

The Children's Part

by J.R. Miller

The children's part in making the home-life is to obey their parents, recognize their authority, and yield to their guidance, as Jesus did.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:1

Topics: "Honor Your Parents", "The Role of Children in the Home"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the vital role of children in the home, urging them to express love and gratitude to their parents while they are alive, rather than waiting until it's too late. He highlights that children should honor their parents through obedience, respect, and by contributing positively to the family environment, drawing on the example of Jesus who exemplified perfect obedience and duty in his own home. Miller argues that the true measure of a child's love is reflected in their actions and character, which should aim to fulfill the hopes and dreams of their parents. He encourages children to recognize the sacrifices made by their parents and to repay that love with a noble and virtuous life. Ultimately, he calls for a harmonious home life where love and respect reign, ensuring that children grow into responsible and caring adults.

Transcript

"What would I not give," said Charles Lamb, "to call my dear mother back to earth for a single day, to ask her pardon, upon my knees, for all those acts by which I grieved her gentle spirit!"

Many another sensitive heart, has felt the same pain when standing by a parent's grave, and has sighed in like manner for an opportunity to speak its penitence and its cries for pardon into the dead ear. But filial love blossoms out too late, when it waits until the parental ear is beyond the reach of human cry. The time for the child to show his affection and gratitude is along the years, while the father and mother are living and treading earth's paths. If he then strews thorns for their feet--what does it avail that he brings flowers for their burial? If he dishonors them by disobedience, by unkindness, by unworthy conduct, by sin--what does it avail that he sets up the costly monument over their graves, cutting in the white marble his praises of their virtues and their faithfulness?

The place for the flowers is along the hard paths of toil and care and burden bearing. The best monument for grateful affection to erect is a noble, beautiful life, a joy to the heart and an honor in the eyes of fond parental hope. Kindness to the living is better than bitter tears of penitence over the dead.

The debt of children to a true Christian home, is one that never can be overpaid, or even fully discharged. It dates from the first moment of their being; it accumulates as the days and years pass on. There are the years of helpless infancy with their solitudes, their broken nights and toilsome days, their unsleeping thoughtfulness and unselfish sacrifice, their gentle nursing and patient watching. There are the years of training and teaching, when the bodily powers are being developed, the feet taught to walk, the hands to handle, the tongue to speak; when the mental faculties are being drawn out, and when all the functions of life are being trained to their several uses. There are the times of sickness when the lamp never goes out in the room by night, and the pale, weary watcher accepts no relief until the danger is past. There are long years of anxieties, of prayers, of tears, of hopes, of disappointments, of sacrifices, of pains and toils. The best that a child can do for true Christian parents, will never repay them for what they done for him.

The question, therefore, "What is the children's part in the home-life?" is no unimportant one. They have a place in making the home-joy. Dreary is the household life, where no children ever come; very lonely and desolate is the home, where they come and stay for a time and then go away. Unconsciously, the children have a most sacred and holy part in the home-life from their earliest infancy. Then all along their years, while they remain under the old home roof and after they leave its shelter to set up homes of their own, they have duties to perform and obligations to render to those who gave them birth and watched over their helpless years.

The little wheels of a watch do not seem to be important, yet if one of them is broken, or if it is bent, or if it fails to perform its part--all the wheels will be arrested in their motion, and the watch will stop. If the smallest wheel goes wrong, moves too fast or too slow, the hands on the dial likewise go wrong. There is no part of the delicate machinery of the watch so small, that it makes no difference how it does its duty.

When the question is asked, "What part have the children in making the home-life?" someone may answer, "The children cannot do anything, at least while they are small, to aid in making the home what it should be. They cannot help make money to buy bread. They cannot do the work. When they grow older they can be of use--but when they are young all they can do is to be rocked and petted while they are babies, and then as they grow larger go to school and eat and romp and wear out clothes. They cannot help in any way; they are only burdens."

