Talks About Home Life

George Everard, 1878

PREFACE  
The following pages were written with an earnest desire to increase the happiness, and advance the spiritual welfare of English households. Published originally in another form, I trust they may be still more useful in a permanent shape. I have endeavored to aid each member of the home. There is a word for the children, the young people, and those more advanced in life. I have endeavored to point out special dangers and temptations, and also to suggest from God's Word the means by which they may be overcome.

The incidents and illustrations employed have mostly been drawn from twenty-five years' experience in the ministry, and may make it still more profitable to guide the faithful and true-hearted servant who wishes to do his Lord's will.

I commend the book to Him who alone can build up our families in faith and goodness, and keep them from snares on the right hand and on the left.

"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain." [Psalm 127:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 127.1)

Chapter 1. The Family Link

God takes delight in the happiness of His creatures. "The Lord is loving unto every man, and His tender mercies are over all His works." He, Himself, is the great Fountain-head of true joy; and He loves to dispense this joy far and wide.

In nothing do we see this more, than in His appointment of the Family. He knows our frame. He remembers that we are but dust. He thinks upon us in our solitude and loneliness. He marks our yearnings after kindly affection. He sees that in our happiest times, we want someone to share our joys; and in our sorrowful hours, that we want someone to help us to bear our burdens. There may be some few hard, tough natures, who seem as if they could best pass through life alone, but with most of us it is far otherwise; and our Father in Heaven, who formed us, knows well what things we have need of. So He ordains blessed links of union and fellowship. He links together husband and wife, when they pledge themselves before Him to love and to cherish each other until death do part them. He links together parent and child by a deep unselfish love on the one side, and by a sense of helplessness and dependence on the other. He links together brothers and sisters, as being sharers in one common home. "God sets the solitary in families," and "makes men to be of one mind in a house." It is all of His tender care and compassion toward those whom He has first made in His own likeness, and afterwards redeemed by the blood of His Son.

Go to the very first family. Adam has been created, but he is alone. He can enjoy from time to time communion with his God; he is gifted with many wonderful faculties; he can delight himself in the glorious works of his Father's hand; but still there is a lack. He needs a companion. So the great Father looks upon him in pity, and will add to his happiness by supplying this need. The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." [Genesis 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 2.18). So He formed Eve, and gave her as a new and precious gift to Adam — a gift more precious than all the fair creation He had before committed to his charge.

And how mercifully do we see the Lord's goodness in the woman being so suited for the man! The wisdom of God is manifested in the difference between the two. There was likeness — yet variety. Had both natures been precisely alike, there could never have been the same closeness of union. But while the one was strong and firm and self-reliant — the other was gentle, more needing help and support, and more capable of warm and self-sacrificing affection. And, in creating them thus, the great Father tenderly provided for the happiness of both.

God Himself thus instituted the ordinance of marriage. It is not a mere human institution, but it is of God. And if this be so, it teaches us a great lesson. How sacred a thing should we ever reckon marriage to be! How careful should people be in the choice of one who may be to them so great a help, or may prove so great a hindrance!

The Israelites were forbidden to make marriages with the Canaanites, because they would lead them to the worship of their gods. When Ahab broke this command and married Jezebel, it led to a train of wickedness and misery, which involved the whole kingdom, and lasted for centuries. Their son, Ahaziah, walked in the ways of his father and mother, and judgment came upon him, according to God's word, as upon Ahab and Jezebel some years before. Their daughter brought judgment down on her husband, the king of Judah, and afterwards was her son's counselor to do wickedly. Her other sons did wickedly also, and broke up the house of God. Two hundred and fifty years after, the curse was still spreading and bringing misery; for we are told all the evil works of the household of Ahab were still being done to make Israel a desolation and a hissing.

We have, moreover, a distinct command to Christians that they marry "only in the Lord;" that is, whatever their choice may be, it ought to be of one who fears and loves God. They may not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what communion has light with darkness, and what concord has Christ with Belial?

The story of Isaac's marriage is a very instructive one, and the chapter in which it is given to us (Genesis 24.) I would especially commend to young people.

Isaac was feeling deeply his mother's death, and his father Abraham sent his steward Eliezer to seek a wife for him among his kindred, for he did not want that Isaac should marry one of the Canaanites, in whose land they were dwelling. So Eliezer goes his way into the far-off country. When he reaches Mesopotamia, he seeks counsel of God. He pours out his heart, and entreats that God would mark plainly whom He had chosen for Isaac. And very soon is the prayer answered. Rebekah comes to the well, and she proves to be the one whom God had chosen to comfort Isaac after his mother's death.

As it was in this case, so must there ever be a blessing in seeking counsel and help from above. If you yourself are walking in God's fear and love, and you seek one who shall be your companion for life — let it be your desire and prayer to find one who will strengthen you in walking along the narrow way.

While I write, I think of two families in humble life, and the rich blessing that has rested on themselves and their children; and, as I believe, from this very cause.

More than sixty years did husband and wife, in one case, walk happily together as fellow-pilgrims to Zion. They saw their children grow up and take their place as useful members in the Church of God; and those who died gave a clear evidence that they were indeed the true followers of Christ. And what was the secret of this happy, useful course? God had been consulted. His counsel had been sought. And in His fear and love, had these truly Christian people spent their days.

