

The Making of a Man.

by J.R. Miller

The making of a man requires patience, courage, gentleness, and self-discipline, and is shaped through life's experiences with Christ as the guiding force.

Scripture: Philippians 1:6, James 1:2

Topics: "Character Development", "Reliance on Christ"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that life is a divine workshop for the making of godly men, where character is shaped through various experiences and trials. He illustrates that while physical and intellectual growth can be straightforward, the development of moral and spiritual character requires patience, courage, and gentleness, which must be actively cultivated. Miller warns that without intentional training and the presence of Christ, individuals may struggle to navigate life's challenges and fail to achieve their potential. He stresses the importance of understanding and embracing life's lessons to build a noble character. Ultimately, he concludes that true manhood is a continuous process of growth, requiring both self-discipline and reliance on Christ.

Transcript

This world is not a place merely to live in, nor a place in which to do certain kinds of business; it is a great workshop in which to make godly men.

It is not easy for us to be holy and to grow into beautiful life and noble character. It is not hard to take a lump of clay, and shape it into any form we desire. It is fairly easy to take a piece of soft wood, and carve it into a figure of beauty. It is harder to cut a block of marble into a form of loveliness, for the stone is hard. But it is harder still to take a block of marred and sinful humanity, and make it into a godly man, bearing the divine image. Yet that is what God is doing with every Christian who lies in his hands.

A baby is not a man. It may be very beautiful and sweet, and may have folded up in its life many fine possibilities; but it is only a baby. All its lessons have yet to be learned, its powers have yet to be developed, the capacities that lie folded up in its hand and brain and heart -- have yet to be brought out and trained, its character has to be fashioned into loveliness and strength. The education begins at once, with the mother for teacher and the home for schoolroom; but the process must be slow, and it will require a long time.

As the child gets older, other teachers come in and do their work, and the sphere of the education widens. The boy goes to school, perhaps by and by to college. At last he graduates, or finishes his apprenticeship or his training, and takes hold of life's duties for himself. But the man is not yet made. He has reached an important stage in life. He takes his place among men. Burdens and responsibilities are put upon him.

Now he begins to learn the deeper lessons of life -- begins to learn how to live. The principles he has adopted for himself are now to be tested in practice. His theories of duty he is now to work out in every-day experience. His character is to be tried, and by the strain upon it is to be fashioned and wrought into fixedness and permanency. Life itself is now the school, and the conditions and experiences of life are the teachers.

Now it is seen how the training the young man has received in the schools of his youth has fitted him for real life. Perhaps he has wasted his time and missed his lessons; if so, he will find himself unequal to the duties which come into his hands. Perhaps he has failed in acquiring self-discipline, or has not gathered into his life the strength of moral principle; if so, he will fail in the stress of temptation, and will not stand the testing of character which every young man must meet when he enters the world's battles.

Now it is that the real making of the man begins. All that has gone before, has been preliminary and preparatory. It is . . .

in duty,

in burden-bearing,

in struggle,

in temptation,

in joy and sorrow, in prosperity and adversity,

in ease and hardship,

in pleasure and pain,

in health and sickness,

in life's experiences of all kinds

-- that the work goes on. Everywhere lessons are set which must be learned, if the result in character-building is to be satisfactory.

Take PATIENCE, for example. The etymology of the word shows that it is not an easy lesson to learn. It implies suffering and endurance. It is in the bearing of pain, trial, wrong, or hardship -- that patience is developed. One definition is, "The character or habit of mind that enables us to suffer afflictions, calamities, provocations, or other evils -- with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or fretfulness; calmness; composure."

A young person may have had very little opportunity to learn patience. He has had only ease and his own way, without sickness, disappointment, or pain, with almost no wish ungranted, no desire ungratified, no craving unmet.

How will he behave in sickness, in sorrow, or in affliction?

How will he endure injury, injustice, and wrong?

How will he stand the test of disappointment, defeat, or failure?

What will be the effect on him of unpleasant contacts with other men?

Will he prove patient in such antagonisms?

Will he always keep sweet?

Patience is only one of the lessons; there are many more which go to the making of a man. COURAGE is one. In every scheme of manly character, courage is set down as a fundamental quality. All the world scorns cowardice. The highest courage is not physical, merely -- but moral. There are men whose faces grow pale in presence of danger -- but who, nevertheless, stand firm in their place, or move on in the path of duty without faltering. True moral courage shows itself in devotion to principle, in faithful adherence to the right, in the consecration of the life to common duties, and in the resisting of temptation.

But courage, too, is a lesson set for us, and one which must be learned. We are not all born brave, at least morally brave. The lesson should be taught in the home and in life's first schools. Young people themselves, as soon as they become conscious of the nobleness of courage, and the unworthiness of cowardice -- should take up the lesson and master it. The way to do this is to hold one's self resolutely and unflinchingly to all heroic and manly conduct in every experience. Bravery is not 'bluster'. Quietness is a better test of heroism, oftentimes, than noise. It is in rigid self-discipline, that this manly quality is gained and wrought into the character.

Another of the elements in a true man is GENTLENESS; a man must be a gentleman. This includes all the fine feelings wrought into life. The noblest types of manliness the world has ever seen, have been marked by gentleness. Jesus was the ideal man; and he would not even break a bruised reed, so gentle was he. Heartlessness is unmanliness, amid whatever other great qualities it may be found.

This lesson, too, must be learned. The gentle touch must be gotten by training. The secret is in refinement of feeling. The love which is taught in the New Testament, makes one gentle. Every one who would make a true man of himself, must cultivate gentleness, both in his heart and as a trait in his disposition, his words, his conduct, his acts.

These are a few of the qualities which must always go to the making of a man. Young people must not think that they will naturally grow into fine character, without any care of their own; the natural drift of life is the other way -- away from manliness. Only training and self-discipline will yield the noble product. Through all the years the education must go on. Every day brings its new lesson. Every experience has its mission in the building and adorning of the character.

The lesson in all this, is that experiences alone will not make a worthy and noble man out of anyone. Several things are essential in order that beauty may be wrought out in life's school. The preparation must be right. A misspent youth, with squandered privileges, insures failure in life. Every day and hour of youth must be well spent if one is to be ready for manhood.

The true meaning of experiences must be understood. Many lives are hurt and marred, by the things which are intended to fashion them into beauty and strength. We must meet all experiences victoriously.

Then we need Christ at every point. To leave Christ out of life, is to thrust away the only hand which can make circumstances minister to the building up of character. Without Christ, apart from him -- only marring can come. If we have Christ in all our life, we shall grow into his beauty.

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