But wait a minute. They are not so useless, after all. They are like the tiny wheels of the watch. They may not look large enough to be of any use, and yet there is not a child in any true Christian home so small, as to have no influence. There is not even a baby that does not unconsciously affect all the home-life by its coming. Indeed, every baby is an emperor, with crown and scepter, and from its throne on the mother's bosom it rules all the house. The father, out at his work in the busy world, has a lighter, warmer heart--because he is thinking of the baby at home. The mother gets through all her work more easily, because her baby is sleeping in its crib or kicking up its heels on the floor beside her. The boys and girls are gentler, quieter and more thoughtful since Baby came. No one can say that any child is too small to have a part in making the home-life. Of course a baby's part is done unconsciously, and it is not to be held responsible, as are the children who have grown older. This chapter is not addressed to babies--but to those who are of sufficient age to know what they ought to do and to try to do it.

Here is the question on which every child, living in a parent's house, should think much: "What is my part in making this home what it should be?"

You know what a true Christian home ought to be. It ought to be a place where love rules. It ought to be beautiful, bright, joyous, full of tenderness and affection, a place in which all are growing happier and holier each day. There should never be any discord, any wrangling, any angry words or bitter feelings. The home-life should be a harmonious song without one marring note, day after day. The home, no matter how humble it is, how plain, how small--should be the dearest spot on the earth to each member of the family. It should be made so happy a place, and so full of life, that no matter where one may wander in after years, in any of the ends of the earth, his home should still hold its invisible cords of influence about him and should ever draw resistless upon his heart. It ought to be the one spot in all the earth, to which he would turn first, when in trouble or in danger. It should be his refuge, in every trial and grief.

To make a home such a power in one's after life, it must be happy in the days of childhood and youth. Have childhood and youth any responsibility for the realizing of this ideal of home? Is it altogether and only the parent's work? So far as infancy is concerned, there certainly is no responsibility. The father and mother must do all, and the little one is only a tender and lovely plant growing in the garden which parental hands tend. But with the years of consciousness comes responsibility, and then every child helps either to make or to mar the home blessedness and the home joy.

What should the child life be, that would perfectly fulfill its part in the home? We have a model. Once there was a home on earth in which a Child lived, whose life was spotless and faultless, and who realized all that is lovely, tender and true in child life. If we only knew how Jesus lived as a child in that Nazareth home, it would help other children to live aright. We know that he helped to make the home happy. He never caused his parents one anxiety, one pang, one moment of shame. He never failed in a duty. We know that he did his part well in the making of that home, and if we only had a memoir of his years of childhood telling us what he did, every other child could study it and imitate his example.

We have no such memoir--but we have one single glimpse into his home-life which reveals a great deal. We see him at twelve years of age. He is in the temple at Jerusalem. He has been lost from his parents in the great caravan returning from the Passover, and when they find him again, we are told in one brief sentence that he went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. Then for eighteen years longer he remained in that home; we have not another word about him; not another glimpse do we get of him or of his home; Scripture is silent concerning him all those years. We have only this one sentences about the way in which he lived in that home; "He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Yet this one glimpse really reveals the whole history of those years. He was subject to his parents.

Remember who this Child was. It was over his birth that the angels sang their song: "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will to men." He was the eternal Son of God. He had made all the worlds. He had adorned the heavens. Him all the hosts of glory obeyed. Yet he humbled himself, veiled his glory, and dwelt in a lowly home of earth for thirty years. He submitted himself to earthly parents, and obeyed them. Then he himself worked with his own hands to help support the home. No details are given--just this one word; but we can easily fill out the picture for ourselves. We see, for thirty years, from infancy to full manhood, this holy Child exhibiting toward his parents--the most perfect dutifulness, obedience, honor and helpfulness. He obeyed them, not by constraint, but cheerfully, all these years. He did his part well in the making of that home.

His example is the answer to the question of this chapter--that the great duty of childhood in the home-life, is to obey. He was subject unto them. Although he was the Son of God, yet he obeyed human parents. He did their will, and not his own. He had entered upon the affairs of his heavenly Father. In the temple he

had said, "I must be about my Father's business." Yet immediately after saying this he went back to his own home to take and keep for eighteen years more the place of a child. Hence we conclude that the Father's business for him all those years, was subjection to his earthly parents. That was the work which was given him to do for that time. He had come to the earth on a great mission, the greatest ever undertaken or performed in the universe, yet the place in which he was prepared for that mission was not in any of the fine schools of the world--but in a lowly home; not at the feet of rabbis and philosophers--but with his own mother for his teacher. What an honor does this fact put upon home! What a dignity upon motherhood!

