

Living Without Worry - Part 2

by J.R. Miller

Jesus' commandment of love is a new commandment that refers to loving one's brother or fellow-Christian, and the measure of love is 'as I have loved you'.

Scripture: John 13:34

Topics: "Love", "Christian Unity"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the transformative power of love as taught by Jesus, distinguishing between the old commandment to love one's neighbor and the new commandment to love one another as Christ loves us. He illustrates that true love is selfless, patient, and kind, urging Christians to embody these qualities in their interactions with others, regardless of their worthiness. Miller highlights the importance of cooperation in Christian life, advocating for a love that fosters unity and mutual support among believers. He challenges the audience to reflect on their own expressions of love and to strive for a deeper, more sacrificial love that mirrors Christ's own. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to live out this love in practical ways, enriching both personal relationships and the broader community.

Transcript

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J. R. Miller

The New Kind of Love

Why should Jesus have called his commandment of love a new commandment? There was an old commandment that ran, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Some people suppose that this is the same as the commandment that Jesus gave to his disciples. But there are two differences. The old commandment referred to your neighbor--that is, to everybody; the new refers to your brother, your fellow-Christian. The other difference is in the measure of the love--"as yourself"; "as I have loved you."

The world never knew what love meant, until Jesus came and lived among men. "As yourself" --this puts self and others side by side; "as I have loved you" --this carries us away beyond that, for Jesus made sacrifice of himself in loving his disciples.

And so this touches our lives at very practical points. "Love is patient, and is kind." The trouble with too many of us is that our kindness is spasmodic, is shown only when we feel like it, and is checked

continually by things which happen. But nothing ever stopped the flow of Christ's kindness; nothing ever should check the flow of a Christian's kindness.

"Love... does not behave itself unseemly." That is, it never forgets itself, is never crude. All uncharitableness is unseemly. Nothing is more remarkable in the story of Christ's life, than his unflinching respect for people. He seemed to have almost reverence for everyone that came before him, even the poorest, the lowest, and the worst. The reasons were, that he loved everyone, and that he saw in each the glorious possibilities of heavenly sonship. If we had our Master's lofty regard for, and his deep interest in, the lives of men, we would never act in an unseemly way toward even the unworthiest. The poet said he would never have for his friend, that man who would needlessly set his foot upon a worm. If it befits us to treat considerately, a mere worm--how should we treat even the poorest, the lowliest, who wears the divine image, and is "but little lower than God"?

"Love is not provoked." That is, it does not become vexed or irritated at what another may say or do. Yet many people seem to overlook this line of the picture. Nothing is more common than ill-temper. Some people get provoked even at things. A boy the other day flew into a rage at his bicycle from which he had fallen, and beat the machine unmercifully. A man stumbled over a chair, and in a violent passion kicked the chair all about the room. No other infirmity is so often confessed as bad temper. Many people will tell you that they find no other fault in themselves so hard to overcome. Nor do they seem ashamed to make the confession; apparently they do not consider the fault a serious one. They speak of it apologetically, as an infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, certainly not a fault to be taken seriously. Bad temper has been called the vice of the virtuous. Men and women whose characters are noble, whose lives are beautiful in every other way, have this one fault--they are sensitive, touchy, easily ruffled, easily hurt.

But we make a grave mistake when we let ourselves think that ill temper is merely a trifling weakness. It is a disfiguring blemish. Jesus set for us the perfect model of living, and he was never provoked. In all his experience of persecution, wrong, mocking, and injustice--he was not once provoked. He would have us live the same life. When he bids us love one another as he has loved us--this is part of what he means.

Loving one another as Christ loves us, makes it easier for others to live and work with us. A minister tells of some people in his church who are excellent workers, full of zeal and energy--but he says they will not drive double. There are horses of this kind; they will not pull in a team--but have to be driven single. So it seems there are people who have the same infirmity. They want to do good--but they cannot work with others. There is a kind of carriage which has only two wheels and a seat for one. It is suggestively called a sulky, because the rider rides alone. Some people seem happiest when they ride alone.

The love of Christ teaches a better way. We need to learn to think of others, those with whom we are united in Christian life and work. It is so in all associated life. It is so in marriage. When two lives are brought together in close relation, after having lived separately, it is evident that both cannot have their own way in everything. There is not room for any two people to have their own way in the marriage relation. They are now one, occupying only the place of one, and they must live as one. There must be either the entire displacement of one by the other, the losing of the individuality of one in that of the other, the entire giving up of one to the other--or else there must be the mutual blending of the one in the other. Love unites them, and they are no longer twain--but one.

The same principle must prevail in Christian life and work. Headstrong individualism must be softened and modified by love. Jesus sent forth his disciples by two by two. Two working together, are better than two

working separately. One is strong in one point and weak in another; the second is strong where the first is weak, and thus the two supplement each other. Paul speaks of certain Christians as yoke-fellows. Yoke-fellows draw together patiently and steadily, two necks under the same yoke, two hearts pouring their love and fellowship into one service.

We know the importance in Christian life, of being pleasant to live with and work with. It never should have to be said of us that other people cannot work with us. The secret of being agreeable yoke-fellows, is love. This means self-losing, self-forgetfulness. The Christian who is always wanting to have positions of prominence, to be chairman or president, first in something, has not caught the spirit of the love of Christ, who came not to be ministered unto--but to minister. Love never demands the first place--it works just as enthusiastically and as faithfully at the foot of a committee, as at the head of it. It is content to be overlooked, set aside--if only Christ is exalted. It is patient with the faults of fellow-workers.

We are called to a love like Christ's, in building up his kingdom. He loved and gave himself; we must love and give ourselves. We can serve Christ and our fellow men, only in a sacrificial service. "As I have loved you" means loving to the uttermost.

This is a love which is not affected by the character, or the past life of the person we love. To love as Christ loved--is to love the worst, the least worthy; to love them until they are lifted up, cleansed and transfigured. To love as Christ loved--is to let his love into our own lives, to learn to live as he lived--in gentleness, in patience, in humility, in kindness, in endurance, in all sweetness of spirit, in all helpfulness and self-denial. It is not easy; but it was not easy for Christ to love as he did.

