

Helping Without Money

by J.R. Miller

We can make a significant impact on others without money by offering our time, sympathy, and encouragement.

Scripture: Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 25:40, Acts 3:6, Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:24, 1 John 3:17

Topics: "Helping Others", "The Power of Encouragement"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that true help does not always require money, as many good-hearted individuals feel discouraged by their lack of wealth. He illustrates that while financial aid is sometimes necessary, the most valuable assistance often comes in the form of encouragement, hope, and strength to help others bear their burdens. Miller uses the example of Peter healing the lame man to show that spiritual and emotional support can be far more impactful than monetary gifts. He encourages believers to actively engage in uplifting others through small acts of kindness and personal connections, which can lead to profound changes in their lives. Ultimately, Miller concludes that love and personal investment in others are the most precious gifts we can offer.

Transcript

There are many good people, with benevolent hearts and kindly impulses, who think they cannot do much good in the world, because they have no money to give. They envy those who have wealth at their disposal, and who can so easily lift off the burdens of the poor, and give substantial aid to those who are in distress. They lament, that, because of their own poverty, they cannot relieve the human needs which they see about them. They do not know of any way of doing good without money--and sit discouraged in the midst of human needs and sorrows, not supposing that they with their empty hands could render any help or comfort.

No doubt, there are necessities which money only can relieve. Love, however rich and true and tender, will not pay the widow's rent, nor buy medicines for the sick man, nor put shoes on the orphan's feet. There always will be need for almsgiving, while sin and sorrow continue on the earth, and he who has money to give, must give it.

"Whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" Our professed love for Christ will, if real, exhibit itself in love to his friends who are in need. We cannot now serve Christ in person with our acts and ministries, for he does not need what we can give; but his people are with us, and what we do for them, we do for him.

There is need oftentimes for money, and those who have it must use it to relieve the needs of their suffering neighbors. Yet it should be remembered that the help which human lives need, in nine cases out of ten, is not money-help. "Silver and gold have I none," said Peter to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, "but such as I have give I you." And what he gave was infinitely better than gold or silver would have been. He said to him, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Then, taking the lame man by the hand, he lifted him up; and at once his weak limbs became strong, so that he could walk alone, needing no longer to sit by the temple entrance, and ask for alms. Better help had been given him than any alms the poor man ever received.

This story is a parable as well as a fact. Its lesson is, that there are better things to give than gold and silver. If we can put new life and hope into the heart of a discouraged man, so that he rises out of his weak despair, and takes his place again in the ranks of active life--we have done a far better thing for him than if we had put our hands into our pockets, and given him money to help him nurse his miserable and unmanly despair a little longer. The truest sympathy is not that weak emotion which only sits down and weeps with a sufferer, imparting no courage or hope--but that wiser love, which, while it is touched by his pain and grief, and feels tenderly toward him, seeks to put new strength into his heart, to enable him to endure his suffering in a victorious way.

What most people really need in their troubles, is not to have the burden lifted off, or even lightened--but to have their own hearts strengthened with fresh cheer and hope--so that they shall not fail in their duty, and that they may overcome in their struggles. Not assistance in carrying the load--but a new inspiration of courage and energy, that they may carry it themselves, is for most men the wisest help.

The true problem of living is not to get along easily, with the least exertion and the fewest crosses--but to grow by every experience, into stronger men; hence we show real unkindness to those who are enduring hardship, when we seek merely to make life easier for them, regardless of their own highest good. Usually it is a great deal better for people to fight their own battles through, and carry their own burdens, and bear the crosses God gives them to carry, unlightened. He knows better than we do--what they need; and is ever watching, that the trial may not become more than they shall be able to bear. He will have relief ready--when it is wisest that there should be relief.

We may interfere with God's discipline, when we come running up with our help at every moment of stress. By encouragement and cheer and inspiration, we may put new hope and energy into hearts that are fainting; but usually that is the only aid we should give. It is always vastly better to give a man something to do, by which he can earn his own bread--than to put the bread into his hand, and leave him idle. In the former case, we encourage him to be brave and manly; in the latter case, we make it easy for him to be weak and despairing, and rob him of a lesson which God had set for him to learn.

It is the worst kindness, to do a child's homework for him, and to tell him the answers to the questions assigned to him. In doing so, we make the lessons of little or no use to him. The mere having of correct answers is a matter of small importance to him--in comparison with the mental discipline to be gotten from the personal and even painful search after the truth. We can show him no greater unkindness than to make his lessons easy for him--by doing all the hard part for him. The truly kind thing is, to encourage him to solve the examples, and to search out the answers for himself. Each bit of knowledge which he gets for himself through persistent struggle, he will keep forever. It is then his own, by virtue of search and discovery, and he will never lose it. Besides, the wrestling with the hard problem has added new power to his own mental faculties, and the victory over the difficulty has inspired him with fresh hope for new

struggles.

