

The Parent's Part

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of parental responsibility in making the home a place of spiritual growth and character development for children.

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

Topics: "Parenting", "Responsibility in Family"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound responsibility and transformative power of parenthood, illustrating how caring for children draws out the best in parents and shapes their character. He argues that the arrival of a child brings new purpose and unity to a marriage, urging parents to recognize their vital role in nurturing their children's spiritual and moral development. Miller warns against the dangers of neglecting parental duties, highlighting that both fathers and mothers must actively participate in creating a loving and supportive home environment. He stresses that the home should be a place of growth, love, and unselfishness, where children can flourish and learn essential life principles. Ultimately, he calls parents to seek divine guidance in their sacred task of raising children, as they shape the future of their families and society.

Transcript

God has so constituted us, that in loving and caring for our own children--the richest and best things in our natures are drawn out. Many of the deepest and most valuable lessons ever learned, are read from the pages of unfolding child life. We best understand the feelings and affections of God toward us--when we bend over our own child and see in our human parenthood, a faint image of the divine Fatherhood. Then in the culture of character, there is no influence more potent than that which touches us when our children are laid in our arms. Their helplessness appeals to every principle of nobleness in our hearts. Their innocence exerts over us a purifying power. The thought of our responsibility for them, exalts every faculty of our souls. In the very care which they exact, they bring blessing to us. When old age comes, very lonely is the home which has neither son nor daughter to return with grateful ministries, to bring solace and comfort to the declining years!

It is a new marriage, when the first born enters the home. It draws the wedded lives together in a closeness they have never known before. It touches chords in their hearts, which have lain silent until now. It calls out powers, which have never been exercised before. Hitherto unsuspected beauties of character appear. The laughing, heedless girl of a year ago--is transformed into a thoughtful woman! The

careless, unsettled youth--leaps into manly strength and into fixedness of character, when he looks into the face of his own child and takes it in his bosom. New aims rise up before the young parents; new impulses begin to stir in their hearts. Life takes on at once, a new and deeper meaning. The glimpse they have had into its solemn mystery, sobers them. The laying in their hands of a new and sacred trust--an immortal life, to be guided and trained by them--brings to them a sense of responsibility which makes them thoughtful. Self is no longer the center. There is a new object to live for, an object great enough to fill all their life, and engross their highest powers! It is only when the children come, that life becomes real, and that parents begin to learn to live. We talk about training our children--but they train us first, teaching us many a sacred lesson, stirring up in us many a slumbering gift and possibility, calling out many a hidden grace, and disciplining our wayward powers into strong and harmonious character.

Our homes would be very cold and dreary, without the children. Sometimes we weary of their noise. They certainly bring us a great deal of care and concern. They cost us no end of toil. When they are very young they break our rest many a weary night, with their colics and teething; and when they grow older they well-near break our hearts many a time with their waywardness! After they come to us, we may as well bid farewell to living for self, and to personal ease--if we mean to do faithful duty as parents.

There are some who therefore look upon the coming of children as a misfortune. They talk about them lightly as "responsibilities." They regard them as an obstacle to their personal pleasure. They see no blessing in them. But it is cold selfishness which looks upon children in this way. Instead of being hindrances to true and noble living--they are helps! They bring blessings from heaven when they come--and while they stay they are perpetual blessings.

When the children come--what shall we do with them? What duties do we owe to them? How may we discharge our responsibility? What is the parents' part in making the home--and the home-life? It is impossible to overstate the importance of these questions.

It is a great thing to take these young and tender lives, rich with so many possibilities of beauty, of joy, of power--all of which may be wrecked--and to become responsible for their shaping and training, and for the up building of their character. This is what must be thought of in the making of a home. It must be a home in which children will grow up for true and noble life--for God and for heaven. Upon the parents, the chief responsibility rests. They are the builders of the home. From them it receives its character, whether good or evil. It will be just what they make it. If it is happy--they must be the authors of the happiness; if it is unhappy--the blame must rest with them. Its tone, its atmosphere, its spirit, its influence--it will take from the parents. They have the making of the home in their own hands--and God holds them responsible for it.

