

The Home-Life

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of home-life and the need for loving speech, thought, and influence in the home.

Scripture: Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21

Topics: "Home Life", "Family Responsibilities"

Description

J.R. Miller reflects on the journey of home-life, comparing it to a stream that begins small and carefree but deepens and widens with the addition of responsibilities and experiences. He emphasizes the importance of each family member fulfilling their roles to create a harmonious and loving environment, where even in trials, the home remains a source of peace and joy. Miller highlights the significance of conversation, shared experiences, and the influence of literature in shaping character and fostering a nurturing atmosphere. He also addresses the inevitability of sorrow in family life, encouraging a reliance on God's love and the hope of eternal life to find comfort in times of grief. Ultimately, he portrays the home as a sacred space that shapes lives and prepares hearts for the eternal home in heaven.

Transcript

In a quiet nook among the hills, where great forest trees interlock their branches and form a deep shade--a little stream takes its rise. As it springs out from among the rocks, and goes rippling over the stones, only a tiny thread of silver at first as it begins its way toward the great sea. Other streamlets join it as it flows, and it goes on gathering and increasing in volume, until it becomes a river, bearing commerce on its bosom, and emptying at last into the broad ocean.

Its course is marked by great variety. For a time it goes laughing and dancing over the stones, like a child at play, with merriment and glee. As it grows wider and deeper, it becomes soberer and graver and its motion is slower; and when it is a river--its flow is calm and majestic. Sometimes its course lies in the sunshine, its waters sparkling like crystal in the bright rays; sometimes it runs through meadows and fields where sweet flowers bloom on its banks; sometimes it plunges into deep, dark gorges, between high rocks, where no sunbeam ever falls and no flower ever blooms; sometimes it breaks into a mad swirl, or rushes away in a fierce torrent or leaps over a precipice in a foaming cataract. So it flows on, amid all this diversity of scene and experience, until it reaches the wide sea.

Is not all this a picture of the life of every true home? It begins when two young lives meet and blend in one, and at the marriage altar with clasped hands vow to love and cherish each the other until death shall

separate them. It starts amid flowers and pealing bells and sweet strains of music and congratulations of friends. In its earliest course it is like the singing brook as it ripples away in its pebbly channel, without care or serious thought, merry and gladsome, bright and sparkling--but without great depth or meaning. In some sense these are happy days, yet their happiness is superficial and does not take deep hold on life.

A little later--and the current begins to deepen and widen. Other lives enter the stream of the home-life as one by one the children come. After that there may be less glee and merriment, just as the stream grows calmer and quieter with its increasing volume. There is more care. Great concerns creep into the life. Thoughtlessness gives way to seriousness, as responsibilities are added. New burdens accumulate. Life takes on a deeper meaning. There is less of laughing and light heartedness perhaps--but the joy is deeper and more real.

As the years pass on, the experiences of the home-life are diversified by many a change and vicissitude, by many an alteration of joy and sorrow. There are times of gladness and prosperity, as when the stream flows through quiet valleys, and green slopes stretch away from its banks and sweet flowers kiss its silvery waters. Then there are times of sorrow, when the peaceful current is broken, when the stream plunges into the gloomy chasm. Every home has its experiences of trial. But through these it passes, emerging again, and flowing on--calmer, deeper, more majestic, in richer, fuller life than before--until at last it enters the great sea of eternity!

In the foregoing chapters, the part of each member of the family in the making of the home has been considered. The duties and responsibilities of the husband, of the wife, of the parents, of the children, of brothers and of sisters--have been touched upon. If all the different members of a family are faithful in their own places, doing their own part well--the home-life will be a sweet song of holy peace. Whatever its experiences may be--it will always have its undertone of joy. In its darkest nights of trial--it will be brightened by the lamps of affection, which no wintry blast can put out. Secluded from the world, sheltered by its own roof, containing in itself the sources of happiness, and not dependent upon the outside world for its gladness and joy--it matters little whether it is day or night, whether it is calm or stormy without. The true home has a peace which is not broken by earth's tempests! Its love is a fountain of blessing--which does not wither in summer weather, and is not frozen in coldest winter. The possibilities of happiness and blessing in household life, are simply incalculable. All that is needed--is that each member faithfully does his own part.