It would seem that no argument after that, was needed to prove to children the duty and the dignity of obedience to parents. We take our place far back in the history of the world; we stand under the cloud-crowned, fire-wreathed Sinai, and amidst its dreadful thundering, we hear the voice of God proclaim: "Honor your father and your mother!" But even all these scenes of majesty--the voice of Jehovah, the burning mountain, the cloud and the thunder--did not give to this command such sacred authority, such solemn importance, as when Jesus, the Son of God, for thirty years in a lowly home on earth, submitted himself to human parents and obeyed their commands.

Does any question ever arise as to the authority of this divine word in the Decalogue? This picture of Jesus obeying it in that Galilean home is sufficient answer.

Does the thought ever arise, "Is it manly--is it womanly--to yield to my parents--to have no will of my own--to do their bidding in all things?" Behold Jesus until thirty years of age, yielding to the control of his human parents, asking them continually what they would have him to do, referring every question to them. Was it manly in him? Surely then, it cannot be unmanly in any son of earthly parents in this world. Where shall we learn manliness, if not in the life and from the example of Jesus? Thomas Hughes says, in speaking of manliness, and of courage as one of its elements: "Tenacity of will lies at the root of all courage--but courage can only rise into true manliness when the will is surrendered; and the more absolute the surrender of the will, the more perfect will be the temper of our courage and the strength of our manliness." There is nothing manlier in all Christ's life, than his quiet subjection to his parents in that cottage at Nazareth, though conscious of his divine origin and nature and of his glorious mission. There is no manlier thing ever seen on this earth, than a man in the prime of his strength and power showing deference and love to a humble parent and yielding obedience and honor, as if he were a little child.

Does some evil spirit suggest that such subjection to parent keeps one down, puts chains on his freedom, keeps him under restraint and hinders him from rising into grandeur and nobleness of character? Did it have such effect on Jesus? Did the thirty years of submission in his home--cramp and fetter his manhood? Did his subjection break his power, repress the glorious aspiration of his soul, stunt and hinder the development of his life and make his career a failure in the end? We know well that it did not. There was a preparation for his mission which, as a man, he could have gotten in no other way, but by the discipline he obtained in his own home. No human powers were ever yet cramped or stunted or repressed--by taking the place of subjection in the home. Rather, that life will always be more or less a failure, which in its earlier years does not learn to submit and be ruled. No one is fitted for ruling others, who has not first learned in his place to obey.

Someone may say again: "My parents are very plain people. They have never known much of the world. They have missed the opportunities that I am enjoying, and therefore have not intelligence or wisdom or education sufficient to direct my life."

We have only to remember again--who Jesus was. Was there ever any human parent in this world who was really worthy or capable, in this sense, to be his teacher, to guide and control his life? Was there ever, in any home on earth, such a distance between parents and child as there was in that home at Nazareth? Yet this Son of God, with all his wisdom, his knowledge, his grandeur of character, did not hesitate to submit himself to the training of that peasant mother and that peasant father. Shall any other child, in view of this model child-life at home, assert that he is too far advanced, too much superior in knowledge and culture, too wise and intelligent; to submit to the parents God has given him? If Christ could be taught and trained by his lowly parents for his glorious mission, where is the true Christian parent who is not worthy to be his own child's guide and teacher?

This, then, is the part of every child in the home-life. This is the way in which children can do the most to make the home true and happy. It is the part of the parents to guide, to train, to teach, to mold the character. God holds them responsible for this. They must qualify themselves to do it. It is the part of the children to accept this guidance, teaching, training and shaping at the parents' hands. When both faithfully do their part, the home-life will be a sweet song of love; where either fails there will be discordant life, and the angel of blessing will not leave his blessing of peace.