This responsibility rests upon both the parents. There are some fathers who seem to forget that any share of the burden and duty of making the home-life, belongs to them. They leave it all to the mothers. They come and go--as if they were scarcely more than boarders in their own house, with no active interest in the welfare of their children! They plead the demands of business as the excuse for their neglect. But where is the business that is so important, as to justify a man's evasion of the sacred duties which he owes to his own family? There cannot be any other work in this world which a man can do, which will excuse him at God's eternal judgment bar, for having neglected the care of his own home and the training of his own children! No success in any department of the world's work, can possibly atone for failure here. No piling up of this world's treasures, can compensate a man for the loss of those incomparable jewels--his own children!

In the prophet's parable he said to the king, "As your servant was busy here and there--he was gone!" May not this be the only plea that some fathers will have to offer, when they stand before God without their children, "As I was busy here and there--they were gone!" Men are busy in their worldly affairs, busy pressing their plans and ambitions to fulfillment, busy gathering money to lay up a fortune, busy chasing the world's honors and building up a name, busy in the quest for knowledge--and while they are busy their children grow up--and when they turn to see if they are getting on well--they are gone! Then they try most earnestly to get them back again--but their intensest efforts avail not. It is too late then to do that blessed work for them and upon their lives--which could so easily have been done in their tender years. Dr. Geikie's book, entitled "Life," opens with these words: "Some things God gives often: some he gives only once. The seasons return again and again, and the flowers change with the months--but youth comes twice to none." Childhood comes but once with its opportunities. Whatever is done to stamp it with beauty, must be done quickly!

It matters not how capable, how wise, how devoted the mother may be; the fact that she does her part well, does not free the father in any degree from his share of the responsibility. Parental duties cannot be transferred. No other one's faithfulness, can excuse or atone for my unfaithfulness. Besides, it is a wrong and unmanly thing for a strong, capable man, who claims to be the stronger vessel, to seek to put off on a woman, whom he calls the weaker vessel, duties and responsibilities which clearly belong to him.

There is a certain sense in which the mother is the real homemaker. It is in her hands, that the tender life is laid for its first impressions. In all its education and culture, she has the main part. Her spirit makes the home atmosphere. Yet from end to end of the Scriptures, the law of God makes the father the head of the household, and devolves upon him as such--the responsibility for the up building of his house, the training of his children, the care of all the sacred interests of his family.

The fathers should awake to the fact, that they have something to do in making the life of their own homes, besides providing food and clothing, and paying taxes and bills. They owe to their homes the best influences of their lives. Whatever other duties press upon them, they should always find time to plan for the good of their own households. The very center of every man's life, should be his home. Instead of being to him a mere boarding house where he eats and sleeps, and from which he starts out in the mornings to his world--it ought to be the place where his heart is anchored, where his hopes gather, to which his thoughts turn a thousand times a day, for which he toils and struggles, and into which he brings always the richest and best things of his life. He should realize that he is responsible for the character and the influence of his home-life, and that if it should fail to be what it ought to be--the blame and guilt must lie upon his soul.

Socrates used to say that he wondered how men who were so careful of the training of a colt, were indifferent to the education of their own children. Yet even in these Christian days, men are found, men professing to be followers of Christ, who give infinitely more thought and pains to the raising of cattle, the growing of crops, the building up of business--than to the training of their children!

Something must be crowded out of every earnest, busy life. No one can do everything which comes to his hand. It will be a fatal mistake--if any father allows his duties to his home to be crowded out. They should rather have the first place. Anything else had better be neglected, than his children. Even religious work in the kingdom of Christ at large, must not interfere with work in the kingdom of Christ in his home. No man is required to keep other men's vineyards so faithfully, that he cannot keep his own. That a man has been a devoted pastor or a diligent church officer or a faithful Sunday school teacher--will not atone for the fact

that he was an unfaithful father!

Definitions are important. It will help very greatly in working out the problem of the home-life, to settle precisely the object of a home, and what is intended to accomplish, for those who are to grow up in it. When boys are to be trained for soldiers, a military academy is what is required. If they are to serve in the navy, they are sent to naval school. If a young girl desires to study art, she does not go to a college of music--but to an art school. If she wishes to study the science of medicine, she enters not a theological but a medical school. The course of study, the instruction, the tone and spirit of these schools, are each adapted to produce the end desired. If we know definitely what a home ought to do for the children who are brought up in it--we can tell better what the training, the instruction and the influences should be.