The same is true in all spheres of life. We may do others the greatest harm--by unwisely helping them. If having an easy life were the highest aim, it would be better that we should lift off every burden under which others bow, and do every hard thing for them, and save them from every struggle and difficulty. But life is a school--and tasks and hardships and battles and toils and sufferings--are lessons set for us, by which we are to be trained and disciplined into strength and nobleness. Therefore, he who tries only to make easy paths for another, robs him of that experience by which God designed to make a man of him.

Hence, they are the best comforters and helpers of their fellow-men, who go about with large hopefulness and cheerfulness in their own hearts, trying to put a little more hope and cheer into the life of everyone they meet. Gifts of money, oftentimes, while they relieve immediate distress, and make life for one hour easier--only help to encourage disheartenment, and to perpetuate nervelessness and indolence. It would be a great deal better, by a few brave words, to incite the person to rise up, and grasp life anew, and conquer for himself!

It is evident, from this view of what is best for men, that we can all do a great deal of good, and of the wisest, truest good, in this world, without having much money to bestow. If we have not gold and silver to give--we can take those who have fallen in the way by the hand, and help them to rise again. We can put fresh courage into the hearts of the faint, so that they can take up their burdens afresh, and start forward once more in the race. We can give cheer and comfort to those who are weary through toil or through sorrow. We can impart inspirations of joy, and kindle new hope in the bosoms of those who have begun to lag behind.

We can make life a little easier for everyone we meet, not by taking anything from his burden--but by making him more able to bear it! And in the end, although we may never be able to give a dollar of money to relieve distress, it may be seen that the blessings we have scattered, or have gotten into people's very lives, are far more in number, and greater in value--than if, with lavish hand, we had been dispensing gold and silver all along our years!

There is never an end of opportunities for such personal helpfulness as this. There is a rich, possible wayside ministry, for instance, made up of countless small courtesies, gentle words, mere passing touches on the lives of those we casually meet! Impulses given by putting a little more warmth into our ordinary salutations; influences flowing directly or indirectly from the things we do, and the words we speak.

For example, we meet a friend on the street, whose heart is heavy; we stop a moment in passing, to speak a word of thoughtful cheer and hope; and it sings in his breast all day, like a note of angel song. We walk a little way with a young man who is in danger of turning out of the path of safety, and we let fall a sincere word of kindly interest in him, or of affectionate warning, which may help to save him. Amid the busiest scenes, when engaged in the most momentous labors, we may yet carry on a never-ceasing ministry of personal helpfulness, whose results shall spring up like flowers in the path behind us, or echo in the hearts of others like notes of holy song, or glow in other lives in touches of radiant beauty.

It is related of Leonardo da Vinci, that in his boyhood, when he saw caged birds exposed for sale on the streets of Florence, he would buy them, and set them free. It was a rare trait in a boy, and spoke of a noble heart full of genuine sympathy. As we go about the streets, we find many caged birds which we may set free, imprisoned joys that we may liberate, by the power that is in us of helping others.

Naturalists say that the stork, having most tenderly fed its young, will sail under them when they first attempt to fly, and, if they begin to fall, will bear them up, and support them; and that, when one stork is wounded by the sportsman, the able ones gather about it, put their wings under it, and try to carry it away. These instincts in the birds teach us the lesson of helpfulness. We should come up close to those who are in any way overburdened or weak or faint--and, putting our own strength underneath them, help them along. And when another fellow-being is wounded or crushed, whether by sorrow or by sin, it is our duty to gather about him, and try to lift him up, and save him. There is scarcely a limit to our possibilities of helpfulness in these ways.

"There is a man," said his neighbor, speaking of the village carpenter, "who has done more good, I really believe, in this community than any other person who ever lived in it. He cannot talk very well in a prayer-meeting, and he doesn't often try. He isn't worth two thousand dollars, and it's very little he can donate for the spread of the gospel. But a new family never moves into the village that he does not find them out, to give them a neighborly welcome, and to offer any little service he can render. He is always on the look-out to help strangers. He is always ready to watch with a sick neighbor, and look after his affairs for him. I have sometimes thought, that he and his wife keep house-plants in winter just to be able to send flowers to invalids. He finds time for a pleasant word for every child he meets; and you'll see the children climbing into his own one-horse wagon, when, he has no other load. He really seems to have a genius for helping folks in all sorts of common ways, and it does me good every day just to meet him on the street." This picture, though in homely setting, it may do someone good to look at; so it is framed here, and left on this page.

Thus, without money, we can make our lives abundantly useful in this world of need. Sympathy is better than money--so is courage, so is cheer, so is hope. It is better always to give ourselves than to give our money; certainly we should give ourselves, with whatever else we may give. The gift without the giver is unacceptable. Christ himself gave no money; but every life that came near to him in faith, went away enriched and helped. He gave love--and love is the brightest and richest coin minted in this world. And all of us can give love; none are too poor for that.

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