

Religion in the Home

by J.R. Miller

A true Christian home is one in which all members live the religion of Christ, characterized by love, kindness, and patience, and in which family worship is a vital part of daily life.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6

Topics: "Family Worship", "Love in the Home"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of religion in the home, asserting that true household religion goes beyond regular family devotions to encompass love and kindness in daily interactions. He highlights the importance of daily family worship as a source of protection and unity, while also stressing that love must be actively expressed among family members to create a nurturing environment. Miller warns against the tendency to neglect warmth and tenderness in familial relationships, urging families to cultivate a loving atmosphere that reflects their faith. He encourages thoughtful preparation for family worship to make it engaging and meaningful, ensuring that it becomes a cherished part of family life. Ultimately, he calls for a balance of devotion and genuine love to foster a truly Christian home.

Transcript

Much is said and written on religion in the home, and yet it may be, that there is not always a clear conception of the meaning of the term. It is sometimes supposed that the requirement is fully met when family devotions are regularly maintained. This is of vital importance.

Household religion certainly implies the daily family worship. I cannot think that any home realizes the true ideal, or can have Heaven's richest blessings upon it--in which this is omitted or neglected. God blesses and shelters the household in which he is honored. Prayer weaves a roof of love over the home, and builds walls of protection about it.

Surely the goodness of a thoughtful Providence, received day after day in unbroken continuity, requires some grateful recognition of praise. Then, is it not a perilous thing for the members of the household to disperse in the morning to their duties and responsibilities, into dangers and temptations, to meet possible trials--without the invoking of Heaven's guidance, protection and help? There is reason to fear that in many homes, family worship is neglected, and that in the intense whirl and excitement of these busy times--the neglect is becoming more and more common. How can we expect God's blessing upon our homes--if we do not call upon his name? Is it any wonder that there is sorrow over children's wanderings, in the households in which there is no family altar?

There is a wondrous educating influence in the daily assemblage of the family for prayer. Where through childhood and youth, the custom has been regularly maintained, its influence over the life is such as can never be wholly obliterated. And it may be seriously questioned whether in any other way, by any other means, children can be so firmly "bound by gold chains about the feet of God." The memories of the old family altar, awakened years and years after the home walls had crumbled and the home voices had become silent, have led many a wanderer back to God's feet.

Then there is nothing else that so sweetens the home-life. True family worship is a fountain that brings streams of holy influences into every part of the household. It is a vase of perfume that sheds fragrance over all. It softens asperities. It quells anger. It quiets impatience. It settles differences. It subdues evil passions. Hearts that are drawn together at God's feet every day--cannot get very far apart. The frictions of the day are forgotten, when all voices mingle in the same heavenly song. As the tender words of inspiration fall with their gracious counsels--all feeling of unkindness melts away.

The altar in the midst, wondrously hallows and sweetens the home relationships. Besides, it puts new strength into every heart. It comforts sorrow. It is a shield against temptation. It smooths out the wrinkles of care. It inspires strength for burden-bearing. It quickens every pious sentiment, and keeps the fires burning on every heart's altar.

The manner in which the family worship is conducted, is very important. It should be made so pleasant as to be looked forward to with gladness, even by the youngest children. Too often it is made tedious, monotonous or burdensome. Men fall into a stereotyped order which they never vary. Long passages are read, and the prayers offered are not only long--but are the same every day, from year to year, with no adaptation to the home-life, or to the capacities of children.

There is no reason why the family worship should not be the most delightful exercise in the home-life. It should be the continual study of heads of households to make it bright, interesting and profitable. To make it dull and irksome, is treason to true religion.

It is impossible to give more than the merest suggestions and hints as to methods. A part in the service should be given to each child. Questions may be asked each day on the passage read. Incidents may be introduced to illustrate the lesson. Hard words may be explained. One practical lesson at least may be selected from the Scripture read, which will bear upon the day's life. Cheerful songs may be sung. Then in the prayer, some part should be given to the little ones. Sometimes it is good to have all follow in the prayer, repeating it phrase after phrase. And all may unite in the Lord's Prayer at the close.

When there are quite young children in the family, it may not be best to read the Bible in course--but to select portions in which they will be easily interested. For an exercise so sacred and fraught with such influences, it is not too much to say that the most careful preparation should be made. It is probable that there are few duties for which so little preparation is actually made. If thought were given to this matter beforehand, the exercise need never be dull or wearisome. The passage may not only be selected--but studied and some point fixed upon for practical enforcement. A bright incident or little story may be ready to help to fix the lesson. The prayer may be thought over or even written out. A few minutes given every day to preparation for family worship--will serve to make it, as it should be--the most pleasant and attractive incident of the day!