Such, in general, is the central feature of the children's part in the home-life--to recognize their parents as the head, and to yield to them in all things. This is not meant to make them slaves. The home-life I am depicting, is ruled by love; the parental authority is exercised in love; it seeks only the highest good of each child; it asks nothing unreasonable or unjust. If it withholds things that a child desires--it is either because it is not able to grant them, or because the granting of them would work injury rather than benefit. If it seeks to guide the tender feet in a way that is not their chosen way, nor the easiest and pleasant way--it is because a ripper wisdom sees that it is the best way.

True parental guidance, is love grown wise. It is an imitation of God's government. He is our Father and we are his children. We are to obey him absolutely and without question. Yet it is no blind obedience. We know that he loves us with a deep, tender, unchanging love. We know that he is wiser than we, infinitely wiser, and can never err. We know that when he denies a request--that the granting of it would be unkindness. We know that when he leads us in another path than the one we had marked out--that his is the right way. We know that when he chastens or corrects--that there is love in his chastisement or correction. We know that in all his government and discipline--that he is seeking only our highest good. Our whole duty therefore as God's children, is to yield ourselves to his will. True human parenthood is a faint copy of the divine parenthood, and to its direction and guidance, children are to submit.

This subjection implies obedience to the commands of parents. Thus Paul interprets it: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right;" and again, "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." It is right on moral grounds, and this ought to settle the matter. True manliness never wants to know more than that a thing is right--that it is duty. Devotion to duty, at whatever cost, is one of the first elements of heroism. It is right that children should obey their parents--and no further question need be asked, no further reason for obeying need be sought.

But it is also well pleasing unto the Lord. He is watching how every child acts, and he is well pleased when he sees obedience. This ought to furnish an additional motive, if any were needed. The thought that doing a certain duty faithfully, causes emotions of pleasure and approval in the heart of God, certainly ought to be a wonderful spur and incentive to heroic fidelity.

This obedience is to extend to "all things," the things that are agreeable, and the things that are disagreeable. Though he may be unjustly treated, the child is not to rebel. He may know that his parent is unkind or oppressive, or even cruel--but his duty is not thereby changed. Wrong on the parent's part--will never justify wrong on the part of the child. There is only one qualification: children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." If the parent commands the child to commit a sin--of course it is not to obey. Herodias was under no moral obligation to obey, when her cruel and bloody mother bade her ask for the head of John the Baptist. No human authority is ever binding, when it bids us break a divine law. No true Christian parent will knowingly ask anything of his child that is not right; hence the law of parental government requires obedience in all things.

It is told of General Havelock that one day, when a boy, his father, having some business to do, left him on London Bridge and bade him to wait there until he came back. The father was detained and forgot his son, not returning to the bridge all the day. In the evening he reached home, and after he had rested a little while his wife inquired: "Where's Harry?" The father thought a moment. "Dear me!" said he, "I quite forgot Harry. He is on London Bridge, and has been there for eight hours waiting for me." He hastened away to get the boy, and found him just where he had left him in the morning, pacing to and fro like a sentinel on his beat. That father knew just where to find his son, because he knew that he always obeyed his commands. It is such obedience that pleases God, while it ensures harmony and peace in the home. The parents are the divinely constituted head of the family, and it is the children's part to obey.

This requirement implies also honor and respect. "Honor your father and your mother," says the command. Honor is a larger word than obey. We may obey a person, whom we do not respect. We are to honor our parents--that is, reverence them--as well as obey them.

There is no need for any argument to prove that every child should honor his parents. Yet it is idle to deny that there is on every hand, a lack of parental respect. There are many children who show by their words or acts, that their parents are not sacredly enshrined in their hearts.

I heard a bright young girl, well dressed, with good manner and good face, say that her mother looked so old fashioned that she was ashamed to walk with her on the street. I chanced to know a little about that mother and daughter. I knew that one reason why the mother looked so old fashioned, and probably lacked something of refinement of manner, was because of her devotion to the interest of her daughter; she had made a sacrifice of herself for her daughter's sake; she had denied herself in dress and ornament, that her daughter might appear well and be admired.