The trouble with too much of what we call love--is that it costs nothing, is only a sort of gilded selfishness, is not ready to sacrifice anything, to give up, to suffer, or to endure. Let us not profane the holy name of love, by calling such life as this love. To love as Christ loves, is to repeat Christ's sacrifice continually, in serving, in forgiving, bearing, enduring, that others may be helped, blessed and saved.

As I Have Loved You

The art of living together is not easily learned. Indeed, it is the one lesson of life--and it takes all life to learn it. We cannot evade the lesson, for we cannot live apart. We are not made for solitariness. We need continual contact with others, in order that we may have the benefit of the impact and discipline of life on life. We are made to love together, and the ideal is very high. Christ gave the secret to his disciples. They were to love one another, and the measure of their love should be, "As I have loved you."

When we have learned to live in this way, we shall have no trouble in living together. It is worth our while to study the Master's rule of love, that we may know how to make it our own. How did he love his disciples? We have it in his every-day life with his disciples.

In the broadest sense his love was unselfish. SELF never thrust itself into any thought of his. It is selfishness which so often mars men's treatment of each other. "How will this affect me?" is the question which rises first in deciding what to do. It never rose at all in Christ's dealing with others. He thought only and always of what he could do to give pleasure or do good.

The spirit of unselfishness showed itself first of all, in unvarying kindness. His heart was sensitive to every pain or suffering in any life. He was touched with the feeling of every human infirmity, and longed to help or strengthen or comfort. He was ever ready to do gentle or obliging things. He did not expect others to

help or serve him--he came not to be ministered unto--but to minister.

We cannot love as he loved, in the great infinite ways of his divine power. We cannot imitate his miracles of mercy and helpfulness. We cannot feed multitudes with our little loaves and fishes, or go along the streets and heal sick people by hundreds. But for every miracle that Jesus wrought, he did a thousand simple deeds of kindness, just such deeds as we can do. "As I have loved you" means therefore no impossible thing in our daily life. The divinest thing in the world is love shown in unselfish kindness. It may be only a gentle word, the commonest act of helpfulness to a lowly one, a bit of cheer to one who is discouraged. We cannot know the power of helpfulness there is in the commonest kindnesses we may do.

The love of Christ was always patient. Impatience mars a great deal of human love--but he never showed the slightest impatience to anyone. He did not fly into a temper as we do so often when people try us. His disciples were dull and slow learners. It seemed as if they never would learn the lessons he wanted to teach them. But he did not chide them. A great teacher said he never could forget how a boy whom he had rebuked for his dullness in not understanding some lesson, looked into his face and said, "Indeed, sir, I am doing the best I can!" The teacher said it shamed him to think how he had wronged and hurt the boy by his impatient and unworthy outbreak. Jesus never did anything like that. He had infinite patience with the slowest scholar he was trying to teach.

He had patience also with his disciples in their many failures in faithfulness and obedience. We are very exacting in our friendships; making large demands upon those we call friends, impatient even of the slightest lack of devotion; quick to resent any lack in loyalty or service. But Jesus bore with his friends in all their lack of faithfulness, never rebuking them and never withdrawing the rich grace of his love from them. They slept, when he had asked them to watch beside him while he was enduring his agony. Their failure grieved him sorely--but he uttered no word of complaint or chiding. It hurt him to have them so misunderstand his teaching about himself--but the only word he spoke was, "Have I been so long time with you--and have you not known me?" He was patient with their faults, their failures, their fears, their doubts, their denials, and all their unfaithfulness. They made friendship very hard for him--but he never failed nor faltered in his loving--he loved them unto the end.

Think what it would mean if we were to live together in this patient and forbearing way as Christians. Is not impatience one of the faults in our ordinary fellowship, which do most to mar the perfectness of our relations as Christians? Do we not too easily grow weary of the dullness of those we ought to help? Do we not chafe at the slowness of those who are walking with us? Do we not fail continually in sympathy with those who are weak and faint, with those who are feeble in body or mind? Do we not show irritation when others misunderstand us, when one doubts the sincerity and the reality of our friendship, or when those who we have trusted prove unworthy of our confidence? No doubt there are sore testing of love--but remember what "As I have loved you" means to us. The law of love is not "Do to others--what they have done to you," but "Do to them--what you would have them do to you."

Few of us go through life without being unjustly treated. The teacher was wise who exhorted those he taught, to accustom themselves to injustice. It is not an easy lesson to learn--but it is part of "As I have loved you." We must keep our love sweet, patient, forgiving, bearing all injury and wrong, if we would obey the Master's word and follow his example.

"As I have loved you." How small and inadequate much of our loving of each other is, when we lay it alongside this pattern! Christ loved men because he was their Friend. He never asked whether they were

worthy or unworthy. He despised no one--but saw in every meanest wreck of life--a possible child of God and sought to lift the unworthiest to glory. In living together as Christians, we are to love all whom Christ loves. Not everyone is beautiful, holy, or a saint--but love makes us gentle with rudeness, harshness, or unkindness; patient with faultiness, pitiful toward weakness. Whatever others may do to us or fail to do--we must always love them.

F.W. Robertson tells of a friend who had failed to speak a word for him when he was falsely charged, leaving him defenseless against a slander. But he did not complain. He only says, "How rare it is to have a friend who will defend you thoroughly and boldly!" Yet that is what a friend should do. If you hear a word spoken against your friend, your fellow-Christian, if you love him as Christ loves you--you will defend him, stand between him and the false thing charged against him. That is the way the Master did, when any of his disciples were maligned. We cannot be too ready to speak for others, when they are criticized or calumniated. Too often we forget this requirement of Christian love. Some even seem to be glad to hear evil of others, and to believe it, and to allow suspicion to poison their friendship. This is cowardly, as well as unchristian. The true course regarding evil spoken of others, if possible, is to refuse to hear it; if we must hear it, to refuse to believe it; if it is so plain that we cannot but believe it, then to cast the mantle of charity over it and seek in every way to save the person against whom the evil is proved. "If any man is overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourself, lest you also be tempted." That is loving as Christ loves us.

Is Christ-love the master-passion of our life?