It may be profitable at this point to touch upon a few of the particular phases and incidents of home-life, which are common to all households. There is nothing insignificant in the life which we live within our own doors. There is nothing which is without influence in the building up of character. On some old rocks the geologist shows you the tracks which birds made ages and ages ago; and the print of the leaf which fell; or the dents made by the pattering raindrops. It was soft sand then--but it hardened afterward into rock, and these marks were preserved, imperishable records of the history of a day that shone uncounted centuries ago. Let no one think that the history of any day in the life of a home, is recorded any less imperishably on the sensitive lives of the children.

There is something infinitely more important than the mere performance of duties. There is an unconscious influence which hangs about every life, like an atmosphere, which is more important than the words or acts of the life. There are many parents who fail in no duty, who are deeply concerned for their children, and really strive to make their home what it should be--whose influence is not a blessing. When the results of life are all gathered up--it will probably be seen that the things in us which have been made

the deepest and most lasting impressions in our homes and upon our children--have not been the things we did with purpose and intention, planning to produce a certain effect--but the things we did when we were not thinking of training or influencing or affecting any other life!

A wise writer says, "I look with wonder on that old time, and ask myself how it is that most of the things I suppose my father and mother built on, especially to mold me to a right manhood are forgotten and lost out of my life. But the things they hardly ever thought of--the shadow of blessing cast by the home, the tender, unspoken love, the sacrifices made and never thought of, it was so natural to make them--ten thousand little things so simple as to attract no notice--and yet so sublime as I look back at them--they fill my heart still and always, with tenderness when I remember them and my eyes with tears."

It is not so much strict fidelity in teaching and training that is so powerful in our homes for holy impression--as it is the home-life itself. The former is like the skillful trimming and training of a vine; the latter is like the sunshine and the rain that fall upon the vine. The writer above quoted adds: "It is said that a child, hearing once of heaven, and that his father would be there, replied, 'Oh! then I don't want to go to heaven!' He did but express the instinct of a child, to whom the father may be all that is good--except just goodness; and be all that any child can want, except what is indispensable--that gracious atmosphere of blessing in the healing shadow it casts, without which even heaven would come to be intolerable."

It is necessary that the whole home-life and home spirit should be in harmony with the teaching and training, if these are to make holy impressions. Simple goodness is more important than the finest theories of home government, most thoroughly and faithfully carried out! There is nothing in the daily routine of the family life, which is unimportant. Indeed, it is oftentimes the things we think of as without influence, which will be found to have made the deepest impression on the tender lives of the household.

A distinguished Danish artist had chiseled in the city of Rome, some of his rarest works in marble. When he had finished them they were sent home. The workmen as they unpacked them, scattered on the ground the straw which had been wrapped about the statues. In the straw were multitudes of little seeds, and the next summer countless flowers from the gardens of Rome were blooming all about the artist's northern home. He had not intended to drop these tiny seeds of loveliness; he was intent only on his great work, thinking only of the magnificent results in marble that he was bringing home which would be admired for ages. But while carrying out his grand purpose, he was also unconsciously scattering about his home--other tender and beautiful influences.

In like manner, the busiest men, intent on the grandest purposes, are ever scattering about them countless seeds, which will spring up either in tender loveliness to bless their homes--or in a harvest of evil to leave blight and sorrow. It may be that in the end--that the unconscious, unintended influences will far surpass in their permanent results on life and character, those endeavors which they planned with such pains, and wrought with such glowing hope.

Few things are more important in a home than its conversation, and yet there are few things to which less thought is given. The power to communicate good which lies in the 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 out thoughts which will arouse and quicken heedless souls; even whisper the secret of life giving energy to spirits that are dead.

