

# Making or Marring Beauty

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of little things in our lives, highlighting how they can either add to the volume of good we do or to the measure of pain we cause, and encourages us to strive for Christlike conduct.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16, Colossians 3:12

**Topics:** "Character Development", "Kindness in Relationships"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of small actions and attitudes in shaping our character and relationships, arguing that while many may appear virtuous in major principles, it is the little flaws and failures in kindness that often mar their beauty. He illustrates how minor irritations and neglects can lead to deep regret and sorrow, affecting both the giver and receiver of unkindness. Miller urges us to be mindful of our conduct, as the little things in life can either contribute to joy or cause unnecessary pain. He highlights that true love is expressed not just in grand gestures but in the gentle and thoughtful details of our interactions. Ultimately, he calls for a Christlike demeanor in all aspects of our lives, focusing on the importance of gentleness and kindness.

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## Transcript

"Little things make perfection." In nothing is this more true than in character and conduct. There are many people who in great matters of principle, and in the cardinal virtues -- are without fault; yet the luster of whose life is dimmed by countless little blemishes and flaws.

One man who is upright and steadfast, with the firmness of a rock -- is hard to live with at home, because of his irritability or his despotic disposition.

Another, who is faithful in all his dealings with men, whose word is as good as his bond -- is so harsh and ungentle in his relations with others, that he is anything but a comfort and help to those with whom he comes in personal contact.

Another is full of great benevolent and philanthropic schemes, doing good in many ways -- yet those who know him most intimately, discover in him an almost utter lack of the sweet graces and amenities, which are the true adornment of a Christlike life.

It is in the little things that most of our failures are made. Little faults thoroughly penetrate our characters. Little sins ruin many a life.

Henry Drummond, writing of tropical Africa, tells of a species of white ants which work desolation wherever they go. One may leave his chair at night and go to bed. In the morning the chair is there, apparently in good condition -- but let him sit down on it, and it falls with him in a heap on the floor! During the night the white ants have eaten the inside out of the legs, seat and frame. Houses are in like manner destroyed. The timbers are bored through and through -- until one day the building tumbles to the ground! Just so, there are human lives which seem strong and right to men's eyes -- but countless infinitesimal faults and sins, eat away their substance, until they fall at last in hopeless ruin.

It is the little failures in loving, which mar the beauty of the perfect ideal. There are many who would give their very life for a friend -- whose love yet lacks altogether the gentle things in disposition and expression, which are needed to fill out the true measures of affection. The lack of thoughtfulness causes untold pain and suffering.

An hour ago, a strong and active man, who occupies a high place in the world, was telling how he had been going about all day, carrying a secret pain at his heart and a deep sense of shame -- because of a mere lack of courtesy at his own table in the morning. It was so slight that probably no one but himself noticed it. It was not a bitter word that he spoke, nor anything harsh that he did -- but only his failure to do a trifling kindness, a mere neglect to be gentle -- when gentleness would have meant much. A moment after he had left the breakfast table, he became aware of what he had done, or rather of the opportunity he had missed to give sweet comfort and help to his wife, and in all the hours of his busy day, there had been a deep shadow hanging over him and a feeling of regret and sorrow embittering his heart.

Ofttimes, it is not the one who does the little unkindness or neglects to do the kindness, who suffers -- but the one to whom the unkindness or the neglect is shown. There is no doubt that the largest part of the pain and heartache endured in the world, is caused by multitudinous little failures in lovingness -- rather than by life's great and conspicuous sorrows.

A thoughtful writer says: "Taking life through and through, the larger part of the sadness and heartache it has known, has not come through its great sorrows -- but through little, needless hurts and unkindnesses; not so much through the orderings of Providence -- as through the mis-orderings of humanity. Look back and you can readily count up the great griefs and bereavements that have torn your heart and changed your life. You know what weary months were darkened. There was a certain sacredness and dignity, like the dignity of a lonely mountain top, in their very greatness; and looking back, if not at the time, you can often understand their purpose. But, oh, the days that are spoiled by smaller hurts, spoiled because somebody has a foolish spite, a wicked mood, an unreasonable prejudice which must be gratified and have its way -- no matter whose rights, plans, or hearts are hurt by it! There are so many hard places along the road for most of us, made hard needlessly by human selfishness -- that the longing to be kind with a tender, thoughtful, Christlike kindness grows stronger in me each day I live."

It should be our care to watch the little things in our conduct, the minute attentions, the small courtesies, the delicate graces and refinements of our manner -- since by all these we add either to the volume of good we do, or to the measure of pain we cause.

There come every day, a thousand opportunities to be thoughtful, in which are a thousand possibilities of giving happiness or hurt. In the mere tones of the voice in which we speak -- lie the widest opposites of gentleness or harshness.

"It is not so much what you say,

As the manner in which you say it;  
It is not so much the language you use,  
As the tones in which you convey it.  
"The words may be mild and fair,  
And the tones may pierce like a dart;  
The words may be soft as a summer air,  
And the tones may break the heart!  
"For words but come from the mind,  
And grow by study and art;  
But the tones leap forth from the inner self  
And reveal the state of the heart!  
"Whether you know it or not,  
Whether you mean it or care,  
Gentleness, kindness, love, and hate,  
Envy, and anger -- are there."

It is not enough, therefore, that we seek to be true, honest, and just, in all our life; we should learn all the lessons of love, so that in every disposition and temper and word, in every shade of expression, we shall be Christlike.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/making-or-marring-beauty/>

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