What, then, is the OBJECT of a home? What is its mission? What is it designed to accomplish? What kind of results is it expected to yield? We know the design of a blacksmith's shop; articles and implements of iron are forged and fashioned there. We know what a marble cutter's yard is for; forms of grace and beauty are there chiseled from the block of marble. We know what a textile factory is designed to do; its shuttles weave the fabrics which men and women are to wear. When an artist fits up a studio, we know what kind of work he expects to send out; on canvas or in marble, he will fix the beautiful creations of his genius and send them forth to give inspirations of loveliness to others. In every kind of shop or factory or mill which men build--they have some definite design to accomplish, some specific results to be achieved. What then, are the results which homes are meant to produce? What forms of beauty, what fabrics of loveliness, are they expected to yield?

We begin to think of these questions, and we say, "A home is a place in which to sleep and get one's meals. It is a place in which to rest when one is tired, to stay and be nursed when one is sick; a place in which to rock the babies and let the children romp and play; a place to receive one's friends and keep the treasures one gathers."

Is that all? Some one asked a young lady who had just completed her education, what her aim in life now was, and she replied, "To breathe." Her reply may have been made in jest, yet there are many who have no higher aim in living. Sadly, the goal which most parents have for their home--is to have as good and showy a house as they can afford, furnished in as rich a style as their means will warrant, and then to live in it as comfortably as they are able, without too much exertion or self-denial.

But the true idea of a Christian home, is that it is a place for spiritual growth. It is a place for the parents themselves to grow--to grow into beauty of character, to grow in spiritual refinement, in knowledge, in strength, in wisdom, in patience, gentleness, kindness, and all the Christian graces and virtues. It is a place for children to grow--to grow into physical vigor and health and to be trained in all that shall make them true and noble men and women. That is, just as the artist's studio is built and furnished for the definite purpose of preparing and sending out forms of beauty, so is a true home set up and all its life ordered--for the definite purpose of training, building up and sending our human lives fashioned into Christlike symmetry, filled with lofty impulses and aspirations, governed by principles of rectitude and honor, and fitted to enter upon the duties and struggles of life with spiritual wisdom and strength.

If this be the true object and design in setting up a home, the question arises--what sort of home culture and home education will produce these results? What influences will best fashion human infancy and childhood into strong, noble manhood and lovely, queenly womanhood? The blacksmith furnishes his shop with the appliances and tools, which are best fitted to do the work he intends to do. The gardener

prepares his soil, sows his seeds, waters his plants, regulates the temperature and provides just the conditions, adapted to promote the growth of his flowers. What sort of implements do we need in training tender lives? What are the conditions which will best promote growth in human souls? What kind of home-life must we try to make--if we would build up noble character in our children?

For one thing, the house itself in which we live, with its surroundings and adornments, is important. Every home influence, even the very smallest, works itself into the heart of childhood, and then reappears in the opening character. Homes are the real schools in which men and women are trained, and fathers and mothers are the real teachers and builders of life! The poet's song that charms the world--is but the sweetness of a mother's love flowing out in rhythmic measure through the soul of her child. The lovely things which men make in their days of strength--are but the reproductions in embodied forms of the lovely thoughts that were whispered in their hearts in tender youth. The artist's picture--is but a touch of a mother's beauty wrought out on the canvas. There is nothing in all the influences and surroundings of the home of tender childhood so small--that it does not leave its touch of beauty or of marring, upon the life.

Even the natural scenery in which a child is reared, has much to do with the tone and hue of its future character. Beautiful things spread before the eye of childhood, print themselves on the sensitive heart. The mountains, the sea, lovely valleys, picturesque landscapes, forests, flowers--all have their influence in shaping the life. Still greater is the influence of the house itself--in which a child is brought up. This subject has not yet received the attention which it merits. As people advance in civilization and refinement, they build better houses. In great cities the criminal and degraded classes live in wretched hovels. One of the first steps in any wise effort to elevate the low and wicked elements of society, must be to provide better dwellings for them. When a whole family is crowded into one room, neither physical nor moral health is possible. In a wretched, filthy apartment in a dark and miserable alley, it is impossible for children to grow up into purity and refinement. One of the things for true philanthropy to do, is to devise some plan by which better homes may be provided for the poor. Until this is done, the leprous spots in our great cities cannot be healed.

