

# Home Memories

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon explores how the memories we create in our homes shape our lives and influence future generations.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 127:1, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 5:16, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Ephesians 6:4, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:21, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 4:8

**Topics:** "Home Memories", "Influence of Family"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of the memories we create in our homes, asserting that they shape our future and influence our character. He contrasts the joy of cherished memories with the pain of regretful ones, urging families to cultivate a loving and nurturing environment. Miller illustrates how the memories of kindness and affection can provide comfort in times of sorrow, while also warning against the lasting impact of unkindness. He encourages parents to weave sacred moments into their children's lives, as these memories will guide them throughout their lives. Ultimately, he calls for a home filled with Christ's presence, as it transforms memories into blessings that endure beyond our earthly existence.

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## Transcript

We are all making in our todays--the memories of our tomorrows. Whether these shall be pleasant or painful to contemplate, depends on whether we are living holy or sinful. Memory writes down everything, where we shall be compelled to see it perpetually. There have been authors who in their last days would have given worlds to get back the words they had written. There have been men and women who would have given their right hands to blot out the memories of certain passages in their lives, certain acts done, certain words sent forth to scatter sin or sorrow.

On the other hand, there are memories that shed a perpetual blessing. There have been artists whose eyes looked in old age upon the pictures they had painted, finding rare pleasure in the contemplation of the lovely things they had made; and there are hearts that are picture-galleries filled with the memories of lives of sweetness, purity and unselfishness. We are each preparing for ourselves, the house our souls must live in the years to come.

The thought is very beautiful--that youth must gather the sweet things of life--the flowers, the fragrant odors, which lie everywhere, so that old age may be clothed with gladness. We do not realize how much of the happiness of our after years, will depend upon the things we are doing today. It is our own life that gives color to our skies, and tone to the music that we hear in this world. The memories he makes along his years, are the old man's heritage, his very home. He may change houses or neighbors or companions

or circumstances--but he cannot get away from his own past. The song or the discord which rings in his ear--he may think it is made by other voices--but it is really the echo of his own yesterdays.

The music which we hear as our years go on, whether it be sweet or discordant, is but the pulse beat of our own hearts. We may think it comes from outside, and we may blame our circumstances if we are unhappy--but really it is the moan of the memories of our own past lives which saddens us.

What is true of our individual lives, is true also of our homes. We are making their memories day by day and year by year--and what they shall be in the future, will depend on the home-life we are living now. We may make our home a palace, filling it with delights, covering the walls with beautiful pictures, planting flowers to fill the halls and chambers with fragrance, and hanging cages of singing birds everywhere to pour out sweet notes of song; or we may cover the walls with hideous images and ghastly specters to look down upon us, and plant only briars and thorns about the doors to flaunt themselves in our faces when we sit in the gloom of life's nightfall. We may make the memories of our home so tender, so precious, so sacred--that each life that goes out of our doors shall carry a blessing upon it wherever it moves. Or we may make its memories a perpetual pillow of thorns for our heads, a burden of bitterness and anguish which shall never be lifted or removed.

There is no need for argument to prove the influence of the home memories, in the formation of character. When one's childhood home has been true and sweet--its memories never can be effaced. Its teaching may long be unheeded and life may be a miserable waste. Sin may sweep over the soul like a devouring flame, leaving only blackened ruins. Sorrows may quench every joy and hope, and the life may be crushed and broken. But the memory of the early home, lives on like a solitary star burning in the gloom of night. Even in revels and carousals, its picture floats in the mind like a vanished dream. Its voices of love and prayer and song, come back like melodies from some far away island in the sea when the lips that first breathed them out have long been silent in the grave.

There ought to be a powerful motive in this truth, to lead us to watch the character of the memories which we make in our homes. How will those who go out of our doors be affected in later life, by what they remember of their early home. Will the memory be tender, restraining, refining and inspiring? Or will it be sad, bitter and a curse?

Cowper's mother died when he was only six years old, yet so deep was the impression made upon him by her character, that he said there was not a day in all his manhood's years, when he did not remember and think of her. The memory of her tenderness hung over him like a soft summer sky. Will it be so, with the children who are playing now in our homes? Does the mother who reads these words so impress the tender lives of her children with the goodness of her own character, that the memory and the influence shall remain when their hairs are white with age and when she is long gone from earthly scenes?