Divine Use of Human Cooperation

The human part in grace is always important. A study of our Lord's miracles illustrates this. The divine power was imparted, usually, through human cooperation. For example, the man with the withered hand was bidden to stretch forth his hand. This was precisely what the man could not do, and had not been able to do for many years. Yet if he was to receive the healing, this was the way it was to come to him. Had he replied that obedience to the command was impossible; his arm might not have been restored. This would have been unbelief in him. But he instantly made the effort to obey, thus magnifying faith; and as he tried to stretch forth the withered hand, the divine power was exerted, and his arm was restored to strength.

Ten lepers, huddled together in their camp, cried to Jesus, as they saw him passing by, imploring him to have mercy upon them. His compassion was stirred at sight of their abject misery--but his manner of answering their pleading, seemed remarkable. He bade them go and show themselves to the priests. This was what the law required a cleansed leper to do in order to receive a certificate of healing, that he might be admitted back into society. There would be no use in their showing themselves to the priests while they were still lepers. So they might have said, waiting to be cleansed before starting toward the priests. But if they had done this they might never have been healed. The cure of their disease, though wrought by Jesus, was to come to them through their own faith, and their faith must show itself in obedience. The men seem to have asked no questions. They took the bidding of the great Healer as an answer to their beseeching, implying an assurance that when they had come to the priests they would find themselves cleansed. So they set out at once, and eagerly, on their journey.

Very strikingly runs the record: "As they went--they were cleansed." The healing was divine--but it was dependent upon human cooperation. If the men had not gone on their way, the cure might never have been wrought. As they believed and obeyed--the healing of Christ swept through them, and their flesh

came again as the flesh of a little child.

These illustrations suggest a law of the divine working which is general in its application. Divine grace does not act in a life or through a life independently of the person's own consent and cooperation. It stands at the door and knocks--but it never lifts the latch nor forces an entrance; he who is within must rise and open the door. It is ready to impart strength and new life--but there is something for us to do before the divine power will become efficient. We may be as utterly unable to do the thing which is commanded, as was the man with the withered arm to obey the Master's bidding--but, like him, we must assent in our heart, and must exert our will in the effort to obey. The doing of the impossible thing is not ours--but the willing to obey is ours. If we say we cannot do it, we are showing unbelief.

Some people think that it is the part of humility, to confess weakness and inability in the presence of divine commands. They suppose that God is pleased with such lowliness of spirit. But this is not humility, it is unbelief, and God is never pleased with unbelief. He is never so unreasonable as to give us any command we cannot obey, for with the divine bidding is included also and always, divine power sufficient to enable us to obey. "Command what you will--and give what you command," was an ancient prayer of faith which was not presumptuous. Paul understood it when he said, "I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me."

Yet there is a vast amount of failure just at this point in human experience. Men hear the divine bidding, and they understand vaguely, at least, that they ought to obey. But they suppose that they must wait for the power before they can obey, and get the blessing. So they sit down in what seems to them the attitude of faith, expecting to receive an inflowing of grace to enable them to do that which they desire to do. But the grace does not come. The mistake they make, is in not instantly willing to do the will of God. If they would assent to the divine command, and attempt to stretch forth their withered hand to do the Lord's work--the hand would become living and strong.

Countless Christian people never do anything worth while for Christ, because they think they cannot do anything. They say they have no ability, no skill, no training, for service. Really, however, they need only to begin to do the duties which come to their hand day by day; if they would will to make the effort, power and skill would be imparted. They do, indeed, need the help of Christ--but that help is always waiting to be given if they will begin to do their part.

There are many who do not enter upon a Christian life because they are waiting for something which they think they must have first--some feeling, some experience, before they can really become Christ's disciples. They want to know that they are forgiven, or to have in them evidences that their life has been changed, before they set out to follow Christ. But they will never find the blessing they expect, until they have entered on a life of obedience, just as the lepers would not have been cleansed, if they had not started on the way to the priest. Those who hear Christ's call, and wish to be his disciples, should wait for nothing. They should begin immediately to follow him. As they go on, they will receive grace, and blessings will be given.

So it is in every phase of Christian life--the divine working waits for human assent and effort. We must keep ourselves in the attitude of obedience, quick to do whatever our Lord may command. Then, as we strive to do his will, thus showing our faith, the power of God will be imparted to us.

There is one class of our Lord's miracles, which illustrates our responsibility for the work of God in others as well as in ourselves. It is said that Jesus could do no mighty work in Nazareth--nothing more than the

curing of a few sick folk--because of the people's unbelief. Thus the blessing of healing was kept from many sick and suffering ones, because men disbelieved. A father besought Jesus to cure his demoniac son--but the father's faith was imperfect. Jesus told him that, if he could believe, the cure would be wrought, implying that it would not be wrought with the father's faith weak as it then was. Thus the imperfection of the man's believing, prevented the child's restoration to sanity. When at length the father's faith became stronger, the boy was healed.

Thus on every side, this truth has most serious bearing on our life. There never can be a failure in the divine blessing--but the receiving of blessing is with us. We need to give most earnest heed to ourselves, that we may not be wanting in cooperation with the divine working, so as to miss blessing for ourselves, or to fail to be God's messenger of good to others.

Converted Tongues

The power to communicate good which God has lodged in the human tongue, is simply incalculable. It can impart knowledge; utter words which will shine like lamps in darkened hearts; speak kindly sentences which will comfort sorrow or cheer despondency; breathe thoughts which will arouse, inspire, quicken, animate heedless souls; even whisper the secret of life-giving Gospel to those who are dead. What good we could do with our tongues, if we would use them to the limit of their capacity--no human being can compute. The opportunity does not lie alone in formal speech, as in the sermon, or the lesson, or in the occasional serious talk--but it extends to all conversation, even to the most casual greeting on the street.

A godly man once wrote to some friends: "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." He knew the value of the gift of speech, and sought in every sentence he uttered to impart some help, some comfort, some warning or cheer. How it would change the current of conversation in parlor, office, shop, on the street, in the railway-car, if all Christian people were to utter only such words as would convey some spiritual blessing to those to whom they speak!