Wherever a child grows up, it carries in its character the subtle impressions of the home in which it lives. The house itself, its shape and appearance, its interior arrangement and decoration, its furniture, its external surroundings --either brick walls and paved streets or green grass and flowers--its outlook, on the majestic sea, on the grand mountains, on the illimitable prairie, on the barren stretches or picturesque landscape --these have their influence on the character, and help to determine its final shaping. In the choosing and preparation of a home, this fact must not be overlooked.

The educating power of beauty must not be forgotten. The surroundings should be cheerful and attractive. The house itself, whether large or small, should be neat and tasteful. Its ornaments and decorations should be simple yet chaste, and pleasing to the eye. The rooms in which our children are to sleep and play and live--we should make just as bright and lovely as our means can make them. If we can afford but two rooms for our home, we should put into them just as much educating power as possible. Children are fond of pictures, and pictures in a house, if they be pure and good, have a wondrous influence in refining their lives. In these days of cheap art, when prints and engravings can be purchased at such small cost, there is scarcely anyone who may not have on the walls of his house, some bright bits of beauty which will prove an inspiration to his children. Every home can at least be made bright, clean, sweet, and beautiful--even if bare of ornament and decoration. It is almost impossible for a child to grow up into loveliness of character, gentleness of disposition, and purity of heart--amid scenes of slovenliness, untidiness, repulsiveness and filthiness. But a clean home, with tasteful and simple adornments and

pleasant surroundings--is an influence of incalculable value in the education of children.

But the house is not all. Four walls do not make a home--though built of marble and adorned with the costliest decorations. A family may be reared in a palace filled with the loveliest works of art, and yet the influences may not be such as leave blessing. The home-life itself is more important than the house and its adornments. By the home-life, is meant all the interactions of the members of the family. It is a happy art, the art of living together in tender love. It must begin with the parents themselves. Unless their life together is loving and true--it will be impossible for them to make their home-life so. They give the keynote to the music. If their interaction is marked by bickering and quarrelings, they must expect their children to imitate them. If gentleness and affectionateness characterize their bearing toward each other--the same spirit will rule in the family life. For their children's sake, if for no other, parents should cultivate their own lives and train themselves to live together in the most Christlike way. They will very soon learn that good rules and wise counsels from their lips amount to but little--unless their own lives give example and illustration of the things thus commended.

We enter some homes, and they are full of sweetness--as fields of summer flowers are full of fragrance. All is order, beauty, gentleness and peace. We enter other homes, where we find jarring, selfishness, harshness and disorder. This difference is not accidental. They are influences at work in each home, which yield just the result we see in each. There are different kinds of shells in the sea. Some of them are very coarse, ugly and unsightly; others are very lovely, like the nautilus, "many chambered, softly curved, pearl adorned, glowing with imprisoned rainbows." But each shell exactly corresponds with the nature of the creature which lives in it. Each little creature builds a house just like itself; indeed it builds its own life into it. In like manner every home takes its color and tone from its makers. A refined person puts refinement into a home, though it be only one plain room without an ornament or a luxury; a coarse person makes the home coarse, though it be a palace filled with all the elegances which wealth can buy. No home-life can ever be better than the life of those who make it. It is nothing less nor more than the spirit of the parents like an atmosphere, filling all the house.

What should this home-spirit be?

First of all, I would name the law of unselfishness as one of its essential elements. Where selfishness prevails, there can be no real happiness in the home. Indeed there is no deep, true and holy love, where selfishness rules. As love grows, selfishness dies out in the heart. Love is always ready to deny itself, to give, to sacrifice, just in the measure of its sincerity and intensity. Perfect love is perfect self forgetfulness. Hence, where there is love in a home, unselfishness is the law. Each forgets self--and lives for the others. But when there is selfishness, it mars the joy. One selfish soul, will destroy the sweetness of the life of any home. It is like a patch of ugly weeds, in the midst of a garden of flowers.

It was selfishness which destroyed the first home and blighted all the loveliness of Paradise; and it has been blighting lovely things in earth's homes, ever since. We need to guard against this spirit. Self culture on the part of the parents is therefore an urgent duty and necessity. Selfishness in them will spread the same unhappy spirit through all the household life. They must be, not in seeming--but in reality, what they want their children to be. The lessons they would teach--they must live.