The amount of good which we could do in our homes with our tongues, if we would use them to the utmost limit of their capacity--is simply impossible to compute. Why should so much power for blessing be

wasted? Especially why should we ever pervert these gifts and use our tongues to do evil, to give pain, to scatter seeds of bitterness? It is a sad thing when a child is born dumb--but it were better far to be dumb and never to have the gift of speech at all--than, having it, to employ it in speaking only sharp, unloving or angry words!

The home conversation should be loving. Home is the place for warmth and tenderness. Yet there is in many families a great dearth of kind words. In some cases, there is no conversation at all worthy of the name. There are no affectionate greetings in the morning or good nights at parting when the day closes. The meals are eaten in silence. There are no fireside chats over the events and incidents of the day. A stranger might mistake the home for a deaf and dumb institution!

In other cases, it would be better if silence reigned, for only words of miserable strife and shameful quarreling, are heard from day to day. Husband and wife, who vowed at the marriage altar to cherish the other until death, keep up an incessant petty strife of words. Parents, who are commanded in the holy Word, not to provoke their children to anger lest they be discouraged--but to bring them up in the nurture of the Lord, scarcely ever speak gently to them. They seem to imagine that they are not "governing" their children--unless they are perpetually scolding at them! They fly into passions against them at the smallest irritation. They issue their commands to them in words and tones which would better suit the despot of some petty savage tribe--than the head of a Christian household. It is not strange that under such "nurture" the children, instead of dwelling together in unity, with loving speech--should only wrangle and quarrel, speaking only bitter words in their fellowship with one another. That there are many homes of just this type, it is idle to deny. That prayer which is offered morning and evening in these families, only makes the matter worse--as it is mockery for a household to rise from their knees only to begin another day of strife and bitterness!

Nothing in the home-life needs to be more carefully watched and more diligently cultivated, than the conversation. It should be saturated with the spirit of love. No bitter word should ever be spoken. The language of husband and wife in their fellowship together should always be tender. Anger in word, or even in tone, should never be allowed. Chiding and faultfinding should never be permitted to mar the sacredness of their speech. The warmth and tenderness of their hearts, should flow out in every word which they utter to each other.

As parents, too, in their fellowship with their children, they should never speak, but in words of Christlike gentleness. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that children's lives can grow up into beauty--in an atmosphere of strife. Harsh, angry words are to their sensitive souls--what frost is to the flowers. To bring them up in the nurture of the Lord--is to bring them up as Christ himself would, and surely that would be with infinite gentleness. The blessed influence of loving speech, day after day and month after month--it is impossible to estimate. It is like the falling of warm spring sunshine and rain on the garden, causing lovely flowers to spring up in every nook and corner, and filling all the air with sweet fragrance. Only beauty and gentleness of character can come from such a home.

But home conversation needs more than love, to give it its full influence. It ought to be enriched by thought. The Savior's warning against idle words should be remembered. Every wise hearted parent, will seek to train his household to converse on subjects which will yield instruction, or tend toward refinement. The kitchen table affords an excellent opportunity for this kind of education. Three times each day the family gathers there. It is a place for cheerfulness. Simply on grounds of good health, meals should not be eaten in silence. Bright, cheerful conversation is an excellent sauce--and a prime aid to digestion. If it

prolongs the meal, and thus appears to take too much time out of the busy day, it will add to the years in the end--by increased healthfulness and lengthened life. In any case, however, something is due to refinement, and still more is due to the culture of one's home-life. The table should be made the center of the social life of the household. There, all should appear at their best. Gloom should be banished. The conversation should be bright and sparkling. It should consist of something besides dull and threadbare commonplaces. The weather is a worn out topic. The idle gossip of the street, is scarcely a worthy theme for such hallowed moments.

The conversation of the table, should be of a kind to interest all the members of the family; hence it should vary to suit the age and intelligence of those who form the circle. The events and occurrences of each day, may with profit, be spoken of and discussed. And now that the daily newspaper contains so full and faithful a summary of the world's doings and happenings, this is easy. Each one may mention the event which has specially impressed him in reading. Bits of humor should always be welcome, and all wearisome recital and dull, uninteresting discussion, should be avoided.