Some young people may read these pages who at times feel as this young lady did. Have you ever sat down quietly to think over and sum up the debt which you owe to your old fashioned mother? Look at the matter for a few moments. Begin with the time when you were a very little baby, as you certainly were once, however great you are now--and think what she had to do for you then. She had to nurse you hour after hour, and lie awake many a night to take care of you. Sometimes you were very cross, though you are so gentle now; yet, no matter how cross you were--she was as patient as an angel with you. She wore herself out for you then.

As you grew older she taught you. Did you ever think how little you knew when you came into this world? You had hands and feet and eyes and tongue and brain--but you did not know what they were for, or how to use them. It was your loving, patient mother who taught you to walk and to talk and to look and to think.

You have been a great deal of trouble to your mother in your time--but she has borne it all cheerfully for you. She has gone without many things herself, that you might have what you wanted. She has worked very hard, that you might receive an education and be fitted to shine in society among your friends, and be ready for an honored and useful place in this world.

Sometimes you think she looks very plain and old fashioned. Perhaps she does; perhaps she is more than a little faded and worn; but did you ever think that it is because she has given so much of the best power and energy of her life to caring for you? If she had not chosen to toil and suffer and deny herself for your sake--if she had thought more of herself and less of you--she might have been very much fairer and fresher now. If she had only neglected you instead of herself--she might shine now, for once her cheeks were as lovely as yours are now. She might have found more rest and less hard work, if she had not chosen to spend so many hours in stitching away on frocks, trousers, jackets or dresses for you--making new and mending the old. She might have better clothes even now to wear, so that you would not blush to have your friends meet her with you, if she did not take so much interest in dressing you prettily and richly. It may be that the little allowance of money that she gets is not sufficient to dress both herself and you in fashionable array--and that you may be well clad, she wears the same dress and bonnet year after year.

Never forget where your mother lost her freshness and youthful beauty--it was in self denying toil and suffering for your sake. Those wrinkles in her face, those deep care lines in her cheeks, that weary look in her eye--she wears all these marks now where once there was fresh beauty, because she has forgotten herself these long years--in loving devotion to you. These scars of time and toil and pain--are the seals of her care for you.

Look at your father too. He is not so fresh and youthful as once he was. Perhaps he does not dress so finely as some of the young people you see about you, or as their fathers dress. There are marks of hard toil upon him, marks of care and anxiety, which in your eye seem to disfigure his beauty. It may be that you blush a little sometimes when your young friends meet you walking with him, or when he comes into the parlor when you have company, and wish he would take more pains to appear well-dressed. Do not forget that he is toiling these days for you, and that his hard hands and his bronzed face are really tokens of his love for you. If he does not appear quite so fresh and handsome as some other men--very likely it is because he has to work harder to give you your pleasant home, your good clothes, your daily food and many comforts, and to send you to school. When you look at him and feel tempted to be ashamed of his appearance, just remember this.

Perhaps he is now an old man, with bent form, white hair, slow step, awkward hand, wrinkled face and feeble, broken voice. Forget not what history there is in all these marks, which look to you like marring of his manly beauty. The soul writes its story on the body. The soldier's scars, tell of heroisms and sacrifices. The merchant's anxious face and knit brow, tell of struggle and anxiety. So gluttony and greed and selfishness and licentiousness write out their record in unmistakable lines on the features--and so do kindness, benevolence, unselfishness and purity. You look at your father and see signs of toil, of pain, of self-denial, of care. Do you know what they reveal? They tell the story of his life. He has passed through struggles and conflicts. Do you know how much of this story, if rightly interpreted, concerns you? Is there nothing in the bent form, the faded hands, the lines of care--which tells you of his deep love for you and of sufferings endured, sacrifices made and toils and anxieties for your sake?

When you think thus of what you owe your parents, and of what they have borne and wrought for you--can you ever again be ashamed of them? Will not the shame rather be for yourself, that you could ever have

been so ungrateful as to blush at their homeliness? All the reverence of your soul will be kindled into deepest, purest admiration, as you look upon these marks of love and sacrifice for your sake. You will honor them all the more, the more they are worn and wasted--the more they are broken and their beauty shattered. These tokens of self neglect and self sacrifice, are the jewels in the crown of love.