What is the staple of conversation now among average Christian? Listen for a day, and make careful note of every word you hear. How much of it is worth recording? How many sentences are spiritually helpful, calculated to kindle higher aspirations or start upward impulses? How much of it is utterly empty and idle, mere chaff that feeds no heart-hunger, inspires no energy, kindles no joy, and helps no one to live better? How much of it is careless scandal, unjust and injurious criticism of the absent? How much of it that flatters and pleases is hypocritical and insincere?

It is startling to think of what Christian conversation might be, and ought to be--and then of what it is. Surely this matter demands the careful attention of every Christian man and woman. Why should such a power for good be wasted? Why should our Christian development be retarded by the misuse of the marvelous gift of speech? It were infinitely better that one was born dumb, than that, having a tongue, one should use it to scatter evil and sorrow, or to sow the seeds of bitterness and pain. What is it that our Lord says about having to give account for every idle word? And if for the idle words we must give account, how much more for the words which stain, or injure, or fall as a destructive blight into other hearts!

When we give ourselves to Christ, we must give him our tongues. It was not without significance that, when the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost, the manifestation was in "tongues like as of fire." Fire signifies purification. And one of the first results of this heavenly baptism, was that the disciples began to speak with other tongues. One meaning of this certainly was that true conversion converts the speech that a Christian must speak with a new tongue.

We are not left without inspired instructions as to the kind of words we should speak. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth--but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." In these words there are two features of purely Christian speech, which are enjoined. One is purity, absolute purity. No corrupt communication is to flow from a consecrated tongue. There is a great deal of impurity in the speech of some professors of religion. Filthy stories are repeated, and there are vile allusions and innuendoes which stain the lips that utter them, and the heart of him who hears. Christian speech should be white as snow. In familiar conversation, nothing should be uttered which would not be spoken in the presence of the most refined and honored ladies. How does our everyday speech stand this test?

Then look at the other requirement. "Let only such communication proceed out of your mouth as is good to the use of edifying that will minister grace unto the hearers." Christian speech, every sentence of it, must be such as will edify those who hear, and minister grace to them. Purity is only negative--but more is required. Each word must be fitted in some way to build up character, and add to its beauty.

Words uttered fall, and are forgotten, as their echo dies away--but they leave their mark. They either beautify or mar. They either make the life brighter or they sully it. They either build up or they tear down what before was built. A warm breath upon the mystic frost-work on the window-pane on a winter's morning, causes all its glory to vanish. So before the breath of impure speech, the soul's glory melts into ruin. The Christian's speech must edify and minister grace. On how many lips which are now garrulous with flippant words, would this test lay the finger of silence! Yet this is the rule, the standard, by which, according to the apostle, all Christian speech is to be tried.

This does not imply that only solemn words may be spoken. There is nothing gloomy about the religion of Christ. You look in vain through our Lord's own conversation for one gloomy sentence. He scattered only sunshine. But all his words were fitted to be helpful words. He sought to leave some gift or blessing with everyone he met. He spoke words which made the careless thoughtful, which kindled hope in despairing souls, which left lights burning where all was dark before, which comforted the sorrowing and cheered the despairing. For everyone he met, he had some message. Yet there was no cant in his speech. He did not go about with a long face, uttering his messages in sanctimonious tone and phrase. Like all his life, his speech was sunny.

He is to be our model. The affectation of devoutness never ministers grace. It only caricatures religion. We are not to fill our speech with solemn phrases, and deal them out to everyone we meet. Yet with Christ in our hearts we are to impart something of Christ to everyone to whom we converse.

There are a thousand ways of giving help. There are times when humor ministers grace, when the truest Christian help is to make a man laugh. Infinite are the necessities of human lives. Our feeling toward others is ever to be a strong desire to do them good. We have an errand with each one with whom we are permitted to hold even the briefest and most casual conversation. What it is, we may not know--but if the desire is in our heart, God will use us to minister blessing in some way. Opportunities for such ministry are occurring continually. In a morning's greeting we may put so much heart and so much Christ into phrase and tone, as to make our neighbor happier all the day. In a few moments' conversation by the wayside, or during the formal call, or in the midst of the day's heat and strife--we may drop the word which will lift a burden, or strengthen a fainting heart, or inspire a new hope.

"Yes, find always time to say some earnest word between the idle talk." So we may leave blessings at every step of our way. Our words in season, throbbing with love, and wafted by the breath of silent prayer, shall be medicine to every heart into which any simplest sentence of our speech may fall.

Speak It Out

No doubt there is a duty of silence. There are times when silence is golden. But there is also a duty of speech. There are times when silence is sin. There are times when it is both ungrateful and disloyal to God--not to speak of his love and goodness, or witness before men in strong, unequivocal words.

We ought to speak out the messages given us for others. God puts something into the heart of every one of his creatures, that he would have that creature utter. He puts into the star, a message of light; you look up into the heavens at night, and it tells you its secret. Who knows what a blessing a star may be to a weary traveler who finds his way by it, or to the sick man lying by his window, and in his sleeplessness looking up at the glimmering point of light in the calm, deep heavens? God gives to a flower, a message of beauty and sweetness, and for its brief life it tells out its message to all who can read it. Who can count up the good even a flower may do, as it blooms in the garden or as it is carried into a sick-room or into the cheerless chamber of poverty?

Especially does God give to every human soul a message to deliver. To one it is some revealing of science. A great astronomer spoke of himself as thinking over God's thought after him, as he traced out the paths of the stars. To the poet God gives thoughts of beauty which he is to speak to the world; and the world is richer, sweeter, and better for hearing his message. We do not realize how much we owe to the men and women who along the centuries, have given forth their songs of hope, cheer, comfort, and inspiration.

We cannot all write poems or hymns, or compose books which will bless men; but if we live near the heart of Christ, there is not one of us into whose ear he will not whisper some fragment of truth, some revealing of grace or love, or to whom he will not give some new experience of comfort in sorrow, some new glimpse of glory. Each friend of Christ, living close to him, learns something from him, and of him, which no one ever has learned before, which he is to forth tell to the world.

