in the way of setting down specific directions, which it is not always practical nor even desirable to do -- at least by throwing a little light upon the path, which may make it somewhat plainer or clearer for their inexperienced feet.

The writer claims no special ability as an adviser of young people, and no particular right to their confidence, except that he has an earnest desire to help them find the right way, and is willing to tell them what he himself has learned in his own experience.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/helping-with-the-problems/>

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