One has written this testimony: "Many a night, as I remember lying quietly in the little upper chamber, before sleep came on, there would be a gentle little footstep on the stair, the door would noiselessly open, and in a moment the well known form, softly gliding through the darkness, would appear at my bedside. First, there would be a few pleasant inquiries of affection, which gradually deepened into words of counsel. Then, kneeling, her head close to mine, her most earnest hopes and desires would flow forth in prayer. How largely a mother can wish for her boy! Her tears bespoke the earnestness of her desire. I seem to feel them yet, where sometimes they fell on my face. Rising, with a good night kiss, she was gone. The prayers often passed out of thought in slumber, and came not to mind again for years--but they were not

lost. They were safely kept in some secret place of memory, for they reappear with a beauty brighter than ever. I willingly believe they were an invisible bond with heaven that secretly preserved me while I moved carelessly amid numberless temptations and walked the brink of crime."

It would seem to be worth while for every mother to try to weave such memories into the early years of her children's lives. There is no surer way to bind them with chains of gold to God's throne. Where is the busy mother who cannot find time enough to spend thus a few moments every night with each child before it falls asleep, in sweet, loving talk; and tender, earnest prayer? Far down into the years, the memory of such sacred moments will go, proving thousands of times a light in darkness, an inspiration in discouragement, a secret of victory in hard struggle, a hand to restrain from sin in time of fierce temptation.

God has thus put into the hand of parent at their own hearthstone, a power greater than that which kings and queens wield, and which must issue in either the weal or the woe of their children. It would surely seem to be worth while to make any sacrifice of personal comfort or pleasure--to transmit a legacy of holy memories which shall be though all the years, like a host of pure angels hovering over those we love, to guard and guide them.

There is one particular class of home memories of which a few words must be said. These are the memories we make in our fellowship one with another. Washington Irving wrote: "Ah! Go to the grave of buried love and meditate. There settle the account with your conscience--of every past endearment unregarded of that departed being who never, never can be soothed by contrition. If you are a child, and have ever added a sorrow to the soul or a furrow to the silvered brow of an affectionate parent; if you are a husband, and have ever caused the fond bosom that ventured its whole happiness in your arms to doubt a moment of your kindness or your truth; if you are a friend, and have ever injured by thought, word or deed--the spirit that generously confided in you; if you are a lover, and have ever given one unmerited pang to the true heart that now lies cold beneath your feet--then be sure that every unkind look, every ungenerous word, every ungentle action--will come thronging back upon your memory and knock dolefully at your soul; be sure that you will lie down sorrowing and repenting on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear--bitter because unheard and unavailing."

The continual remembrance of this truth would sweeten all our tones and give gentleness to all our actions in our home fellowship. If we only could keep in mind all the while--how the memory of unkindness, bitterness or selfishness, one toward another, will pain our hearts when one is taken and the other left--it would be one of the mightiest of all motives for members of a family to dwell together in unity.

A personal friend relates this incident: It was on a bright winter morning that a young man, remarkable for gentleness of manner and kindness of heart, went out from his father's house to his daily occupation. Within half an hour, suddenly and without warning, he was called from time to eternity, and his lifeless form was carried into the home he had left so happily, a few hours before. Parents, brothers and sisters comforted each other as best they could--but the sister nearest in age to the dead brother, whose love and gentleness toward him none would question, seemed to have a sorrow peculiar to herself, which found vent to one who sought to comfort her in the bitter and regretful words, "I was not kind to him as he left home this morning."

No one ever knew to what she alluded. It may have been too keen a sense of delinquency which caused the bitter pain in her heart, or it may have been a hurtful word spoken, or perhaps the mere absence of the

usual tenderness. With her loving nature and her unfailing gentleness toward this brother, it could have been nothing really unkind. Yet it caused her sore pain as she looked upon the dead face. He could not hear her request now to forgive her, nor could any lavish tokens of love now atone for that which caused her pain. She had not been so kind as usual to him, at parting that morning, and the memory added much to the grief of her loving, tender heart over its sudden loss.

One bright summer morning, a young man bade his wife and babe good bye, and went away to his work. Before midday there was an accident on the street; the scaffolding on which he was working gave way, and his lifeless body was carried back to his home, from which only a few hours before he had gone out so happily. The shock was terrible, though the news was broken as gently as possible; but there was one comfort that came with wondrous power to the crushed heart of the devoted young wife. The last hour they had spent in each other's company, in the morning, had been peculiarly happy, and their parting at the door had been unusually tender. She had not dreamed at the time, that it would be their last talk together, yet there was not a word spoken which caused one painful memory, now that she would never more see him, nor speak with him again in this world. Every memory of that quiet talk at the breakfast table, of the morning worship when they knelt side by side in prayer, and of the tender good bye on the doorstep, was full of comfort. Through years of loneliness and widowhood, the remembrance of that last hour has been an abiding source of gladness in her life, like a lamp of holy peace.