Each one should speak out, therefore, his own message. If it be only a single word, it will yet bless the earth. If one of the flowers that bloom in summer days in the fields and gardens had refused to bloom, hiding its little gift of beauty--the world would be poorer and less lovely. If but one of the myriad stars in the heavens had refused to shine, keeping its little beam locked in its breast--the nights would be a little darker than they are. And any human life that fails to hear its message and learn its lesson, or fails to speak it out, keeping it locked in the silence of the heart--leaves this earth a little poorer. But every life, even the lowliest, that learns of God and then speaks out its message, adds something to the world's blessing and beauty.

We ought to speak our heart's joy. There is something very strange in the tendency, which seems so common in human lives, to hide the joy--and tell the misery. Anyone who will keep an account of what people he meets say to him, will probably find that a large proportion of them will say little that is pleasant and happy, and much that is dreary and sad. They will tell him of their bodily aches, pains, and infirmities. They will complain bitterly of the heat if it is warm--or of the chill if it is cold. They will speak of the discouragements in their business, the hardships in their occupation, the troubles in their various duties, and all the manifold miseries, real or imagined, that have fallen to their lot. But they will have very little to

say of their prosperities, their health, their three good meals a day, their encouragements, favors, friendships, and manifold blessings.

Yet it is of this latter class of experiences that the world ought to hear the most. There is no command in the Bible which says we should empty the tale of all our woes into people's ears. It would be far sweeter service if we were to speak only of the pleasant things. And there always is something pleasant even in the most cheerless circumstances, if only we have an eye to find it.

There is a legend that says that once Jesus and his disciples, as they journeyed, saw a dead dog lying by the wayside. The disciples showed disgust and loathing--but the Master said, "what beautiful teeth the creature has!" The legend has its lesson for us. Miss Muloch tells of a gentleman and a lady in a lumberyard, by a dirty, foul-smelling ruin. The lady said, "How good the pine boards smell!" "Pine boards!" exclaimed her companion. "Just smell this foul ruin!" "No, thank you," the lady replied; "I prefer to smell the pine boards." She was wiser than he. It is far better for us to find the sweetness that is in the air than the foulness. It is better, also, to talk to others of the smell of pine boards, than of the heavy odors of stagnant ruins.

There is a large field of opportunities for saying good to others. Many people seem too dilatory of words of encouragement. They have the kindly thoughts in their hearts--but they do not utter them. Of course, there are things in many a heart, which had better not be expressed. There are silences which are better than speech. We should never speak harsh, uncharitable, hurtful words, which will only give needless pain, break hearts, and sunder friendships, and which can never be unsaid. It is bad enough in ill-temper, to have even bitter thoughts of others, of our friends, of any who bear God's image--but it is far worse to let such thoughts find utterance! Then the injury done is irreparable.

But we should never fail to speak out kindly thoughts and feelings. Some people seem to think that the utterance of complimentary words, however well deserved, is weak, sentimental, and unworthy. But it is not, if the things said are sincere and altogether true. Others fail to recognize the value of cheerful, hopeful words--and do not understand that it is worth while to speak them. The truth is, however, that words of encouragement, of inspiration, of cheer--are better oftentimes than angels' visits to those to whom they are spoken. We ought not to withhold that which is in our power to give without cost, and which will so richly bless hungry hearts and weary spirits.

Your neighbor is in sorrow. It is known for days and days that a loved one is hovering between life and death. Then the crape on the door announces that death has conquered, that the home is darkened. You want to help--but you shrink from intruding upon the sorrow. With a heart full of affectionate longing to be of use--you yet do nothing. Is there no way by which your brotherly love might make your neighbor's load a little lighter or his heart a little stronger? Are we not too timid in the presence of other's sorrows? God wants us all to be true comforters. Sorrow is very sacred, and we must enter its sanctuary with reverence. But we must beware that we do not fail in affection's duty, in the hour when our brother's heart is broken. The tenderest sympathy locked up in the heart, avails no more than if our heart were cold.

Perhaps it is in our homes that the lesson is most needed. There is a great deal of sweet love there, which never finds expression. We keep sad silences oftentimes with those who are dearest to us, even when their hearts are crying out for sympathetic words. In many homes that lack rich and deep happiness, it is not more love that is needed--but the flowing out of the love in little words, acts, and expressions. A husband loves his wife, and would give his life for her; but there are days and days that he never tells her so, nor

reveals the sweet truth to her by any sign or token. The wife loves her husband with warm, faithful affection; but she has fallen into the habit of making no demonstration, saying nothing about her love; going through the home life almost as if there were no love in her heart. No wonder husbands and wives drift apart in such homes. Hearts, too, need their daily bread, and starve and die if it is withheld from them.

There are parents who make the same mistake with their children. They love them--but they do not reveal their love. They allow it to be taken for granted. After infancy passes, they quietly drop out of their fellowship with their children--all tenderness, all caresses and marks of fondness. On the first intimation of danger of any kind, their love reveals itself in anxious solicitude and prompt efforts to help--but in the daily life of the home, there is no show of tenderness. The love is unquestioned--but, like the vase of ointment unbroken, it sends out no perfume. The home life may be free from all bitterness, all that is unloving and unkind--and yet it has sore lack. It is not in what is done that the secret of the lack of happiness must be sought--but in what is not done.

It is not enough to love--the love must find expression. We must do it, too, before it is too late. Some people wait until the need is past, and then come up with their laggard sympathy. When the neighbor is well again, they call to say how sorry they are he has been so sick. Would not a kindly inquiry at the door, or a few flowers sent to his room where he was ill, have been a fitter and more adequate expression of brotherly interest? When a man without their help has gotten through his long battle with business difficulties or embarrassments, and is well on his feet again--then they come with their congratulations. Would it not have been better if they had proved their care for him in some way when he needed strong practical sympathy? The time to show our friendship is when our friend is under the shadow of enmity, when evil tongues misrepresent him--and not when he has gotten vindication and stands honored.

There are those, too, who wait until death has come, before they begin to speak their words of appreciation and commendation. There are many who say their first truly generous words of others, beside their coffins. They bring their flowers then, although they never gave a flower when their friends were living. Many a person goes down in defeat, under life's burdens, unhelped, uncheered, and when the eyes are close and the hands folded, then comes, too late--love enough to have turned the battle and given victory, had it come a little earlier.

