

The Ministry of Kindness

by J.R. Miller

Kindness is a fundamental aspect of God's nature and is essential for a fulfilling life, requiring a gentle heart and a willingness to forget oneself and think of others.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22, Colossians 3:12

Topics: "Compassion", "Kindness"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the transformative power of kindness in his sermon 'The Ministry of Kindness,' illustrating how small acts of compassion can significantly impact the lives of others. He argues that true success is not measured by worldly achievements but by the love and kindness we extend to those around us. Miller highlights that kindness should be a habitual practice, woven into the fabric of our daily lives, and that even the smallest gestures can bring joy and comfort to others. He encourages listeners to cultivate a gentle heart, as kindness flows naturally from a heart filled with love for others. Ultimately, Miller reminds us that kindness is a reflection of God's love and should be a priority in our lives.

Transcript

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved--clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23

Nothing is more worth while, than kindness. Nothing else in life is more beautiful in itself. Nothing else does more to brighten the world, and sweeten other lives.

Robert Louis Stevenson said in a letter: "It is our kindnesses, that alone makes the world tolerable. If it were not for that--I would be tempted to think that our life is a practical jest in the worst possible spirit."

The man whose life lacks habitual kindness may succeed splendidly in a worldly sense. He may win his way to high honor. He may gather his millions. He may climb to a conspicuous place among men. But he has missed that which alone gives beauty to a life--the joy and blessing of being kind. There are men who are so intent on winning the race, that they have neither eye nor heart nor hand for the human needs along the wayside. Here and there is one, however, who thinks more of the humanities, than of the personal success; that woos him forward, and who turns aside in his busiest hour to give help and cheer

to those who need.

There is always this difference in men. There are those who have only one purpose in life, the making of their own career. They fix their eye upon their goal, and press toward it with indomitable persistence, utterly unheeding the calls and appeals of human need which break upon their ears. They fail altogether in love's duty. They dwarf and deaden the qualities which are divinest in their nature.

Far nobler are those who, while earnest and diligent in business--yet let the law of love rule in their lives and are ever ready to forget themselves and sacrifice their own personal interest in order to do good to others. He who leaves 'love for others' out of his life-plan, leaves God out too, for love is the first thing in Godlikeness.

When we speak of kindness, we think not so much of 'large' things as of the 'little' things of thoughtfulness and gentleness, which one may do along life's way. There are people who now and then do some great thing of which everybody speaks--but whose common days are empty of love's personal ministries. There are men who give large sums of money to found or endow institutions--but who have scarcely ever been known to do a kindly deed to a poor man or to one in trouble or need, and who fail altogether in love's sweet spirit in their own homes and among their own companions.

Is it not better that we shall have a gentle heart, which will prompt us to unbroken kindness in word and deed--than that once in a great while we should do some conspicuous act of charity; living, meanwhile, in all our common relations--a cold, selfish, unsympathetic, ungentle and loveless life?

There are men and women who have learned so well the lesson of love taught by the Master--that all along their path, a ministry of kindness is wrought by them, which brightens and blesses the lives of all who come within their influence. Their course through this world is like that of a river across a desert whose banks are fringed with green. Like the Master, they literally go about doing good. They have a genius for kindness. They are ever doing thoughtful little things which add to the world's sweetness and happiness.

Once in crossing a meadow, I came to a spot that was filled with fragrance. Yet I could see no flowers, and I wondered whence the fragrance came. At last I found, low down, close to the ground--hidden by the tall grass, innumerable little flowers growing. It was from these, that the fragrance came.

It is just so, when you enter some homes. There is a rich perfume of love that pervades all the place. It may be a home of wealth and luxury, or it may be plain and bare. It does not matter--it is not the house, nor the furniture, nor the adornment that makes the air of sweetness. You look closely. It is a gentle woman, mother or daughter, quiet, lowly, hiding herself away--from whose life the fragrance flows. She may not be beautiful, may not be specially well-educated, may not be musical, nor an artist, nor 'clever' in any way; but wherever she moves--she leaves a blessing. Her sweet patience is never disturbed by the sharp words that fall around her. The children love her--because she never tires of them. She helps them with their lessons, listens to their frets and worries, mends their broken toys, makes dolls' dresses for them, straightens out their tangles, settles their little quarrels, and finds time to play with them. When there is sickness in the home--she is the angel of comfort. Her face is always bright--with the outshining of love. Her voice has music in it as it falls in cheerful tenderness on a sufferer's ear. Her hands are wondrously gentle as their soothing touch rests on the aching head, or as they minister in countless ways about the bed of pain.

A young woman who had passed through deep sorrows, said to a friend one day, in speaking of the comfort certain people had given her unconsciously, "I wish some people knew just how much their faces can comfort another! I often ride down in the same street-car with your father, and it has been such a help to me to sit next to him. There is something so good and strong and kind about him, it has been a comfort just to feel he was beside me. Sometimes, when I have been utterly depressed and discouraged, he has seemed somehow to know just the right word to say to me; but if he didn't talk, why, I just looked at his face, and that helped me. He probably has not the least idea of it, either, for I know him so slightly, and I don't suppose people half realize, anyway, how much they are helping or hindering others!"

There is a great deal of this unconscious kindness in the world. Moses did not know that his face shone. The best people are not aware of their goodness. According to the old legend, it was only when it fell behind him, where he could not see it, that the saintly man's shadow healed the sick. This is a parable. Kindness that is aware of itself--has lost much of its charm. Kindnesses that are done unconsciously, mean the most.

It is one of the blessings of pain or suffering--that it softens hearts, and woos out gentleness and kindness. A very common experience is given in the story of a worker in one of the slums, which tells of a whole family completely changed through the influence of a deformed child who became the angel of the home. The father was a drudge, the children were coarse and uncouth, and the mother, overworked and far from strong, had fallen into untidy habits. But there was born into that home--a crippled child, and she was the means of drawing out the sympathy, love, and tenderness of the whole family. The father nursed and petted his child in the evenings; the boys made playthings for her, and showed their affection in all sorts of pleasant ways; the mother kept the window clean, that her child, pillowed on the table, might look out on the court. Thus a large and blessed ministry of kindness was inspired by what seemed a misfortune. The suffering of a child transformed all the household life, making each heart gentler, sweeter, more thoughtful, more unselfish.

It is often so. Many a sweet home owes most of its sweetness, to a quiet, patient sufferer, whose pain has been the messenger of God to soften hearts and enrich common lives with heavenly tenderness.

One good rule of kindness, is never to allow a day to pass in which someone has not been made a little happier. We fail to realize, too, how much happiness even very little things give. It may be only a word of cheer, as we meet a neighbor on the street, or an inquiry at the door when one is sick, or a note of sympathy when there is trouble in the home, or a simple remembrance on a birthday or an anniversary. Such seeming trifles, costing nothing but thoughtfulness and an expression of love--are life and cheer to those to whom they come. They make the world a sweeter place to live in. They make burdens lighter, rough paths smoother, hard toil easier, loneliness more endurable.

Whatever else we may do or may not do--we should certainly train ourselves to be kind. It may not be an easy lesson to learn, for its secret is forgetting ourselves and thinking of others--and this is always hard. But it can be learned. To begin with, there must be a gentle heart--to inspire the gentle life. We must love people--if we do not, no training, no following of rules, will ever make us kind. But if the heart is full of the love of Christ, the disposition will be loving, and it will need no rules--to teach the lips to speak ever gracious words, and the hands to do always the things of kindness--and to do them always at the right time. Too many wait until it is too late--to be kind.

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