These two incidents illustrate the importance of unbroken tenderness and affectionateness in the family fellowship. In each moment of our home fellowship, we are making memories which may become to us a source either of pleasure or of pain, through long future years. We never can tell when we are having our last talk together, or our last meal, or when we are parting at the door never to meet again. Suppose, then that as you go out in the morning you have a little strife or quarrel with one of the household whom you truly love, and you part, perhaps in anger, with sharp, stinging words, perhaps only in sullen silence. Do you not see how that parting may become a lifelong bitterness to you? Death may come to one of you to prevent your ever meeting again--and then the last memory will be one of pain. What a motive this should be, to make the household fellowship tender and loving, without break or interruption, so that any word spoken, if it should prove to be the last, would leave a hallowed memory for the lonely years!

So uncertain is life, that any leave-taking may be forever. We are never sure that we shall have an opportunity to unsay the angry word and have it forgiven. The only safe way, is to make every hour's fellowship in the household so sweet, that if it should be the last--it would leave a memory without regret.

There is another class of memories which, sooner or later, become part of the history of every home. These are memories of sorrows and losses.

There is no home into which grief does not come, in some form. Nearly every house has its secret drawer, which is not very often opened, which contains the dresses, the tiny shoes, the dolls or toys of a little prattler whom God took.

Or perhaps it was not a child which dies--but one who had lived to grow into all the life of the home and become its inspiration. The sorrow is not the same; the sense of loss is different. The longer we have had the loved ones in our clasp--the more is there to remember, the more touches there are left on the things about us, to stir our hearts when we come upon them.

Or it may not have been in bereavement that the sorrow came. Ah! There are griefs worse than those which death causes! There are losses that leave a blacker blank than when the coffin lid shuts down on

the face, and the grass grows green over the grave of one whom we shall see no more in this world.

It needs no skillful hand, to touch and awaken the memories of sorrow in almost every home. Sometimes the whole household life has been changed into a tone of sadness, by a grief bitterer than is common. Sometimes it has been a gentler stroke that has fallen, and the effect is only a deepening of seriousness and thoughtfulness, a softening of the tones of speech, a growing tenderness in all the fellowship. But sooner or later, the music of every home must have its minor chords. There is a picture that is laid away. There is a vacant chair. There is a wreath of immortelles sacredly kept under glass. There are mementoes of one who comes no more. There are songs that when sung, choke every voice because they were favorites of one whose face is seen no more in the circle. There are books whose pages have a language for the heart, not printed in words. There are places and scenes which bring up a thousand sacred memories.

Such memories affect the home-life. They sober it, and sometimes sadden it. Sorrow is not always rightly borne. Sometimes it puts out all the lights. But if it is endured in the right spirit, it leaves a blessing. Sorrow does not make any true Christian home less tender. Rather it makes it all the tenderer. Grief brings the members closer together. We never love one another so much; we are never so gentle toward one another, so thoughtful, so unselfish, as when a common grief has touched us all. Indeed, sanctified sorrow transfigures a home. It brings more of heaven down into it. It sweeps away something of the earthliness which clings always to unchastened love. It brings out many of the better qualities of the household lives. It takes something of the hardness out of every heart. It deepens the meaning of life. If the music is not so loud afterward, yet it is sweeter. If the joy is less boisterous, it is richer and fuller after the grief has come.

It may truly be said, that no home ever reaches its highest blessedness and sweetness of love, and its richest fullness of joy--until sorrow enters its life in some way. The best home music can be brought out only in the fire of trial. Did you ever sit on a winter's evening before an old fashioned open fireplace with its blazing log of wood? As you sit there and watch the fire playing about the log, you begin to hear a soft sound, a clear musical note perhaps, or a tender quavering strain, plaintive and sad. It takes every tone as the evening passes. Sometimes it sounds like a whole chorus of bird songs; sometimes it dies away into a faint murmur. What is it? Are there birds hidden in the chimney that give out these strange notes? Are there invisible spirits hovering about the room, that breathe out these plaintive strains? No, the music comes from the log in the fire. The flames bring it out. If you are of a poetical turn of mind, you will imagine that long ago in the forest, the birds sat on the branches of the tree from which this back log was taken, and sang there, and their songs hid away in the wood, where they have remained ever since. Or you will fancy that the winds sighed and murmured through the branches in gentle summer breezes, or swept through them in furious storms, and that the music of the breezes or of the storms has been imprisoned in the heart of the tree all these many years. And now in the hot flames, all this long slumbering music is brought out.

This is but a pretty poetic fancy, so far as the music of the log on the hearth is concerned; but it is no mere fancy that the sweetest, fullest music of the home, is not drawn out until the fires of trial come. The bird notes of joy, which warble about the ears in the sunny days of childhood and youth, sink away into the heart and hide there. The lessons, the influences, the gladness, the peace, of quiet, prosperous days, seem to have been lost. The life does not appear to yield its true measure of joyfulness. Then the fires of trial kindle about it, and in the flames, the long gathering and imprisoned music is set free and flows out. We all know lives of which this is the true history. The world's richest songs have been sung in the midst of the hot fires.

