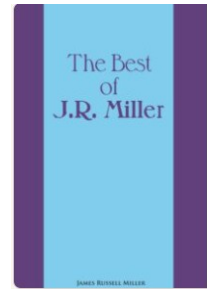


Excerpt from:
The Best of J.R. Miller (Vol. 1)
James Russell Miller (1840-1912)



*Excerpts selected by Bob Evely
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Choosing to Do Hard Things (p. 7)

There are too many people who try to shirk the hard things. They want to get along as easy as possible. They have ambition of a certain sort – but it is ambition to have the victory without the battle; to get the gold without digging for it. They would like to be learned and wise – but they do not care to toil in study and “burn the midnight oil” as they must do – if they would realize their desire.

One Day at a Time (p. 37)

One of the secrets of a happy and beautiful life is to live one day at a time. If we would learn it, it would save us from the worry that in so many people spoils the days, and would add immeasurably to the value of the work we do.

We do not understand how great a mercy there is for us in the briefness of our short days. If they were even twice as long as they are, life would be intolerable. Many a time when the sun goes down we feel that we could scarcely have gone another step.

Night with its darkness seems to be a blot on the whiteness of day – and an interruption to our activity – compelling us to lay down our work when we are in the very midst of it, leaving it only half done. It seems to be a waster of precious time, eating up half of the hours.

Yet night really is no stain on the splendor of day, no thief of time, no waster of golden hours, no obscurer of beauty. It reveals as much beauty as it hides – for no sooner has the sun set, leaving earth’s splendor of landscape, garden, and forest in gloom – than there busts upon our vision the other splendor of the sky filled with glorious stars.

When the privilege of work is interrupted, God has another blessing – the blessing of sleep.

We lie down with our vitality exhausted in the toils and struggles of the day. Then, while we sleep, God comes to us in the silence and stillness and refills the emptied fountains. It is really a new creation that takes place in us while we sleep – a miracle of renewal and restoration! We die, as it were, and are made to live again.

“Do not worry about tomorrow,” He said, *“for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”* (Matthew 6:44). If we allow ourselves to borrow anxiety from tomorrow, we shall find that we have a greater load than we can carry.

The only true way to live, therefore, is one day at a time. This means that we should give all of our strength to the work of the present day. When a new morning dawns, we should accept its duties – the bit of God’s will it unrolls for us. Then we can lay our day back into God’s hand at nightfall with confidence, saying, *“Father, I have finished the work which you gave me to do today.”*

We should never be anxious about either yesterday or tomorrow. Yesterday is gone; therefore, it is useless to waste a moment of time or a particle of strength fretting over it. Tomorrow is not yet ours, and we cannot touch its life until it becomes our today.

God means for us to put our undivided attention into the doing of the present day’s work. If we do this, we shall have quite enough to do to fill all of the hours and to engage our best energy, skill and strength.

If we learn well the lesson of living just one day at a time, without anxiety for either yesterday or tomorrow, we shall have found one of the great secrets of Christian peace. That is the way God teaches us to live. That is the lesson both of the Bible and of nature. If we learn it, it will help cure us of anxiety; it will help save us from feverish haste; it will help enable us to live sweetly in any experience.

Wayside Ministries (p. 43)

There are two ways in which all of us work, and two classes of results which flow from our lives. There are things we do *purposely* – that we deliberately plan to do. They cost us thought and care. We travel many miles, perchance, to perform them. They are the things we live to do.

Then there are other things we do that have formed no part of our plan. We did not set out in the morning to accomplish them. They are *unplanned*, unpurposed things, not premediated or prearranged. They are *wayside ministries*. They are the *little* things we do between the *greater* things. They are the seeds we drop by chance from our hand in the path, as we go out to the broad field to sow. They are the minor kindnesses and courtesies that fill up the spaces of our busy days.

So in all true living, while men execute their greater plans they are ever unintentionally performing a series of secondary acts which often yield most beneficent and far-reaching results – countless little courtesies, gentle words, mere passing touches on the lives of those we meet casually.

We meet a friend on the street whose heart is heavy, and we stop to speak a word of thoughtful cheer and hope, which sings in his ear like a bar of angels’ song all day long. We ring a neighbor’s door-bell to inquire for his sick child, and there is a little more brightness in that sad home all of the afternoon because of this thoughtfulness.

All sorts of people come to us on all sorts of errands during the day. We cannot talk much to each, and yet we may drop into each heart a *word of kindness* that will prove a *seed of beauty*. We meet people in business relations. To talk to them on Christian themes may be neither practicable nor expedient, and yet there is not one of them to whom we may not minister in some way.

We are writing business letters, and we put in a personal sentence or a kindly inquiry, revealing a human heart even amid the great clashing, grinding wheels of business, and it carries a pulse of better feeling into some dingy office and some dreary treadmill life far away.

In every life there are these opportunities for wayside ministry. The things we do with deliberate intention make but a small part of the sum-total of our life-results. Our influence is as continuous as life itself. We are leaving impressions all of the time on other lives.

Full of Christ, wherever we move, we leave brightness and joy. Amid the busiest scenes, when engaged in the most momentous labors we carry on at the same time a quiet, unintentional ministry whose results shall spring up in our pathway like lovely flowers.

Taking Cheerful Views (p. 71)

One of the secrets of a happy life is the ability to extract *comfort* and *sweetness* from every circumstance.

Multitudes prefer to nurse misery than to cherish joy. They always find the dark side of everything, if there is a dark side to be found. They never find anything to their taste. Nothing escapes their criticism. They are chronic grumblers. Instead of being content in the state in which they are, they have learned to be discontented.

On the other hand, there are rare people who always look at the bright side. They find some joy and beauty everywhere. If there is one beam of cheer or hope anywhere in their lot – they will find it! They have a genius for happiness. They always make the best out of circumstances. They are happy as travelers. They are contented as boarders. Their good nature never fails.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again – Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

We should seek to learn contentment.

However, if there are *unavoidable* ills or burdens, which we cannot by any energy of our own remove or lighten, we must learn to be reconciled to them without murmuring. What cannot be *cured* must be *endured*.

True contentment is not irritated under disappointments and losses, but *accepts* them, becomes *reconciled* to them, and at once looks about to find something good in them. This is the secret of happy living!

The greater part of our discontent is caused by some *imaginary trouble* which never really comes.

Learn always to make the best of things. The lesson of contentment will bring some new pleasure into every moment.

Note: Excerpts are provided as they appear in the book. The author uses the masculine “he” or “him” in the broader sense for humanity – male and female. Rather than take liberties with his writing, I have retained the text as used by the author – and offer this note of explanation.

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