Table-talk may be enriched, and at the same time the intelligence of all the members of a family may be advanced, by bringing out at least one new fact at each meal, to be added to the common fund of knowledge. Suppose there are two or three children at the table ranging in their ages from five to twelve. Let the father or the mother have some particular subject to introduce during the meal, which will be both interesting and profitable to the younger members of the family. It may be some historical incident, or some scientific fact, or the life of some distinguished person. The subject should not be above the capacity of the younger people, for whose especial benefit it is introduced, nor should the conversation be over-laden by attempting too much at one time. One single fact clearly presented and firmly impressed, is better than whole chapters of information poured out in a confused jargon, on minds that cannot remember any part of it.

A little thought will show the rich outcome of a system like this--if faithfully followed through a series of years. If but one fact is presented at every meal, there will be a thousand things taught to the children in a year! If the subjects are wisely chosen the fund of knowledge communicated in this way, will be of no inconsiderable value. A whole system of education lies in this suggestion, for besides the communication of important knowledge--the habit of mental activity is stimulated; interest is awakened in lines of study and research, which afterward may be followed out; tastes are improved; while the whole effect upon the family life is elevating and refining!

It may be objected that such a system of table-talk could not be conducted without much thought and preparation on the part of parents. But if the habit once was formed, and the plan properly introduced--it would be found comparatively easy for parents of ordinary intelligence to maintain it. Books are now prepared in great numbers, giving important facts in small compass. Then there are encyclopedias and dictionaries of various kinds. The newspapers contain every week paragraphs and articles of great value in such a course. A wise use of scissors and paste will keep scrap books well filled with material, which can readily be made available. It will be necessary to think and plan for such a system, to choose the topics in advance, and to become familiar with the facts. This work might be shared by both parents, and thus be easy for both. That it will cost time and thought and labor ought not to be an objection--for it is not worth almost any cost to secure the benefits and advantages which would result from such a system of home instruction?

These are hints only of the almost infinite possibilities of good which lie in the home conversation. That so little is realized in most cases where so much is possible, is one of the saddest things about our current life. It may be that these suggestions though crude, may stimulate in some families at least an initial search after something better than they have yet found in their desultory and aimless conversational habits. Surely there should be no home in which amid all the light talk which flies from busy tongues--time is not found every day to say at least one word which shall be instructive, suggestive, elevating, or in some way helpful.

The home evenings present another field rich with possibilities of lasting influence and holy impression. It is one of the misfortunes of our times, that the home is being so robbed of its evenings by business, by pleasure and by social attractions. Some men never spend an evening at home, in all the year. Some women do little better. Is it any wonder that in such cases, Heaven's blessing does not seem to fall upon the household? The days are so full of occupation for most of us, from early morning until nightfall, that whatever real home-life we make--we must make in the evenings.

"To the evenings, and especially the winter's evening, belong mainly the influences of domestic life. Its few short hours are all the uninterrupted time we have at our disposal, to know our own family--and be known by them. The impression which home leaves upon the child, comes largely from its evenings. The visions which memory delights in conjuring up, are the old scenes about the evening fire or the evening lamp."

When we think of the importance of the evenings at home, it certainly seems worth while to plan to save as many as possible of them, from outside demands--for the sacred work within. It would be better that we should neglect some social attraction or entertainment, or miss some political meeting, or be absent from some lodge or society--than that we should neglect the culture of our own homes, and let our children slip away from us forever! To allow a boy to spend his evenings on the streets--is almost inevitably to indenture him to a life of sin, ending in ruin! The school of the street trains him with amazing rapidity for all manner of sin and crimes. The father who permits his son to go out nightly from the home door amid these unholy influences, must not be surprised to learn in a very little time--that his boy has learned to smoke, to swear, to drink, to gamble--and that his soul has already been debauched!

But how can we keep our boys off the streets at nights? Can we do it, if we ourselves hasten away from home every evening, as soon as we snatch a hurried supper? If parents would save their boys--they must make a home-life for the evenings so pleasant, so attractive, and so charming--that they will not want to leave it for any coarse or glittering fascinations outside! How can this be done? It can be done--if the parents set themselves to do it. There may be a season of romping if the children are young--a children's hour devoted to such play as they will enjoy. There may be pleasant games to pass away a portion of the evening. There may be the reading aloud of some racy and interesting book by one member of the family, while the others carry on the light forms of work which occupy their hands and eyes--but leave their ears open to hear. There may be music for a time and bright, cheerful conversation, closing with a prayer and a 'good-night'.