This honor is not to be shown only by the young child living yet as a child in the old home--but by those who are grown up to full manhood and womanhood. While parents live, there never comes a time when a child is no longer a child, owing love and honor. Few things in this world are so beautiful, as the sight of a middle aged man or woman, showing true devotion to an aged father or mother. In all the story of the life of President Garfield, there is no one incident that will be longer or more tenderly remembered, than that little scene on the day of his inauguration, in which he showed such honor to his aged mother. When the last words were spoken and the ceremony was ended; when he was now President of this great nation, and while the hurrahs of the vast throngs were falling upon his ear, and when the greatest and noblest of the land were pressing forward to speak their applause--he turned away from all this, from the cheers of a nation, from the salutation of the great, from the congratulations of foreign ambassadors who bore messages from kings and queens--to give the first thought of that supreme hour to a little aged and worn woman who sat behind him, encircling her with his strong arm and kissing her. It was she to whom he owed all that he was. In the days of poverty, she had toiled and suffered for him. She had been both father and mother to him. She had struggled with adversity and had never spared herself that she might bless his early years. She was plain and poor and wrinkled and unfashionable--but she was his mother--and in that hour his loyal, manly heart honored her above all the world. President Garfield will be honored himself in all the future of our country; honored for his noble character and his kingly rank among men; honored for his achievements in the days of war and in the days of peace; honored for the splendor of soul that shone out from his sick room in those long, weary days of death struggle; but in all the brilliant glory that flashes about his name, no one record will shine more imperishably, than the sentence that tells how in the moment of his supremest exaltation he bent and printed a kiss of recognition and honor, on the wasted face of his mother.

His is not the only case. This noble trait is not so rare as we might think, though it sometimes shines with a luster so brilliant as to draw all eyes to itself. Life's history is not all written. Love's noble deeds are not all wrought in the eyes of the world. Much of the rarest and noblest heroism of love, is never seen by human eyes. There are other great men who have shown the same reverence and love for parents in old age or feebleness. There are noble daughters too who forego the joys offered to them in homes of their own, refusing offers of marriage and voluntarily choosing to live without its blessing and comfort--that they may shelter in old age and surround with love's tenderness, the father or the mother, or both, who filled their youth with sunshine. Here and there heroism finds its way into record; but the noblest heroisms of life, the tenderest histories of love, the most sacred things wrought by human affection, remain unwritten and untold.

Men talk of the wickedness of this world, and surely it is wicked enough. Sin leaves blackness everywhere. There are horrors of ingratitude, of baseness, of shame, of guilt--which make earth a stench in God's nostrils! Yet amid all that is so revolting, there are records of such sacred tenderness, such holy beauty, such ineffable love--that angels must pause over them in reverence. These are fragments of the Eden loveliness which float down upon the dark tide--like lilies pure and white and unsullied, on the black waters of some stagnant bog. In earth's homes where the story of Christ's love has been told, there are filial devotions that are as lovely as angelic ministries.

It was on the cross, that Jesus paid his last tribute of love and honor to his mother. The nails were in his hands and feet and he hung there in agony. He was dying in deepest shame. The obloquy of the world was pouring its blackest tides upon his head. In the throng below, his eye fell on a little group of loving friends, and among them he saw his mother. Full as his heart was of its own anguish, it was not too full to give thought to her. She would have no protector now. The storms would beat in merciless fury upon her unsheltered head. Besides the bitterness of her bereavement, there would be the shame she must endure on his account, the shame of being the mother of one who was crucified on a cross. His heart felt all this, and there, in the midst of his own agony--he made provision for her, preparing a home and shelter for her. Amid the dark scenes of the cross, his example shines like a star in the bosom of the blackest clouds, saying to us, "Honor your father and your mother!"

If true honor for parents has its seat in the heart--there is little need for rules or detailed suggestions. Yet a few particular ways may be mentioned in which children can add to the happiness and blessedness of the home-life.

They should show their love for their parents--by confiding in them; not simply by believing in them and trusting their love and their wisdom--but by making them the recipients of all their confidences. A wise parent teaches his child from the very beginning--to conceal nothing from him, to tell him everything, and there is no part of the child's life, in which he takes no interest. True filial love maintains this openness of heart and life toward a parent, even into the years of maturity. There are no other friends in the world who have so much right to all the confidences of children, as their own parents. There are no others in whose hearts these confidences will be so safe; they will never betray the trusts that are placed in them by their own children. There are no others who will take such deep interest in all the events of their daily lives.

