

What to Do With Our Hands

by J.R. Miller

Our hands have the potential to create, conquer, and bring beauty to the world, and it is our responsibility to train them and use them wisely.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 9:10, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "Purposeful Living", "Stewardship of Talents"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of our hands in shaping our lives and fulfilling our potential. He reflects on how hands are a unique gift from God, capable of creating, nurturing, and expressing the deepest aspects of our humanity. Miller encourages individuals to train their hands for meaningful work, no matter how small, and to embrace the responsibilities and burdens of life with diligence. He illustrates that a life well-lived is marked by the scars of effort and struggle, rather than the absence of wear. Ultimately, he calls for a recognition of the possibilities within our hands and the importance of using them to serve and create.

Transcript

In the lives of most young people, there is a period when they have great trouble in knowing what to do with their hands. Indeed there are a great many people who never learn what to do with their hands. They may overcome their awkwardness and grow out of their self-consciousness; but they never realize the possibilities that are folded up in their hands.

Man is the only creation that has such intricate hands. Hence the hand is one of the marks of man's superiority. With his hands he conquers nature, and does the things which distinguish him among God's creatures. With his hands he cultivates the soil, fells the trees, tunnels the mountains, builds cities, constructs machines, belts the globe with iron rails, navigates the sea, and turns the wheel of industry. It is the hand, too, which gives form and reality to the dreams and visions of the brain and soul. With his hand, the thinker puts his thoughts into written words to become a power in the world. With his hand, the poet weaves into graceful lines the inspirations of his muse. With his hand, the musician interprets on his instrument, the marvelous harmonies which move and stir men's hearts to their depths. With his hand, the artist puts on his canvas the wonderful creations of his genius which immortalize his name and become part of the world's heritage of beauty.

The story of a hand -- is the whole story of a life. Hawthorne, when he saw the marble image of an infant's hand, said that it ought to be kept until the infant had grown to womanhood and then to old age; until her

hand had felt the pressure of affection and returned it; until it had worn the wedding ring; until it had nursed babies and buried them; until it had gathered the flowers of earth's pleasure, and been pierced by the thorns; until it had wrought its part in the world's work; until it had grown old, wrinkled, and faded, and had been folded on the bosom in death's repose. And that then, another cast of it in marble ought to be made, when the two hands, lying side by side, would tell the story of the life.

It is interesting to look at a baby's hand, and try to read its future. Perhaps sleeping in the little fingers, there is music which some day may thrill men's souls; or pictures which by and by will be made to live on the canvas, or poems whose lines will sometimes breathe inspirations for many lives. At least, there must be folded up in the baby's chubby fingers-possibilities of countless beautiful things which should take form as the hands learn to do their allotted task work.

Our hands have to be trained. The skill that sleeps in them, must be brought out by education and practice. No doubt that God has put into many fingers, music which never has been drawn out, pictures which never have been painted upon canvas, beauty which never has charmed men's eyes, and noble deeds which never have been wrought into acts. It is our part to find the possibilities in our hands, and develop them.

We should train our hands to do all their work carefully and thoroughly. Even the smallest things, though they seem insignificant -- we should do as well as we can. Thus God works. The most minute animalculae, millions of which are said to swim in a drop of water, are as perfect in all their functions, as are the largest of the creatures. We do not know what is small, and what is great in this world. Little things may be seeds of future great things. We should train our hands, therefore, to do all their work faultlessly. It is a shame to do anything in a slovenly way, even to work negligently, to slight what we are set to do, to hurry through our tasks, marring the workmanship that we ought to fashion just as carefully -- though it be but the writing of a postal card, the dusting of a room, or the building of a coal-shed -- as if it were the painting of a great picture, the furnishing of a palace, or the building of a cathedral.

Our hands should also be ready always for their tasks. For a time, the child does not find anything to do but to play. Soon, however, it begins to discover duties. Youth is full of bright dreams. We are apt to think of life at first, as only pleasure. But soon we learn its more serious aspect, and find that every moment has its task. It has burdens to carry, crosses to bear, trials to endure -- and our hands should never fail to do their part.

"Life is a burden: bear it;

Life is a duty: do it;

Life is a thorn-crown: wear it.

Though it break your heart in twain,

Though the burden crush you down,

Close your lips and hide your pain:

First the cross -- and then the crown."

Some people go through life and keep their hands white, unroughened, unworn -- but at the end they may find that they have failed altogether in the true object of living. When an army comes home from victorious war, it is not the regiment with the full ranks of unscarred men, that the people cheer most loudly -- but the regiment with only a remnant of soldiers and these bearing the marks of many a battle. Hands scarred in conflicts with life's enemies, are more beautiful when held up before God -- than hands white and soft, covered with flashing jewels.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/what-to-do-with-our-hands/>

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