No instruction is need to teach any intelligent parent, how to give to the evenings at home a charm which shall make their influence omnipotent. It is necessary only, that parents shall set about doing that which their own hearts tell them so plainly ought to be done. Of course it will take time. Something must be left out of life--if this is to be done. But is there anything else in all the round of life's calls, and even its seeming duties, which might not well be left out--for the sake of anchoring our children to their homes! Is there anything else that it would be so fatal and terrible to leave out--as to leave our children out to perish

in the ruin of the streets, while we are at amusements and parties, or even at church meetings!

In considering the influences in the home-life which leave deep and permanent impressions on character, thought must be given to the books and magazines which are read. The invention of the art of printing marked a new era in the world's history. On the printed pages which fly everywhere like the leaves of autumn, drifting to our doors and swept into our innermost chambers--are borne to us the golden thoughts of the best and wisest men and women of all ages. The blessings which the printing press scatters, are infinite and rich beyond all estimates. But the same press which today gives us pure and holy thoughts, words of truth and life; tomorrow gives us veiled suggestions of evil, words of honeyed sweetness--but in which deadly poison is concealed!

It is fabled that a soldier found a casket which was reported to be full of valuable treasures. It was opened, and out of it came a poisonous atmosphere which caused a terrible plague in the army. Just so--many a book which is bound in bright colors, has stored within those covers, the most deadly moral influences. To open it in a pure home, among young and tender lives, is to let loose evils which never can be gathered back and locked up again!

The printing press puts into the hands of parents a means of good, which they may use to the greatest advantage in the culture of their home-life, and in the shaping of the lives of their household. But they must keep a most diligent watch over the pages which they introduce. They should know the character of every book and magazine which comes within their doors, and should resolutely exclude everything which would defile. Then, while they exclude everything whose influence would be for evil, if they are wise they will bring into their home as much as possible of pure, elevating, and refining literature. Every beautiful thought which enters a child's mind, adds to the strength and loveliness of the character in after days. The educating influence of the best books and magazines is incalculable, and no parent can afford to lose it in the training of his family.

Something should be said about home pleasure and amusements. It is a great misfortune, if parents allow themselves to lose the youthful spring and elasticity out of their lives, and to grow away from the spirit of childhood. They should never become old in heart. It was Swedenborg who wrote of heaven--that there the oldest angels are the youngest. There is something very striking in the thought. In that blessed Home, the members of the family grow always toward youth. Instead of acquiring the marks of old age, of care, of exhaustion; they become every day fresher, fairer, and fuller of the exuberance of life.

It ought to be so in every true earthly home. We cannot stop the years from rolling on, nor can we keep back the gray hairs and the wrinkles and the lines of weariness. These bodies will grow old in spite of us. But there is no reason why our spirits should not be always young. We ought to keep a child's heart beating in our breast until God calls us up higher. We ought to grow always toward youth. The oldest people in the home ought to be the youngest. If we do grow old, it will be bad for our households.

There are some homes, where the children can scarcely smile without being frowned upon. They are expected to be as grave as if they were fifty--and carrying all the burdens of the world upon their shoulders! All the joyousness of their nature is repressed. They are taught to be prim and stiff in their manners. They are continually impressed with the thought that it is a sinful waste of time to play, and that it is displeasing to God to have fun and frolic. Someone says, "A great many homes are like the frame of a harp, that stands without strings. In form and outline they suggest music--but no melody rises from the empty spaces; and thus it happens that home is unattractive, dreary and dull." There are homes which this

picture describes--but they are not the homes that are most like heaven, nor the homes out of which come the truest and noblest lives.