Another essential element of true home-life, is affectionateness; not love only--but the cultivation of love in the daily life of the family--the expression of love in words and acts. This reminder is not altogether needless. There are homes where the love is deep and true; the members of the family would die for each

other; when grief or pain comes to one of them, the hearts of all the others give out their warmest expressions of affection. There is no question as to the reality and strength of the attachment which binds the household together. Yet in their ordinary fellowship, there is a great lack of those exhibitions of kindly feeling which is the sweetest blossoming of love.

Husband and wife pass weeks without one of these endearing expressions which have such power to warm the heart. Meals are eaten in haste and in dreary silence, as if the company that surrounds the table had nothing in common, and had only been brought together by accident. The simplest courtesies which even polite strangers never fail to extend to each other, are altogether omitted in the household fellowship. Ill manners which would not be tolerated for a moment in the ordinary associations of society, are oftentimes allowed to find their way into this holiest circle!

This should not be so. The heart's love should flow out in word and deed. There are such homes. The very atmosphere as one enters the door seems laden with fragrance. The conversation is bright, sparkling, cheerful, and courteous. The warmth of love makes itself felt in continuous influence. No loud, harsh tones are ever heard. A delightful thoughtfulness pervades all the family life. Everyone is watchful of the feelings of the others. There is a respectfulness of manner and bearing, which is shown even toward the youngest. Without any such sickening extravagances of expression as mark the fellowship of some families, there is here a genuine kindness of manner which is very charming even to the casual visitor, and which for the hearts of the household has a wondrous warming and satisfying power. All the amenities and courtesies of true politeness are carefully observed, touched also by a tenderness which shows that they are from the heart.

This is the true home spirit. It needs culture. Even the best of us are in danger of growing careless in our own family life. Our very familiarity with our home companions is apt to render us forgetful, and when we have grown forgetful and have dropped the little tendernesses out of our home fellowship, soon the love itself will begin to decay, and what the end may be of coldness and desolateness, no one can foretell.

The home-life should also be made bright and full of sunshine. The courtesy of the true home is not stiff and formal--but sincere, simple and natural. Children need an atmosphere of gladness. Law should not make its restraints hang like chains upon them. Sternness and coldness should have no place in home-life or in family government. No child can ever grow up into its richest and best development in a home which is gloomy and unhappy. No more do plants need sunshine and air--than children need joy and gladness. Unhappiness stunts them, so that their sweetest graces never come out.

Wise parents will see that their home possesses the essential conditions of happiness. They will sympathize with their children and take care never to grow away from them in spirit, though carrying the weightiest responsibilities or wearing the highest honors among men. The busiest father should find at least a few moments every day to romp with his children. A man, who is too stately and dignified to play with his baby or help them in their sports and games, not only lacks one of the finest elements of true greatness--but fails in one of his duties to his children. For this is one of the points at which the mother should not be left alone. She is with her children all the day, and carries the burden of their entertainment for long hours without rest or pause. Surely it is only just to her that for the little time the father is in the home, he should relieve her. Besides, he owes it to his children, for one of their inalienable rights under his roof, is to receive happiness from his hands. In no other way can he so enshrine himself in their hearts, as by giving them daily a few precious moments of gladness associated with himself, which shall endear him to them forever. No father can afford to let his children grow up without weaving himself into the

memories of their golden youth.

One writes: "The richest heritage that parents can give, is a happy childhood, with tender memories of father and mother. This will brighten the coming days when the children have gone out from the sheltering home, will be a safeguard in times of temptation and a conscious help amid the stern realities of life."

Whatever parents may do for their children, they should at least make their children sunny and tender. Their young lives are so delicate, that harshness may mar their beauty forever, and so sensitive that every influence which falls upon them leaves its trace, which grows into the character, either as a grace or a blemish. A happy childhood stores away sunshine in the chambers of the heart which brightens the life to its close. An unhappy childhood may so fill the life's fountains with bitterness, as to sadden all the after years.

Something must be said concerning the training of children. It is to be kept in mind that the object of the home is to build up manhood and womanhood. This work of training belongs to the parents and cannot be transferred. It is a most delicate and responsible duty, one from which a thoughtful soul would shrink with awe and fear--were it not for the assurance of divine help. Yet there are many parents who do not stop to think of the responsibility which is laid upon them when a little child enters their home.