What is true of individual life, is true also of home-life. Our love for one another may be true and deep in the sunny days--but it never reaches its richest development until pain or suffering touches us and calls out all the hidden wealth of affection. The mother's love for her child, rich and deep as it is, never attains its full wondrousness of self-denial and sacrifice, until the child is sick or in some pain--and the mother bends over it in yearning solicitude and unselfish ministry.

The same is true of all the home affections. It is the fire that brings out the imprisoned music. The household that has endured sorrow in the true spirit of faith and resignation, comes out of it with richer and tenderer love. Husband and wife that bend side by side over a dead child--are drawn to each other as never before. The other children are dearer to the parents after one has been taken. Brothers and sisters grow more patient and thoughtful toward one another, when their circle has been broken. An empty chair has a wonderful power to soften home hearts, and refine the feelings of nature.

Thus the memories of grief and trial in a truly Christian home, are not discordant notes in the song--but become really its sweetest voices. As the years come and go--the remembrance of losses and disappointments loses its bitterness, and becomes a source of joy rather than of pain.

So it oftentimes comes that the very tenderest and richest memories of a home are the memories of its sorrows. They are golden chains which bind hearts together in tenderest clasp. When Christian faith rules in the heart, the mementos of grief and loss become inspirers of new hopes. We are richer for having loved--although we have lost.

We are richer also for having suffered--if we have suffered with resignation and trust in God. Then we are richer also in immortal possessions. Our holy dead are not lost to us; they have only passed into a higher, fuller, safer life, where they are secure forever from danger and trial, and secure also for us.

It is not every home whose memories are such a heritage of blessing. An ungodly home twines about the tender lives of the young, no such sacred cords to bind them to truth, to virtue and to love. The fellowship of an unloving household, leave no such joy fountains in the hearts of its members. In a Christless, prayerless home--sorrows are not thus transfigured and changed into blessings. It is only where Christ is a guest that the home-life is so enriched and illumined. It is only his presence which will sanctify every influence and hallow every memory.

It is important for us, to make sure that we have Christ himself in our home. If Christ is indeed remembered daily and hourly in the home, if his presence is consciously realized and its transforming power felt in each heart, and if everything is done and every word is spoken in his name--the household life will be pervaded by the spirit of heaven, and the home memories will be tender with all the hallowed tenderness of the warmest love.

We are fast moving on through this world. Soon all that will remain of us will be the memories of our lives. No part of our work will then afford such a true test of our living, as the memorials we leave behind us in our homes. No other work that God gives any of us to do is so important, so sacred, so far reaching in its influence, so delicate and easily marred--as our home-making. This is the work of all our life--that is most divine. The carpenter works in wood, the mason works in stone, the smith works in iron, the artist works on canvas--but the homemaker works on immortal lives. The wood or the stone or the iron or the canvas may be marred, and it will not matter greatly in fifty years; but let a tender human soul be marred in its early training, and ages hence the effects will still be seen. Whatever else we slight, let it never be our home-making. If we do nothing else well in this world, let us at least build well within our own doors.

The last song and the most beautiful that Mozart sang, was his Requiem. He had been engaged upon this exquisite piece for several weeks, his soul filled with inspirations of richest melody. After giving the last touch, and breathing into it that undying spirit of song which was to consecrate it for all time, he fell into a gentle and quiet slumber. At length the light footsteps of his daughter awoke him.

"Come hither, my Emilie," he said; "my task is done. The Requiem, my requiem, is finished."

"Say not so, dear father," spoke the gentle girl; "you must be better; even now your cheek has a glow upon it."

"Do not deceive yourself, my child," said the dying father; "this wasted form can never be restored by human aid. Take these, my last notes; sit down by my piano here and sing them with the hymns of your sainted mother. Let me once more hear those tones which have so long been my solace and delight."

Emilie obeyed, with a voice enriched by the tenderest emotion. Then, turning from the piano when she had finished, she looked in silence for the approving smile of her father--but there was instead only the still, passionless smile which the enrapt spirit had left, with the seal of death upon his features. He had gone home on the wings of his own Requiem.

There is no requiem so sweet for the departing spirit, as the hallowed memories of a true home. They will make music in the heart in its last moments, inspiring as the songs of angels.

May God help everyone of us to live at home so tenderly, so unselfishly, so lovingly--that the memories we make within our own doors shall be our own holiest requiem, on the breath of which our spirits may be wafted away to glory--in the Home in our Father's House!

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