God wants us to fill our homes with happiness. He made childhood joyous, full of life, bubbling over with laughter, playful, bright and sunny. It is a crime to repress the mirth and the gladness--and to try to make children grave and stately. Life's burdens will come soon enough to lie upon their shoulders. Life will soon enough bring care, and anxiety, and hardship, and a weight of responsibility. We should let them be young and free from care--as long as possible. We should put into their childhood days--as much sunshine and gladness, as much cheerful pleasure, as is possible. Besides, the way also to make them strong and noble in character when they grow up to manhood and womanhood, is to make their childhood and youth bright and happy. If you want to produce a vigorous, healthy plant, you will not bring it up in a dark room--you will give it all the sunshine it will take. Human lives will never grow into their best in gloom. Pour the sunshine about them in youth; let them be happy; encourage all innocent joy; provide pleasant games for them; romp and play with them; be a child again among them. Then God's blessing will come upon your home--and your children will grow up sunny hearted, gentle, affectionate, joyous themselves and joy bearers to the world.

When MacMahon returned victorious from the battle of Magenta, all Paris came out to welcome him. Many were the honors heaped upon the brave, bronzed soldier. As he was passing in triumph through the streets and boulevards, a little child ran out toward him with a bunch of flowers in her hand. He stooped down and lifted her up before him, and she stood there, her arms twining about his neck, as he rode on. This simple exhibition of gentleness toward a little child pleased the people more, and seemed a more beautiful act in their eyes for a moment, than all the memory of his heroic deeds on the battlefield.

Men are greatest and best, not when they are wrestling with the world, not when they are putting forth the startling qualities of power, not when they are playing the hero in great contests--but when they are exhibiting most of the spirit of a little child. No parent therefore should ever be ashamed to romp and play with his children. Perhaps he is nearer to God then--than when doing what he deems his grandest work in the world. Perhaps the angels applaud more then--than when he is performing deeds that bring him praise or fame. It is better to have fame among the angels than a dozen worlds.

The young must have amusements. The only question is--what shall be the character of the amusements? Shall they be pure, healthful, refining, elevating? Or shall they be degrading in their influence? The parents must answer these questions, and the best way to answer them is to provide in their own home such amusements as they deem proper. If the home is dull and cheerless, it must not be considered an indication of extraordinary depravity, that the children and young people seek pleasure elsewhere. It is as natural as that bees hived in a stubble field, should want to fly over the fence to gather honey from the clover field adjoining. If there is clover at home--the children will not care to fly abroad. Wise parents will provide amusements for their children, and they will provide them at home, and thus counteract the solicitations of worldly pleasures.

There is a great variety of suitable home amusements. One is music. Music is not a mere amusement only--but one that combines rich instruction and lasting influence for good, with the purest enjoyment. It is scarcely possible to conceive of any pleasure that surpasses an evening of song in the parlor when the whole family unites in it, perhaps with other friends, one at the piano or organ and the others grouped about, male and female voices blending, now in the pleasant ballad or glee, now in the sacred anthem or hymn. The songs of childhood sung thus into the heart are never forgotten. Their memories live under all

the accumulations of busy years, like the sweet flowers that bloom all the winter beneath the heavy snow drifts. They are remembered in old age when nearly all else is forgotten, and oftentimes sing themselves over again in the heart with voice sweet as an angel's, when no other music has power to charm. They neglect one of the richest sources of pleasure and blessing, who do not cultivate singing in their homes.

Then there are many games which bring great enjoyment. Chess is delightful to those who have patience and skill to master it--but it requires close thought. There is much enjoyment in the old fashioned game of checkers. There are many games with various kinds of historical cards, and cards of authors or of birds and animals, which combine exciting pleasure with some instruction. There is scarcely any limit to the number of innocent games from which to make selection for evening amusements. Charades furnish genuine enjoyment. Reading clubs may be so conducted as to yield both pleasure and instruction.

It needs only a heart in full sympathy with youthful feelings, a little skill in arranging and preparing these pleasures, a small expense in furnishing the simple games and other requisites, and interests enough in the matter to devote a little time and pains to it. There is no parent of ordinary intelligence, who may not make his home-life so bright and sunny, that no one will ever care to go outside to seek amusement amid the senseless frivolities or the debasing pleasures which the world offers. Homes which are made thus in all these ways so bright and happy, acquire a resistless power over those who live within their doors, which will hold them under its subtle influence wherever they go in all their after years.