Look at it a moment. What is so feeble, so helpless, and so dependent--as a new born babe? Yet look onward and see what a stretch of life lies before this feeble infant, extending into eternity. Think of the powers folded up in this helpless form, and what the possible outcome may be. Who can tell what skill there may be lying unconscious yet in these tiny fingers, what eloquence or song in these little lips, what intellectual faculties in this brain, what power of love or sympathy in this heart? The parents are to take this infant and nurse it into manhood or womanhood, to draw out these slumbering powers and teach it to use them. That is, God wants a man trained for a great mission in the world, and he puts into the hands of a young father and mother a little babe, and bids them nurse it and train it for him until the man is ready for his mission; or at least to have sole charge of his earliest years, when the first impressions must be made, which shall mold and shape his whole career.

When we look at a little child and remember all this--what a dignity surrounds the work of caring for it! Does God give to angels, any grander work than this?

Women sigh for fame. They would be sculptors, and chisel out of the cold stone, forms of beauty to fill the world with admiration of their skill. Or they would be poets, to write songs to thrill a nation and to be sung around the world. But is any work in marble as great as hers, who has an immortal life laid in her hands to shape for its destiny? Is the writing of any poem in musical lines so noble a work as the training of the powers of a human soul into harmony? Yet there are women who regard the duties and cares of motherhood, as too obscure and common place tasks for their hands. So when a baby comes--a nurse is hired, who for a weekly compensation agrees to take charge of the little one, that the mother may be free from such drudgery to devote herself to the imagined nobler and worthier things which she finds to do.

Is the following indictment too strong?--"A mother will secure from the nearest employment office, a girl who undertakes to relieve her of the charge of her little one, and will hand over to this mere hireling, this ignorant stranger, the soul-mothering which God has entrusted to her. She has mothered the body--yet anyone will do, to mother the soul. So the little one is left in the hands of this hireling, placed under her constant influence, subjected to the subtle impress of her spirit, to draw into its inner being the life, be it what it may, of this uncultured soul. She wakens its first thoughts, rouses its earliest emotions, brings the

delicate action of motives to bear upon the will--generally in such hands, a compound force of bullying and bribing, base desire--tends it, plays with it, lives with it; and thus the young mother is free to dress and drive, to visit and receive, to enjoy balls and operas, discharging her trust for an immortal life by proxy! Is there any malpractice in duty, like unto this? Our women crowd the churches to draw the inspiration of religion for their daily duties, and then prove despicable to the first of all fidelities, the most solemn of all responsibilities. We hear fashionable young mothers boast that they are not tied down to their nurseries--but are free to keep up the old mirthful life; as though there was no shame to the soul of womanhood therein."

Oh that God would give every mother a vision of the glory and splendor of the work which is given to her when a babe is placed in her bosom to be nursed and trained! Could she have but one glimpse into the future of that life as it reaches on into eternity; could she be made to understand her own personal responsibility for the training of this child, for the development of its life, and for its destiny--she would see that in all God's world, there is no other work so noble and so worthy of her best powers, and she would commit to no other hands--the sacred and holy trust given to her.

This is not the place to present theories of family government; I am trying only to define the parents' part in making the home. So far as their children are concerned, their part is to train them for life, to send them out of the home ready for whatever duty or mission God may have ready for them. Only this much may be said--whatever may be done in the way of governing, teaching or training, theories are not half as important as the parents' lives. They may teach the most beautiful things--but if the child does not see these things in the life of the parent--he will not consider them important enough to be adopted in his own life. To quote here the words of another: "You cannot give your child what you do not possess; you can scarcely help giving your child what you do possess. If you are a coward--you cannot make him brave; if he becomes brave it will be in spite of you. If you are a deceiver--you cannot make him truthful; if you are selfish--you cannot make him generous; if you are self-willed--you cannot make him yielding; if you are passionate--you cannot make him temperate and self controlled. The parent's life flows into the child's life. We impress ourselves upon our children less by what we teach them--than by what we are. Your child is a sensitive plate; you are sitting before the camera; if you do not like the picture the fault is with yourself. One selfish deed, one social deception--will do more to mar, than a hundred homilies can do to make."

What we want to do with our children is not merely to control them and keep them in order--but to implant true principles deep in their hearts which shall rule their whole lives; to shape their character from within into Christlike beauty, and to make of them noble men and women, strong for battle of life, and for duty. They are to be trained rather than governed. Growth of character, not merely good behavior, is the object of all home governing and teaching. Therefore the home influence is far more important than the home laws; and the parents' lives are of more moment than their teachings.