Life is hard for many people, and we have no right to withhold any word, or touch or act of love, which will lighten the load or cheer the heart of any fellow-struggler. The best use we can make of our life is to live so that we shall be a blessing to everyone we meet. Then we shall make at least one little spot on this earth more sweet and beautiful, and shall leave a few flowers blooming in the desert when we are gone.

The Summer Vacation

When the vacation season comes, some seekers of rest will settle down in one place for a quiet summer; others flit here and there, from shore to mountain, from mountain to spring, from spring to lake. Some cross the sea and climb the Alps, and hurry through foreign villages and cities. Some go into a secluded spot, away from the distracting noise and noxious smells of the city, and rest where the music of birdsongs breaks continually upon their ears, and the breath of summer flowers sweetens the air about them.

Among these refugees are many thousands of the best Sunday-school workers--pastors, superintendents, teachers, and officers. If they have earned their vacation rest by nine, ten, or eleven months of honest, earnest work--the Master will not blame them for taking it. There is no one who does not need hours and days of pause in his busy life. A few weeks of rest should fit all for better service when they return.

Now, of course, all these Christian workers take their religion with them wherever they go. It is sometimes charged that Christian people leave their religion at home, when they go away for summer vacation or summer travel. But this charge is manifestly untrue. True religion is not like a cloak, something which can be laid off. It is something which begins in the heart and permeates the whole life, weaving its thread into the warp and woof of the character, permeating the disposition, shining in the face, gleaming in the eye, uttering itself in the speech. It is absurd then, to talk about leaving one's religion at home when one travels. All the religion one really has--he will carry with him wherever he goes. People who leave their religion at home, will not have much trouble in laying it off, for it is precious little they can have to leave, and it must be only an outside cloak at the best.

So we may consider this point settled--that all true Christians will take their religion with them. They will be as sincere, faithful, watchful, reverent, prayerful, Bible-reading Christians, by the seashore or on the country farm, as they are at home.

Now let them carry also with them, their Christian activity. After the hard work of nine or ten months some good people think that they should have an absolute rest for the few weeks they spend away from their own fields. So they drop everything. They give up their lesson-study. They keep away from the Sunday-school. They attend church on Sunday mornings--but manifest no interest in the people with whom they worship, or in their work. They make no effort to be helpful to others. They give their hands and hearts a vacation. The result is they leave no impression for good in the place where they have tarried. They fail to let any light shine to cheer or bless other hearts. They fail to bear any positive witness for Christ. They leave no one blessed by their stay.

There is a better way. It is for the Christian worker to continue his active ministry for Christ, wherever he goes. It will not diminish in the smallest degree the benefit he will derive from his vacation. It never aids one's resting or recuperation to be selfish meanwhile. It does one's brain no good to shut up one's heart and stop the outflow of its kindness and beneficence. On the other hand, it makes a vacation all the richer in its results of rest, health, and new vigor--to keep the heart ever open, and to scatter blessings all along one's path.

There are a great many ways in which earnest Christian people can do good in vacation. You are stopping for a few weeks in a country village, or on a farm near a country church. You can enter at once with heartiness and sincerity into the interests of the little congregation. If teachers are needed, you can take a class. If there are young people who are not in the Sunday-school, you may gather a few of them together and form a Bible-class. If no such work seems to be needed, you can enter a class yourself, thus attesting you love for the Bible and your eager desire to know more of it.

At the same time you can make yourself one of the people, showing kindness on every hand, and trying in a simple, Christlike way to touch as many lives as possible with the blessing of your own loving, unselfish spirit. All work for Christ, is not that which we do as officers in church or school. Our unofficial ministry is oftentimes far more productive of good results, than that which is formal and official. What we do as Christian men and Christian women, is far more important than what we do as pastors, superintendents, and teachers. There is always a field therefore, and an open door, for the wayside ministry.

Let the spirit of Christ in your heart flow out in gentleness toward all. If you hear of a sick person in the neighborhood, find some way of showing Christian sympathy, by calling, by sending a few flowers, or some choice delicacy, or a little book. If sorrow enters a home while you stay, although you are a stranger,

there is nothing improper in your manifesting your interest in some gentle way. You can notice the children whom you meet, win their confidence, and leave blessing in their hearts. If there is a poor family in the vicinity, a widow with orphaned little ones, or a household struggling with adversity--you can prove God's angel to carry help, cheer, and strengthening sympathy.

Or if you are spending the summer in a large boarding-house or hotel. You can gather the children of the house into a pleasant little Sunday-school which they will greatly enjoy. Or you may arrange for a Bible-reading or a song service on Sunday evenings. There are many Christian ladies and gentlemen who every summer, do such work as this at the boarding-houses or hotels where they spend their vacations; and great good comes from their quiet efforts. In such resorts, too, there is constant opportunity for personal ministry. There are heavy hearts in every such circle as gathers in a large summer boarding-house. There is need for the ministry of sympathy and comfort. There are some who are thoughtless and worldly, who may be impressed, if not by spoken words, at least by the influence of a genuine Christian life, lived out close beside them, in patience, gentleness, and unselfishness, all the summer through.

These are hints only of the ways without number in which true Christian workers may carry on their work through all their summer rest. Wherever they go they will find opportunities, if not for formal, official service, yet always for that better service of heart and tongue and hand to which every Christian is chosen and ordained. They can so witness for Christ in every place--as to win friends for their Master. They can so give out the sweetness of Christian love--that every life which touches theirs shall receive a blessing, and shall bear away an inspiration for better living thereafter. They can so seek to do good to the poor, the sorrowing, the disheartened, that their memory shall be cherished for years in the spots where they tarry.

Is it not better to spend a vacation thus--than in idleness and selfishness, or in worldly gaiety and dissipation?

Launch Out Into the Deep

The deep sea hides great treasures. It is full of wonderful things. It contains a world of beauty. Yet he who only walks along the shore and looks at the shining sands, or picks up here and there a beautiful shell, or watches the waves break on the cold, grey rocks, or he who sails merely along the coast, not venturing out upon the deep waters--knows but little of the wonderful secrets of the sea, which fill its sunned chambers.

