

Wholesome or Unwholesome Living

by J.R. Miller

A wholesome life is one that is free from unhealthiness, characterized by cheerfulness, generous love, and activity, and lives according to the Word of God.

Scripture: Proverbs 17:22, Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 5:16, John 15:12-13, Romans 12:10, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Wholesome Living", "Influence of Character"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the contrast between wholesome and unwholesome living, illustrating how wholesome individuals positively influence their surroundings with cheerfulness, love, and activity, while unwholesome individuals often succumb to negativity and morbidity. He explains that true wholesomeness encompasses not just physical health but also mental and spiritual well-being, urging believers to cultivate a heart filled with God's love and to actively engage in helping others. Miller highlights that a wholesome life is marked by generosity, forgiveness, and a focus on the good in others, ultimately reflecting Christ's love. He concludes that a life lived in accordance with God's Word is a source of inspiration and blessing to the world.

Transcript

The word wholesome means whole, sound, having perfect health. It is applied usually to conditions. Thus we speak of a wholesome climate, meaning a climate that is healthful; or of wholesome food, meaning food that is nutritious. But the word may be used also of a person. Hawthorne speaks of a thoroughly wholesome heart, and of the purifying influence scattered throughout the atmosphere of the household, by the presence of one such heart.

There are wholesome people who indeed exert a purifying and healthful influence wherever they go. They are sound and whole in their make-up and in their condition. They are healthy, not in body only--but also in mind and in spirit. Such people are blessings wherever they are found--full of life and of inspiration. Even unconsciously they diffuse strength, cheer, hope and courage--by the mere influence of their presence.

But there are also unwholesome people, whose influence is not toward the things that are beautiful and good. Their unwholesomeness may be physical, or it may be in their mental, or or social, or spiritual conditions.

A common form is what in general we call morbidness. Whatever its cause, it is the result of over-sensitiveness. Morbid people are easily disturbed in their feelings. They yield readily to depression of spirits. The smallest cause makes them gloomy. Their imagination plays a mischievous part in creating unhappiness for them. They imagine slights when none were intended or even dreamed of. They are apt to be very exacting toward their friends, continually demanding renewed assertions of faithfulness and constancy, and often expressing fears and doubts, and raising questions. Thus they make friendship hard, even for those who love them best.

These morbid people see all life and all the world through tinted glasses--tinted with the unhealthy hue of their own mental condition. They see their neighbor's faults--but not the excellences of his character. They have an eye for the blemishes and the unlovely peculiarities of others, and for the disagreeable things of life. They fret and chafe at the smallest discomforts in their lot, and fail to get happiness and pleasure from their many and great blessings. They are unhappy even in the most favorable circumstances, and discontented even in the kindest conditions. The trouble is not in outside things--but in themselves. They are like a fever patient who tosses restlessly on his bed and complains of the heat of the room, while all the while the fever is in himself, not in his room. It is the unwholesomeness of his own spirit, that makes the world and all life around them, so full of discomfort for them.

There are many forms and phases of unwholesomeness in life. Some people are unwholesome in their religion. They find no happiness in it. It does not make them joy-givers. They are somber, gloomy Christians. They are lacking in the grace of cheerfulness and in heartiness. They are severe in their judgment of others, sometimes uncharitable and censorious. Their own religion is a burden to them--and they would make religion a burden to all who profess it. It vexes them to see a rejoicing Christian; for they suppose that joyousness is a sign of triviality of heart, and of the lack of a due consciousness of life's gravity and seriousness. They think of religion as always severe, stern, solemn, sad.

Some people are unwholesome in their affections, giving way to envy, jealousy, and suspicion, unmistakable symptoms of unhealthiness. Some are unwholesome in their temper, lacking the power of self-control, permitting anger to dominate them and lead them to unseemly outbreaks.

Someone says, "Losing the temper takes all the sweet, pure feeling out of life. You may get up in the morning with a clean heart, full of song, and start out as happy as a bird; but the moment you are crossed and give way to your temper--the clean feeling vanishes, and a load as heavy as lead is rolled upon your heart; you go through the rest of the day feeling like a culprit. Anyone who has experienced this feeling knows, too, that it cannot be shaken off--but must be prayed off."