Men say that into the strings of some old Cremona violin, the life of the master who once played upon it has passed, so that it is as an imprisoned soul, breathing out at every skillful touch. This is only a beautiful poetic fancy. But when a little child in a mother's bosom is loved, nursed, caressed, held close to her heart, prayed over, wept over, talked with, for day, weeks, months, years it is no mere fancy to say that the mother's life has indeed passed into the child's soul. What it becomes is determined by what the mother is. The early years settle what its character will be--and these are the mother's years.

O mothers of young children--your work is most holy. You are fashioning the destinies of immortal souls! The powers folded up in the little ones that you hushed to sleep in your bosoms last night, are powers

which shall exist forever. You are preparing them for their immortal destiny and influence. Be faithful. Take up your sacred burden reverently. Be sure that your heart is pure--and that your life is sweet and clean. The Persian fable says that the lump of clay was fragrant, because it had lain on a rose. Let your life be as the rose, and then your child as it lies upon your bosom will absorb the fragrance. If there is no sweetness in the rose--the clay will not be perfumed.

History is full of illustrations of the power of parental influence. It either brightens or darkens the child's life to the close. It is either a blessing which makes every day better and happier--or it is a curse which leaves blight and sorrow on every hour. Thousands have been saved from drifting away--by the holy memories of happy, godly homes; or, when they have drifted away, have been drawn back by the same charm of power. There are no chains as strong as the cords which a true home throws about the heart!

John Randolph said, "I would have been an atheist, had it not been for one recollection, and that was the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers, and, causing me to bow at her knee, taught me to pray." Is it not worth while for parents to seek to have such abiding, strong and blessed influence over their children's lives?

Just as far reaching and as powerful is the evil influence, if parents are unholy. When the morning sun rises, the shadow of Mount Etna is cast far across the lovely island of Sicily, resting on gardens and fields and the people's homes--a shadow always of gloom--a shadow of an ever imminent danger. Just so, over the life of a child to its close, hangs the shadow of an ungodly parental influence. What parent wants to project such fatal gloom, over the future years of the child he loves so well?

When I think of the sacredness and the responsibility of parents, I do not see how any father and mother can look upon the little child that has been given to them, and consider their duty to it--and not be driven to God by the very weight of the burden which rests upon them, to cry to him for help and wisdom. When an ungodly man bends over the cradle of his first born, when he begins to realize that here is a soul which he must train, teach, fashion and guide through this world to God's judgment bar--how can he not go to God for help? Let him, as he bends over his child's crib to kiss its sweet lips, ask himself: "Am I true to my child--while I shut God out of my own life? Am I able to meet this solemn responsibility of parenthood all alone, in my unaided human weakness--without divine help?" I know not how any father can honestly meet these questions as he looks upon his innocent, helpless child--given to him to shelter, to keep, to guide--and not fall instantly upon his knees and give himself to God. Rather would I see my own little ones laid away in the grave tomorrow, and miss from my life henceforth all their love, and go with empty arms and sobbing heart through this world to life's close--than to attempt to train them, teach them and lead them--without the help of God.

"Better be out on the boundless sea, without knowledge of the stars above or the currents beneath; better be in the untrodden forest without pathway or compass; better be on the trackless desert without a landmark in all the horizon, nothing but burning sand under foot and brazen sky over head--than to be on this sea, in this wilderness, upon this desert of our life, with a human destiny entrusted to your care and no guiding God to pilot you to him and the desired haven! But with God's presence, help and guidance, even this great and responsible work shall not crush you nor make you afraid."

There is an old picture which represents a woman who has fallen asleep at her wheel, in great weariness, as she toils to fulfill her household duties, and the angels have come and are softly finishing her task while she sleeps. Let parents be faithful; let them do their best. The work may seem too great for them, and they

may faint under its burdens and seem to fail. But what they cannot do--the angels will come and finish while they sleep. Night by night they will come and correct the day's mistakes, and if need be, do all the poor, faulty work over again. Then at last when the parents sleep in death, dropping out of their hands the sacred work they have been doing for their children, again God's angels will come, take up the unfinished work and carry it on to completeness!

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

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