The BIBLE is a great ocean. On one shore it breaks on the earth, rolling close to our feet; on the other it dashes up its silver spray on the golden street of heaven. It hides in its depth, the most glorious secrets. The bottom of the sea must hold vast treasures. Ships have gone down with their freightage of gold and silver and precious stones. But in the depths of the Holy Scriptures, are treasures infinitely richer than any which the sea contains. All the wealth of redemption is hidden there. There are promises there, and title-deeds to most glorious inheritances, and crowns brighter than any that ever rested on the brow of earthly king, and gem and jewels more brilliant than any that were ever worn in this world. In the depths of Holy Scripture, lie all the riches of God's love and all the treasures of divine knowledge.

But we can never find the wonderful things of the Bible by merely searching along its shores. Newton, after all his discoveries in science, spoke of himself as but a little child playing along the edge of an ocean, finding here and there a brilliant shell, while the ocean itself, with all its great depths, lay before him unexplored. This is still more true of the most diligent researches of the Bible. It is an inexhaustible book.

Yet there are those who toil away and draw their nets through it, and find nothing. It is because they search only along the shore. Does the bible yield but little blessing or comfort to us? Do we fail to find in it, the precious things of which we hear others speak? Is it because we have not yet sounded its depths? Its best things come not to mere surface readers; they must be sought for with diligence, with eagerness, with love, with strong faith, with heart-hunger. "Put out into the depths, and let down your net," is Christ's word today to us as it was to his disciples.

The same is true of PRAYER. It has its great ocean depths. No one has begun to realize the possibilities of prayer. Well says the English poet: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Scientific men are busy measuring the forces of nature. They tell us of the energies of light, of heat, of gravitation, of electricity, and they think they have catalogued all the forces that are at work in this world. But last night a million women were on their knees praying to God for husbands and sons and fathers and brothers, and through the darkness and the silence their pleadings went up to God, and a new power was felt upon a million lives all over the world.

Today, in hundreds of thousands of sanctuaries, devout believers meet and mingle their hearts' breathings in prayers for the outpouring of God's Spirit, and all these importunities are heard in heaven and will bring down upon men's hearts and lives, a spiritual energy that shall be felt in penitences and repentings and new consecrations and obediences, in new holiness and love.

There is something overwhelming in the thought of the things which are wrought by prayer in this world. Think of all the secret prayers which rise from heart-closets, of all the supplications which go up from family altars, of all the pleadings which ascend from worshiping assemblies; and then remember that no true prayer of faith remains unanswered. Truly "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of!"

Yet the great mass of Christian people are only sailing along the shore of the boundless sea of prayer. Take one or two of the promises: "Whatever you shall ask in my name--that will I do." Did Christ mean that? Who will say he did not? "Whatever you shall ask in my name!" Have we sounded that promise to its depths? Have we put it to its full and finest test? Have you brought all your desires to Christ and poured them all out before him? Have we done anything more than walk along the edge of that promise, and picked up a few of the treasures which lie in the shallows?

"Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." What a marvelous ocean of prayer, does this promise unveil to our eyes! Able to do all that we can ask. What can we ask? How much prayer can we put in words? When friends plead for friends; when mothers cry to God for their sick or dying children, or for their children imperiled, unsaved; when pastors supplicate for lost souls perishing in their sins; or when, under sense of need, beseech God for themselves, what desires can they express in words? Then what prayers can we think, which are too great to put into language! We never pray long for anything in deep earnestness, until we find our desires too big for words. We try to tell God of our sorrow for sin, of our weakness and sinfulness; of our desires to be better, to love Christ more; of our hunger after righteousness, after holiness. But with what faltering tongues do we speak! We can put only the merest fraction of our praying into speech. But what prayers can we think, as we bow before God and breathe out our soul's longings and sighings and hungers and aspirations! "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." What a measure of the possibility of prayer does this word suggest!

Then have we exhausted the blessing of prayers? Have we sounded its utmost depths? Have we drawn up its richest and best treasures? Do not many of us at times come back from our hours of devotion feeling that nothing has been accomplished? We ask and receive but small blessings; we seek and find but little gifts; we knock, and the door does not seem to open. We hunger and get but little bread for our souls. We plead for comfort in our sorrow, and receive only faint gleams of light and mere hints of what we know to be possible. We beseech God to give up his Spirit, and yet how little of the Spirit comes into our life! Is it not true that we have tried only the shores of prayer? There are depths into which we have not yet cast our nets. "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch." We have only to obey his bidding to draw up blessings which shall overwhelm us by their richness and abundance.

Shall we not learn to take God at his word in whatever promises he gives us for prayer? If only we have strong faith, there is no limit to the possibilities of answers to our supplications. Then every pleading will bring down a heavenly benefaction. Mothers will pray--and their children will be circled around with divine grace. Teachers will pray--and their pupils will come asking how to be Christians. Pastors will pray--and souls will be saved by scores and hundreds, flocking like doves to their windows. Congregations will pray--and the Spirit will come again as on the day of Pentecost, with mighty, resistless power. Mourners will pray--and the sweet comfort of God will come down into their hearts in heavenly blessedness. Christians will pray--and will be filled with all the fullness of God.

God wants to give us infinite blessing. The clouds above us are big with mercy. Let us not hinder the divine blessing, by our prayerlessness, or limit it by our coldness and lack of faith in prayer. Let us launch out into the deep sea of prayer and let down our nets, that they may be filled with the best and richest things God has to give.

The same thing is true of Christian experience. There are few who really attain to deep and joyous personal experience. There are few who possess a calm and triumphant assurance. The Word of God promises perfect peace to those whose minds are stayed on Christ; but are there are many Christians who realize this deep, tranquil, unbroken peace? Most believers have occasional seasons of joyful, assurance and holy confidence--in the closet, at the communion table, in the house of prayer. Now and then gleams of heavenly sunshine break in upon them and irradiate their souls for a moment--and then the old doubts and fears fill their sky again and shut out the light. The mass of Christian people know but little of abiding spiritual joy--joy which lives on through sorest trials and which nothing can quench. Too much of the joy of Christians, is like summer flowers which the first autumn frost kills.