There is one experience which comes sooner or later, in the life of every home--the experience of sorrow. There may be years of unbroken gladness--but in the end, grief is sure to come. The stream which has flowed so long, with merry ripple through the green fields and amid the flowers in the bright sunshine--sweeps into the deep shadows, plunges into the dark, sunless gorge, or is hurled over the waterfall. We press our children to our bosom today, and love builds up a thousand brilliant hopes for them in our hearts; then tomorrow death comes, and they lie silent and still amid the flowers. Or we watch over them and see them grow up into nobleness and beauty, when, just as our dreams and hopes seem about to be realized, the fatal touch is upon them, and they are taken away.

There is no need to describe this experience; memory needs no reminder in such cases. The most helpful thing which can be done in these pages, is to point out a few of the comforts which should come to every Christian home in such hours.

There is great comfort in the thought that what has befallen us is God's will. Long ago this was the rock on which a godly man leaned when death had come suddenly and taken all: "The Lord gave--and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." When we know that God is truly our Father, and that his love is eternal and unchangeable, this confidence should give up great peace even in the sorest bereavement.

In the Pitti Palace at Florence there are two pictures which hang side by side. One represents a stormy sea with its wild waves and black clouds and fierce lightning flashing across the sky. In the waters a human face is seen, wearing an expression of the utmost agony and despair. The second picture also represents a sea tossed by as fierce a storm, with as dark clouds; but out of the midst of the waves a rock rises, against which the waters dash in vain. In a cleft of the rock are some tufts of grass and green herbage, with sweet flowers, and amid these, a dove is seen sitting on her nest quiet and undisturbed by the wild fury of the storm, or the mad dashing of the waves about her. The first picture fitly represents the sorrow of the world, where all is helpless despair; and the other picture fitly represents the sorrow of the

Christian, where amid trial just as terrible--he is in perfect peace, because he is hidden in the cleft of the Rock of Ages and nestles securely in the bosom of God's unchanging love.

Another of the great comforts when a Christian child is taken away, is the truth of the immortal life. In the autumn days the birds leave our chill northern climate and we hear their songs no more; but the birds are not dead. In the warmer climate of the far South they live, and amid flowers and fragrant foliage and luscious fruits they continue to sing as joyously as they sang with us in the happiest summer day. So our Christian children leave us, and we miss their sweet faces and prattling voices; but they have gone to the summer land of heaven. There in the midst of the glory of the Lord they dwell, shedding their tender grace on other hearts. We all believe this--but most of us believe it in such a way as to get but little comfort from it. The bringing into our hearts of the truth of immortality, would take away all bitterness from our sorrow when our little ones leave us.

One of the chief elements of the sorrow when young Christians die, is the sore disappointment. Careers of great usefulness have been marked out for them, and without even entering upon them, they are gone. They seem to have lived in vain, to have died without accomplishing any work in this world. So it appears--until we think more deeply of it, and then we see that they have not been in this world in vain, though their stay was so brief. They have not done what we had planned for them to do--but they have accomplished the part in God's great Plan which he had marked out for them.

Here is a little babe; it lies now in the coffin with a face as beautiful as an angel's smile. It lived but a few days or a few months. It merely opened its eyes upon the earth, and then, as if too pure for this world of sin, closed them again and went back to God. Did you say that it lived in vain, that it performed no work? Do you know how many blessings it brought down from heaven to that home when it came like a messenger from the fragrant garden of God, shook its robes and then fled away again? It only crept into the mother's bosom for a brief season and was gone--but ever afterward her heart will be warmer, her life richer and deeper and her spirit gentler and sweeter. No one can tell what holy work a babe performs, which stays only an hour in this world. It does not live in vain. It leaves touches of beauty on other souls which never shall fade out. It may accomplish more in that one short hour; leave greater blessings behind, than do others who live long full years. It may change the eternal destiny of other souls. Many a child dying, leads an unsaved parent to the sacred feet of Christ. Certain it is, that no true parent is ever just the same in character after clasping his own child in his arms. To have felt the warmth and thrill of a new love even for a few moments, though the object loved be withdrawn, leaves a permanent result in the life.