To the true mother, nothing is trifling which has interested her child. She listens as eagerly to the story of its experiences, its joys, its disappointments, its plans, its imaginations, its achievements, as other people listen to the recital of some romantic narrative. She never laughs at its fancies nor ridicules anything that it says or does. There are no other friends, who are such safe and wise counselors. The children that speak every thought, every hope, every ambition, every plan, and every pleasure--into the ear of their parents and consult them on every matter--will live safely. At the same time they will confer great happiness upon their parents by confiding so fully in them, for it is a great grief to parents when a child does not confide in them and turns away to others with the sacred confidences of his heart.

Children must learn self-denial if they would faithfully do their part. They cannot have everything they desire. They must learn to give up their own wishes for the sake of others. They must learn to do without things that they would like to have. In no other way can home-life be made what it should be. Every member of the family must practice self denial. The parents make many sacrifices for the children, and it is certainly right that the children early learn to practice self-denial to relieve their parents, to help them and to minister to their comfort.

They should also learn thoughtfulness. A home is like a garden of tender plants which are easily broken or bruised. A thoughtless person is forever causing injury or pain, not through intention--but heedlessly. Many, also, who outside are thoughtful, careful of the feelings of others and quick to speak the gentle word that heals and blesses--yet at home are thoughtless. But surely there is no place in the world where we ought to be so studiously thoughtful, as in our own homes. There are no other friends who love us--as do the home friends. There are no other hearts that are so much hurt by our lack of thought--as are the home hearts.

It is reasonable to expect that even quite young children, shall learn to be thoughtful. And for those who are older, there certainly cannot be a shadow of excuse for rudeness and thoughtlessness. There are in every home, abundant opportunities for the culture and display of a thoughtful spirit. Is any one sick? All the others should avoid noise, moving quietly about the house, speaking softly, so as not to disturb the sufferer. All should be gentle to the invalid, ministering in every little way, brightening the sickroom by their kindnesses.

This thoughtfulness should show itself also toward parents. Ofttimes they carry heavy burdens while they go about busying themselves in their daily duties. Their work is hard, or they are in ill health, or they are perplexed and anxious, perhaps on their children's account. Bright, happy, joyous youth--never can know what burdens rest heavily on the hearts of those who are older, who are in the midst of life's struggles. It would make us gentle even to strangers--to know all their secret griefs; much more should it soften our hearts toward our friends--to know what trials they have. If children would remember always--that their parents have cares, anxieties and sorrows of which they know not--it would make them gentle at all times toward them. Here is an opportunity for most helpful ministry, for nothing goes deeper into a parent's heart--than the sympathy and gentleness of his own child.

It is not great services which belong to thoughtfulness--only a word of cheer perhaps when one is discouraged, a little tenderness when one looks sad, and a little timely help when one is overworked. It may be nothing more than the bringing of a chair when the father comes in weary, or the running of a little errand for the mother to save her tired feet, or keeping quiet when the baby is sleeping; or it may be only a gentleness of manner and tone showing warmth within.

Thoughtlessness causes no end of pain and care, ofttimes of trouble and loss. It goes stalking through heart gardens, treading down the most delicate flowers. It is always saying the wrong word and hurting someone's feelings. It is noisy in the sick room, crude in the presence of sensitive spirits, and cold and unsympathetic toward pain and sorrow. It misses the countless opportunities which intimate daily association with others gives to do really kind deeds, to give joy and help; and instead of such a ministry of blessing it is always causing pain. Its confession must continually be "Ah me!

"Oh I did not think," or "I did not mean it," is the poor excuse most common in many homes. It would be better to learn to think, to think of others, especially of those who love us, and then to walk everywhere--but particularly in our own homes, with tender care and regard for the feelings and comfort of others.