These are suggestions of common phases of unwholesomeness. A wholesome life is one that is free from these and other unhealthinesses. It is sound and whole. Good physical health ought to make it easier, for one to have also mental and spiritual health. But in fact many a person whose bodily health is excellent--is very unwholesome in disposition; while many a physical invalid possesses a most wholesome spirit! Ofttimes radiant souls--live in diseased and suffering bodies.

One mark of wholesomeness in a life is cheerfulness. It is not without its burdens, its cares, its trials; but it has learned the lesson of victoriousness. Nothing breaks its glad-heartedness; nothing chokes its song of joy. The peace of Christ in the heart--is the secret of it. There is an Old Testament promise which says: "You will keep him in perfect peace--whose mind is stayed on you." There is a New Testament word which bids us not to be anxious about anything--but to make every need known to God in prayer; and then

promises that the peace of God shall guard our heart and our thoughts in Christ Jesus.

He who understands this--has learned one of the inmost secrets of a wholesome life. With the peace of Christ in the heart, even the sorest trials and the bitterest sorrows will not make a life unwholesome; rather the outcome of struggle and suffering will be the promotion of spiritual health. Sorrow rightly endured, cleanses the life of its earthliness and its unhealthiness, and leaves it holier and more beautiful. It is pitiful to see people suffer and not grow better--but grow worse continually. A wholesome use of sorrow--is the putting of its pain, into new energy of loving and living.

Another mark of wholesomeness in a life is generous love. Our affections make us what we are. The things we love, tell whether we are living for earth--or for heaven. We are commanded not to love the world, because the world, and the things in it which are loved and sought after--are all passing away! We are commanded to love the things which are eternal, and then we shall endure forever. Love is all of life. All duty is included in loving God and our neighbor. Loving God is always first. Unless we love God--we really do not love at all. Love that lacks the divine element, and which is not born of and inspired by God's love in the heart--is only earthly, and will not endure--is not worth while. In the truly wholesome life--there is love to God, and then a love for others born of this--which is like God's love for us.

This love is forgiving. We are taught to link together, the spirit of forgiveness and the desire for forgiveness. "Forgive us--as we forgive others," we pray.

This love is also generous. It is free from all miserable envying and jealousy. It rejoices in the happiness and the prosperity of others. It sees the best--not the worst, there is--in the lives of other people. Instead of watching for blemishes and faults--it looks for the lovely qualities. It does not find the thorn among the roses--but does find the rose among the thorns. It is charitable, overlooking flaws and mistakes--and seeing ever the possibilities of better things. It is unselfish, forgetting its own interests, in thinking of the interests of others. It is gentle, with a heart of quick and tender sympathy for sorrow or suffering--and a hand skillful and ever ready to give actual help--when actual help is needed.

Here is a secret of a wholesome life, which is well worth learning--we should seek for the best and the noblest in everyone we meet--and then strive to call it out. One who was asked how to cultivate this charm of character replied, "Look at everything through kindly eyes." If we do this--there will be no more envy, no more jealousy, no more censoriousness, no more uncharitableness. Having pure, generous love in our heart--we shall find in every other life something beautiful, at least something that through the kindly nourishing of our love, may grow into beauty. This is a mark of supremest wholesomeness in life. It is thus that Christ's love looks on everyone of us, seeing in us the best possibilities of our being, and calling ever for the best that is in us.

One other mark of wholesomeness in life is activity. Action is necessary to health; inaction produces death. Someone has said, that the stars would rot in their orbits--but for their unresting motion. The water that rests, stagnates. One of the most prolific causes of unwholesomeness of life in all its phases, is inaction. He was a wise physician who prescribed for a morbid, unhappy patient, "Do something for somebody." Most of the common doubts on religious questions which trouble people, would be scattered to the winds if the doubter would go forth and begin to live out the teachings of Christ among suffering, sorrowing, and tempted people. The best thing to do for an unhappy Christian--is to send him out to comfort or help someone in trouble.

Religion in the head and heart which finds no expression in the life--soon grows unhealthy. The wholesome life must be always active. Exertion keeps the blood pure, and strengthens all the fibers of the being. There is a blessing, too, in doing, in helping others, in making something beautiful. Work is a means of grace.

Thus a wholesome life is one of abounding moral and spiritual health, that lives according to the Word of God, realizing the divine plan for it. Such a life is a blessing in the world. Its every touch is inspiration, and its every influence is fragrance.

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