Or perhaps the child lives to be ten or twelve years old. She is the light and joy of the home. Great promises begin to bud and blossom out in her life. Then she dies. As the parents bend over her and kiss her pale, cold lips--they mourn over the crushed hopes which lie there, like buds opening only to be killed by the frost. In imagination they have seen her standing forth in all the splendor of queenly womanhood, crowned with honor, beauty and love. But she has died without realizing these hopes. She has fallen just on the threshold of life. Yet who will say that she did no work in those brief, bright years? She has been a blessing in her home all the time, drawing out the love of tender hearts, scattering influences of joy and purity. Now she is gone--but the work she has done in the home--hearts and lives remains, and never can be taken away.

God takes away your children, and in faith you surrender them to him to see them no more in this world; but you cannot give back all that they have brought to you. In your heart new springs of love were opened by their coming; and you cannot give these back. Death cannot take out of your life, the new experiences

which you had in pressing them to your heart, or in loving and caring for them through the sunny years. You are better, stronger, richer in your nature, more a man or a woman, because you have held in your arms and have nurtured your own child. These new outreachings of your life can never be taken from you. Like new branches of a tree they will remain ever after, a part of yourself. Though the loved ones are removed, the results of their coming to you and staying with you, the influences, the impressions made, the qualities, the new growths in your life--will never depart. They are your permanent possessions forever.

Thus, while the influences of a child's life remain, its death also brings new blessings to the home. It softens all hearts. Rudeness grows gentle--under the influence of sorrow. It brings the parents closer together. Many an incipient estrangement, is healed at the coffin of a dead child. It is like a new marriage.

There come to many homes, other sorrows besides the sorrows of bereavement. There are griefs sorer than those caused by death. There are sorrows over the living who are in peril, or who are wandering away, sometimes over those who have fallen. There are wives weeping in secret, over trials of which they can speak to none but God. There are parents with sadder disappointments, than if they stood by the coffins of their early dead. Sin and shame cause bitterer tears than death. There are homes from which the shadow never lifts, out of which the brightness seems forever to have gone. There are home-hearts from which the music has fled, and which are like harps with their strings all broken. Yet even for these, there is comfort if they are resting in God's bosom. The divine love can bring blessing out of every possible trial. No life that clings by faith to Christ, can be destroyed.

In a lovely Swiss valley there is a cascade which is caught by the swift winds as it pours over the edge of the rock, and scattered so that the falling stream is lost for the time, and only a wreath of whirling spray is seen in the air. But farther down the valley the stream gathers itself back again and pours along in full current in quiet peace, as if it had never been so rudely smitten by the wind. Even the blast that scatters it for the time, and seems to destroy it altogether, really makes it all the lovelier as it whirls its crystal drops into the air. At no other point in all its course is the waterfall so beautiful. Just so--there are Christian lives that seem to be utterly destroyed by trial--but beyond the sorrow they move on again in calmer, fuller strength, not destroyed, not a particle of their real life wasted. And in the trial itself, through the grace of Christ, their character shines out in the richer luster and rarer splendor, that ever in the days when their hearts were fullest of joy and gladness.

So the life of the true home flows on, sometimes in the bright sunshine, sometimes in the deep shadow; yet whether in sunshine or in shadow--it brings blessing. It shelters us in the day of storm. Its friendships remain true and loyal when adversity falls and other friendships are broken. It lays holy hands of blessing upon our heads as we go out to meet life's struggles and duties. Its sacred influences keep us from many a sin. Its memories are our richest inheritance. Its inspirations are the secret strength of our lives in days of toil and care. Then it teaches us to look toward heaven as the great Home in which all our hearts' hopes and dreams shall be realized, and where the broken ties of earth shall be reunited.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/the-home-life-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net