Children should early learn to bear some little share in the home work. Instead of being always and only a burden to the loving ones who live and toil and sacrifice for them--they should seek in every way they can--to give help. It was Charles Kingsley who said: "We can become like God, only as we become of use." There is a deep truth in his words. We begin to live--only when we begin to live to minister to others. Instead of singing "I want to be an angel" it were better if the children should strive to be like the angels, and the angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.

Home is the school in which we are first to learn and practice the lessons of life. Children should learn there--to be useful to their parents and to one another. They can do much in this direction, by not requiring unnecessary attendance; and by not making trouble and work for others on their account. There are some spoiled children who are such selfish tyrants at home, that all the other members of the family are taxed to wait upon them. As soon as possible, children should learn to wait upon themselves, and in measure to be

independent of the help of others, so as to become self reliant and strong. What more painful picture do we see--than that of sons and daughters growing up idle and selfish in their own homes, too indolent to put forth an exertion, too proud to soil their dainty hands with any kind of work--but not too proud to let delicate or already overwrought parents slave to keep them in dainty food or showy array of dress! Nothing good or noble can ever come out of such home-life.

Children should make themselves worthy of their parents. They should seek to be all that the father and mother in their most ardent dreams, hoped for them. It is a sad thing to disappoint love's brilliant expectations. It matters not so much if mere dreams of earthly greatness fail to come true, for oftentimes the hopes of ambitious parents for their children are only for honors which wither in a day; or for wealth which only sinks the soul to ruin. Such hopes were better disappointed. But in the heart of every true Christian parent, there glows an ideal of beauty of character and nobleness of soul, which he wants to see his child attain. It is a vision of the most exalted life, lovelier than that which fills the thought of any sculptor as he stands before his marble and begins to hew at the block; fairer than that which rises in the poet's soul as he bows in ecstatic fervor over his page and seeks to describe his dream. Every true, godly parent, dreams of the most perfect manhood and womanhood for his children. He wants to see them grow up into Christ likeness, spotless in purity, rich in all the graces, with character fully developed and rounded out in symmetrical beauty, shining in this world--but shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Just here it may be suggested to children that a large part of what seems to them "fussiness" and needless fault finding on the part of the parents--is due to concern to have them perfect. Parents sometimes err through over anxiety or through unwise and irritating and incessant admonitions--but the sons and daughters should recognize the fact, that deep concern for their well doing is at the root of even this excessive carefulness.

There is a story of a great sculptor weeping like a child, as he stood and looked on the fragments of his breathing marble, the work of his life and his ripest powers, the dream of his fairest hopes, which lay now shattered at his feet. With still deeper sorrow and bitterer grief, do true and godly parents look upon the wreck of their high hopes for their children and the shattering of the fair ideals that glowed in their hearts during the bright years of childhood and youth.

If children would do their part well--in return for all the love that has blessed their helpless years and surrounded them in their youth, and that lingers still in the days of manhood and womanhood, they must seek to realize in their own lives, all the sacred hopes of their parents' hearts. A wrecked and debauched manhood, or a frivolous and purposeless womanhood, is a poor return for parental love, fidelity and sacrifice. But a noble life, a character strong, true, earnest and Christlike, brings blessed and satisfying reward to a parent for the most toilsome and painful years of self-forgetting love. Parents live in their children, and children hold in their hands the happiness of their parents. Let them never be untrue to their sacred trust. Let them never bring down the gray hairs of father or mother with sorrow to the grave. Let them be worthy of the love, almost divine, which holds them in its deathless grasp. Let them so live as to be a crown of honor to their parents in their old age. Let them fill their declining years with sweetness and tenderness. Let them make a pillow of peace for their heads, when death comes.

When our parents grow old--they exchange places, as it were, with us. There were years when we were feeble and helpless, unable to care for ourselves; then they cared for us. They watched over us; they toiled and sacrificed for us; they sheltered us from hardship and trial; they threw around our tender years--love's sweetest gentleness and holiest protection. Now we are strong--and they are feeble; we are

able to endure hardship and toil--but the faintest breath of storm makes them tremble and the lightest toil wearies them. This is the time for us to repay them. It is ours now to show tenderness to them--to shelter them from trial, and to pour about them as much of love's tenderness as possible.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/the-childrens-part/>

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