Have we ever thought much of the possibilities of Christian experience? Suppose we take a few Scripture words which describe the privileges of the believer in Christ, and see how much or how little we know by experience of these privileges. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, there are sons of God. For you received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; by you received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

That is one of Paul's pictures of the believer's privilege. Then here is John's inimitable picture of the same privilege: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God--and such we are!" We know something of what childship means. We have learned it in our own homes. What on earth is more beautiful than childhood in a true, ideal home! How many of us have the child-feeling toward God--perfect love, perfect trust, perfect peace, sweet obedience, filial devotion, and unquestioning acquiescence!

Here is one of Paul's prayers for Christians: "That Christ may dwell in you hearts through faith; to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." Here again we have hints of what is possible in Christian experience--Christ dwelling in the heart, rooted and grounded in love, strong to know the love of Christ, filled unto all the fullness of God. Have we sounded the depths of such spiritual blessedness as this? Too many of us scarcely ever dare claim to be Christians. We never get beyond "hoping" that we are forgiven and saved. We do not rise to the joy of assurance. We do not exalt and rejoice as God's children, and if children, then heirs. We are not filled with all the fullness of God. We do not know the love of Christ, in the sense that we are conscious ourselves of being loved by Christ with all infinite tenderness.

No doubt many of us have truly blessed experiences in our Christian life. We know something of the love of God, of loving him whom we have not seen, of believing in Christ and clinging to him in the darkness. We know something of communion with God, of fellowship with Christ, of heavenly comfort in sorrow.

This is not questioning the reality of the spiritual life of the humblest believer; it is only saying that most of us have only tasted the joy of being Christians. There are far deeper joys within our reach than we have yet experienced. Indeed many of us seem to get very little out of our religion. It does not seem to help us in our struggles with temptation. It does not keep us from being discontented and fretted. It does not light up our sick-rooms. It does not make us victorious in disappointments and sorrow. It does not soften our hearts and make us gentle toward the erring and toward those who injure us. It does not make us brave and heroic in our loyalty to Christ and to the truth. The beauty of the Lord does not shine always in our faces and glow in our characters and appear in our dispositions and tempers. Is this your Christian experience? Is this ordinary Christian life the best that Christ is willing to help us to live? Surely not. We are like the Galilean fisherman--toiling and taking nothing. Is it any wonder some of us are discouraged and are almost ready at times to give up?

But listen to the Master's voice as it breaks upon our ears: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch." The trouble with us, is we have been living in the shallows of God's love. We have been like timid seamen, not venturing out of sight of land, merely dropping our nets along the shore. We have a little faith, a little consciousness of God's love, a little feeling of assurance, a little measure of peace, a little of the child-spirit. But the depths of love, the fullness of joy and peace, the fullness of the blessing of adoption and childship, we have not yet learned. Shall we not strive for richer and more blessed Christian experience? Shall we not push out into the wide sea of God's love? Half consecration knows nothing of the best things of divine grace. We must cut the last chain which binds us back to the shore of this world, and, like Columbus, put out to sea to discover new worlds of blessing.

It is more love we need--more love for Christ. Then more love will give us more faith, and more faith in turn will give us more love. Christian experience begins when we first accept Christ and believe that he loves us, and then commit our lives to him. We begin to trust him, and peace comes as we learn to believe in him and to lay our burdens on him. We know him better and better as we go on trusting him, venturing on him and for him, and following him. So there grows between us and him--a close, tender, intimate fellowship, a friendship more precious than the sweetest of human friendships. The limits of this experience of Christ's love, no one can set. There have been those who have indeed found heaven on earth in their communion with Christ. Let us seek for this today!

What should we do? There is only one thing. We must give ourselves to God as we have never done before. We must open all our soul to the divine Spirit that he may come in and take full possession. We must put away our doubts and fears. We must crucify self--that Christ may be all and in all. We must arouse our spiritual energies until our lives shall be like flames of fire in devotion to God.

The Basis of Helpfulness

There are many people who want to be helpful to others--but who find insuperable obstacles in the way. There are some to whom they find it easy to minister--those of lovely character, those who are their friends and who really reciprocate any favors shown to them. But they must not confine the outgoings of their helpfulness and ministry to such small classes. Even the ungodly do good to those who do good to them, and give to those of whom they hope to receive again. And the Christian must do more. He is to do good to those who hate him, to bless those who curse him, and to be kind to the evil. Even toward unworthy and disagreeable people--he is to manifest that love that is full of gentleness and beneficence.

But how can I help a man whom I cannot respect? How can I be useful to one who treats me with insults or slights? How can I continue to do good to one who only curses me? How can I minister to those who are repulsive in character?

There is a way of relating ourselves to all men, which solves these difficulties. So long as we think of ourselves, and of what is due to us from others, it will be impossible for us to minister to any large number of people. But when true Christian love reigns in the heart, the center of living is removed outside the narrow circle of self. Those who study our Lord's life carefully, will be struck with what we might call his reverence for humanity. He looked upon no one with scorn or contempt. The basest fragment of humanity which crept into his presence--trampled, torn, stained, and defiled--was yet sacred in his eyes. He never despised any human being. And further, he stood before men, not as a haughty and imperious king, demanding attention, reverence, honor, service, ministry--but as one who wished to serve, to help, to lift up, to comfort. He said, indeed, that he had not come to be ministered unto--but to minister, and even to give his life for others. He never thought of what was due from men to him, of the attention they ought to show to him, or the honor they ought to accord; but always of what he could do for them, of how he could help or serve them. The more repulsive the life that stood before him--the more deeply, in one sense, did it interest him and appeal to his love, because it needed him and his healing help all the more because of its repulsiveness. And there is no other true basis of helpfulness.

We can learn to do good to all men--only by putting ourselves in the same attitude to them in which our Lord stood to those about him. We must not think of ourselves at all as deserving attention from others, and chafing and fretting if we do not receive it. We are to esteem others better than ourselves, in this sense, especially, that instead of asserting our own superiority and demanding respect, reverence, submission, and service from them--we are in a sense to forget ourselves, and think how we can minister to them. We are not here to be waited upon, honored, and served. The moment we put ourselves in this attitude--we cease to be helpful to others. We then measure everyone by his ability and willingness

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