

Learning to Be Thoughtful.

by J.R. Miller

Thoughtfulness is a vital quality that gives a wondrous charm to a life, making one a blessing wherever he goes, and is essential for building strong, loving relationships.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:32, Philippians 2:4, Colossians 3:12

Topics: "Christian Character", "Thoughtfulness"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of thoughtfulness in a complete Christian character, illustrating how it transforms one's life into a blessing for others. He explains that a thoughtful person instinctively helps others, respects their individuality, and avoids intrusiveness, especially in times of sorrow. Miller highlights that true thoughtfulness is not just about actions but also about refraining from causing pain or discomfort to others. He encourages self-reflection on our own thoughtfulness and stresses that a Christian life should be marked by sweetness and kindness, as modeled by Christ. Ultimately, he calls for believers to cultivate this grace in their interactions with others.

Transcript

One of the finest things in a complete Christian character, is thoughtfulness. It gives a wondrous charm to a life. It makes one a blessing wherever he goes. It tempers all his conduct, softening all natural harshness into gentleness, and giving a spirit of kindness to his every word and act, and to all his bearing.

A thoughtful person does not have to be asked to help others -- he helps, as it were, instinctively. He is ever ready . . .

to do the obliging thing,

to say the encouraging word,

to show an interest in the life of others,

to perform those countless little kindnesses which so brighten the common pathway.

He does not make his life an intrusion to others, a constant irritating influence. He never meddles with other people's affairs -- but respects the individuality and the rights of everyone. He curbs his curiosity, and does not pry into matters of which he has no right to know. He is most careful not to touch others at

sensitive points. If anyone has a physical deformity or any feature which is marred, he is careful in conversation never to refer to it, and seems never to notice it, or to be conscious of it.

Thoughtfulness reveals itself quite as much in what it does not do -- as in the things it does. Many people make their very goodness so obtrusive as to do harm, and give pain to those they would help. They are too anxious to be helpful. They intrude upon others, pressing their offers of kindness upon them in ways which become, if not offensive and impertinent, at least burdensome. When their friends are in sorrow, they are sincerely eager to give comfort; but they fail to understand the sacredness of grief, or to respect the craving of sad hearts for quiet, and allow their eagerness to become intrusiveness.

There is no more delicate test of thoughtfulness, than that which sorrow furnishes. Usually love's sweetest and best service then is rendered in the quietest expression of sympathy, certainly with no undue pressing of one's self into the presence of the friends who are in trouble, and with no over-eager offer to help. Then, unless from personal experience of grief, one has been prepared for giving effective sympathy -- one would better not seek to be a privileged comforter.

Thoughtfulness has a wide field for its ministry in the family circle and in the daily household life. Perhaps few young people come by this grace naturally, and are born with it. Usually it has to be learned. Most of us think first of ourselves and our own comfort and convenience -- and are not apt to think how our words, acts, and dispositions will affect others. We say what at the moment we feel like saying, not stopping to ask whether it will give pleasure or pain to those who must hear it. We like to say, saying it too with some pride, that we are plain, frank people, honest and outspoken. We are sincere though brusque, not realizing that our brusqueness and plainness often hurt gentle hearts. We do the thing we feel inclined to do, because it pleases us, not remembering that true love seeks not its own -- but thinks first of the comfort and pleasure of others.

Without being aware of it, many of us are miserably selfish in our life among others. We practically forget that there are any other people, or that we ought to make any sacrifices, or practice any self-denials, for their sake. Young people at home, for example, will indulge themselves in sleep in the mornings, coming down late to breakfast, not thinking of the trouble they cause to those who have to do the work, nor how they interfere with the order of the household. Thoughtfulness seeks never to add to another's burdens, never to make extra work or care -- but always to lighten loads.

In much home conversation, too, there is a lack of thoughtfulness shown. Not always is the speech gentle -- sometimes it is sharp and bitter, even rude. Playfulness is to be allowed, and in every family there should be a readiness to take a jest without being hurt by it. Over-sensitiveness is a serious fault. Some people are so touchy as to demand an excessive thoughtfulness -- a watchfulness in all our relations with these over-gentle souls which is unreasonable, which makes friendship with them a burden. Life is too short, and has too many real duties and cares, for us to be held to such exactions of attention and kindness as these good people would demand. Yet always in our relations with others, there should be that refined courtesy which is part of the lesson of love that we learn from our Master, "As I have loved you -- even so must you love one another." Rude words never should be spoken, even in jest.

Thoughtfulness will seek always to say kindly words, never words that will give pain -- but ever those words that will give pleasure. We have no right, for the sake of saying a bright thing, to let loose a shaft, however polished, that will make a loving heart bleed! Mr. Sill says:

These clumsy feet, still in the mire,

Go crushing blossoms without end.

These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust,

Among the heart-strings of a friend.

The ill-timed truth we might have kept,

Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?

These are fragments of a lesson which might be indefinitely extended. Are you thoughtful? -- that is the question. Answer it for yourself.

James Johnston has said, "Unless our religion has sweetened us to a very considerable extent -- giving us the control of our temper; checked us in our moments of irritation and weakness; enabled us to meet misfortune and, in a measure, overcome it; developed within us the virtues of patience and long-suffering, making us tender and charitable in our judgments of others; and generally diffusing about us an atmosphere that is congenial and winsome -- whatever else we may have gained, one thing is sure, our religion is not having its perfect work in us. And, even though our Christian life is clear and positive, it is only as a gnarled and twisted apple-tree which bears no fruit -- only as a prickly bush that bears no roses. The very thing which of all others we should have -- is the very thing in which we are most deficient. A Christian life without sweetness, is a lamp without light, salt without savor."

We all know in our own experience the value of sincere and Christly thoughtfulness. We do not like to come in contact with thoughtless people. We know well how it hurts and how unbeautiful, how unchristian, it seems when we see it in another, and when our heart is the one that suffers from its harsh, rude impact. We all long for thoughtfulness in others; our hearts hunger and thirst for it. It is bread and wine to us.

What we long for in others, in their relation to us -- we should be ready to give to them. What in others hurts us, gives us pain -- we ought to avoid in our contact with others. Thoughtfulness is one of the finest, ripest fruits of love, and all who would be like the Master must seek to learn this lesson and wear this grace.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/learning-to-be-thoughtful/>

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