But while family religion implies regular devotions, there is something else required. There are homes in which family worship is never neglected--in which there is yet a painful absence of home religion! Religion

is love, and a religious home is one in which love reigns! There must be love in action, love that flows out in all the home fellowship, showing itself in a thousand little expressions of thoughtfulness, kindness, unselfishness and gentle courtesy. There are homes in which there is truest love. The members of the household would give their lives for each other. When grief or pain comes to any one of them, the hearts of all the others are touched and at once go out in deepest sympathy, in warmest expressions of affection and in self-forgetful ministries. There is no question as to the reality and the strength of the attachment that mutually exists between the hearts of the household.

And yet in their ordinary associations, there is a great lack of those exhibitions of kindly feeling, which are the sweetest charm of love. There is a lack of tender words. Husband and wife pass week after week without one harsh word, it may be--but also without one of those endearing expressions such as made their early love-days so sunny and radiant. And the fellowship of the whole household is characterized by the same lack of warmth and tenderness. The conversation is about the most commonplace matters, is often constrained, and in many cases consists only of occasional monosyllables. Many a meal is eaten almost in silence. The tone of the home-life is cold. All sentiment is avoided, no compliments are uttered. Even the simplest courtesies of manner are often neglected. Favors are asked, given and accepted--without one of those sweetening graces of politeness, which we are all so careful to observe in our fellowship with strangers, and which add so much to the pleasure of such fellowship.

Sorrow falls upon one of the family, and immediately all is changed. The coldness of manner passes into tenderness. This proves the reality and power of the family bond. But ought the love to be so locked up and hidden away in the crannies of the heart and in the inner recesses of the nature--as to require affliction or sorrow to call it out? Should not love celebrate its sweetest summer--all the while in the home? Should it require calamity or pain--to woo out its fragrance and its beauty?

What a wondrous charm it gives to family-life when all the members let their hearts' love flow out in all those tender graces of expression which have so much power to give joy! There are such homes. The very atmosphere, as you enter the door, seems laden with fragrance. The kindest courtesy marks all the fellowship of the family. Each one is thoughtful of the other's comfort and pleasure. No harsh word is spoken. The conversation at table flows on in musical sweetness, bright, sparkling and cheerful, without one jar. There is no sullen look on any face. There is no disregard of politeness. There is no laying aside of good manners.

But there are many who are amiable and polite away from home--who are not so in the sacredness of their own household. There are men who in society are courteous, thoughtful and gracious--who when they enter their own doors--become gruff, moody, and even rude! There are ladies who are the brightest charm of the social circle--sunny, sparkling, thoughtful--who as they cross their own thresholds are suddenly transformed, becoming disagreeable, petulant, impatient, irritable and unlovely! Some of the most brilliant lights of society--are the most unendurable at home. They keep their courtly manners for company, and relapse into barbarism when in the shelter of their own roof. They have kind words for the stranger; but for their own--the bitter tone.

Now, it need not be said that the most unbroken continuity in family devotions, will not make such home-life, truly pious. A true Christian home is one in whose holy circle--all live the religion of Christ. We should be just as sunny inside our own doors--as on the street. Courtesy that changes to rudeness when we cross our own threshold--is no courtesy at all. Love that bears all things, endures all things and seeks not its own--must not turn to petulance and selfishness at home! We should appear always at our

best--among those we love the best. We ought to bring the sweetest things of our hearts, into our homes.

Yet there are tendencies to careless living at home, against which we need to guard ourselves very carefully. Sacred as are the home relationships, our very familiarity with them, is apt to render us forgetful. Incessant repetitions of impressions of any kind, are in danger of producing callousness of sensibility. In the constant contact of the home-likes, lies the danger that we become heedless of them. It takes special care and watchfulness and continual quickening of the affections--to keep our hearts' sensibilities always alive to the unbroken touch of the tender relationships of home.

Then outside we have to be ever on our guard. The world has no patience with our ill-temper and bad manners. A moment's petulance, a single gruff reply or uncivil word, or the lack of courtesy in the smallest thing--may cost us a friend or lose us a customer or mar our reputation! Hence we have the constant pressure of these selfish motives, to compel us to appear always at our best in society.

But at home, this pressure is removed. We are sure of the hearts there. They have patience with us. Their love is not of the fickle and uncertain kind, that requires continuous appeasement. We have no fear of losing their esteem or regard. In our heedless selfishness we are in constant danger, when we enter the home-shelter after the stress of the day, of removing the restraint and permitting our least amiable self to come to the outside.

There is still another reason why peculiar watchfulness over the home-behavior is necessary. In the outside world, the contact of life with life is usually at a reasonable distance. We do not get very close to others. We see only their best points. We meet them only in favorable circumstances, and are not compelled to endure the friction of actual contact with their lower qualities. But that which makes home-fellowship the sorest test of piety and of character, is its closeness. Lives touch there at every point. The very unrestraint laying all lives bare to each other--adds immeasurably to the danger of friction. Nothing but the religion of Christ, the love that endures all things, is equal to the strain of such experiences.

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