The other case is equally interesting. Many years ago two young people were engaged to be married, neither of them professing any serious views of religion. But the young man went one Sunday morning to a village church, where he heard a very faithful servant of Christ. The message of God's love reached his heart. He left the church determining henceforth to be the Lord's. Then he thought of his engagement. He felt he never could be really happy now, with one who was living only for the world. So he was very plain-spoken, and said to the young woman, that he intended living a new life, and he feared they would never suit each other. God blessed his faithful dealing to her conversion. She said to him, "If it would be good for you — then why not for me?" And so they began to seek the Lord together, and after a while were married, and the blessing of the Lord rested on their home.

I might give a contrast. An officer who loved the Savior was married to one who was not like-minded with himself. For twenty years she was a thorn in his side, continually distressing him by many a word she spoke, and by a life very different from his own. By the death-bed of an only son, and by his earnest exhortations, she was awakened to see her sin, and was led to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

But where the link has been formed, and a family is perhaps growing up — what can be done to promote the happiness of the home? Let anyone who bears the Name of Christ, and professes to serve Him, endeavor by all means to influence the others for good. And this can be done best by quiet home influence. A holy, consistent life is a great element of good, and may leaven a whole household. Peter tells us that a husbands "may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." [1 Peter 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 3.1-2)

I was sitting one day on one of the seats in Hyde Park, by the side of a respectable looking man. I offered him a little book, which he very gladly accepted. In the conversation which followed, he told me that when first he was married, he never went to the house of God, and did all he could to prevent his wife from going. But he added, "She was such a good wife, she kept my house so clean, she was always so kind and hard-working, that I thought her religion must be a good thing; and so I began to go with her to God's house."

Who shall tell the blessed fruit of a life like that of this Christian woman?

Dear reader, strive in every way to cultivate the spirit of true religion in your home. It will be a foundation for that sound principle which alone brings permanent comfort.

It will shut out those deadly sins of intemperance, profligacy, rash and angry tempers — which bring misery wherever they are found.

It will nourish an unselfish love and kindness and forbearance — which will bring Paradise down to earth again.

Oh, strive then to make your home a little plot of Heaven, a nursery for the Great Home above. Let . . .  
your walls be built of salvation,  
your floors carpeted with meekness and humility,  
your light be the lamp of God's Word,

the fire burning on the hearth, be love to God and love to one another, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit,  
your furniture be made of the fragrant wood of genuine sincerity and holy living,  
your gates and doors be fervent prayers to shut out all that is evil, and to guard and nourish all that is pure and good,  
the windows be minds enlightened by Divine grace, to learn the secrets of heavenly wisdom,  
the motto engraved on your house be something of this kind,  
"Except the Lord builds the house, their labor is but lost that build it."

"God's Providence our Inheritance."

"He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Some few years ago there fell asleep in Jesus one whose home had been something of this kind. Fliedner had for many years walked with God, and left to Germany a legacy of many valuable Christian institutions. Before his death, his wife, and his ten sons and daughters, stood around his bed, and he told them of his hope:

"Here comes a poor sinner, Lord, whose ransom You have paid, and who longs to be admitted on high. It is the last time I shall see you all around me," he added, "and we will not conceal from ourselves that I must very shortly enter eternity. It is a solemn and an important step, when I look back on my past life. My one feeling is, Oh that each pulse were thankfulness — that each breath a song to Him who keeps me even in death! How can I praise Him enough? How blessed to serve such a Master — one who will forgive all faults, and will bounteously pardon my many sins! The blood of Jesus Christ is what I cling to. One thing is needful, that you should be saved, that you should strive to enter in at the strait gate, and then we shall meet again above, and rejoice forever and ever."

He blessed his wife, children, and grandchildren by name, and then added: "The Great Jehovah is with us. Oh how sweet it is to serve the Lord who has redeemed us from all evil! What would I be without Him?"

Then over the head of each of his sons he said, "Peace! peace!" — and was at rest in the bosom of the Savior.

Chapter 2. A Family Without Prayer, is like a House Without a Roof

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." [Joshua 24:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 24.15)

It is now many years ago since a young lady at a boarding school in London was laid low by a dangerous disease. Her father was summoned to her bedside, as it was evident that her end was near. She was very dear to him, and the sorrow thus coming upon him was a burden almost too heavy for him to bear. But the young lady knew the comfort of a Savior's love, and she asked her father to kneel down, and ask God's presence and help in this her time of need. But this he could not do. Anything else in the world he could have done for her, but he had never learned to pray. Then she asked him to make her a promise, that after her death he would begin to seek the Lord. The promise was made and faithfully kept.

The thought of his daughter safely shielded in the Savior's bosom, while he was yet a stranger to God, led him in true humiliation to seek that Friend who will never cast out any who come to Him. And then he went back to his home in the country determined to live a new life. He gathered his servants together, and told them that he had done them a great wrong, for he had never asked them to kneel down in prayer, or to hear God's Word. But from that day he proposed that all this should be changed. So from that time, morning and evening, the Word of God was read, and the whole family knelt down together at the mercy-seat.

I know few things in family life that exercise so great an influence for good on home happiness, as the meeting together day by day at the family altar. "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof."

The family altar is the thermometer of home piety — it tells what is the spiritual condition of a family. If family prayer is either omitted, or neglected for any slight cause, or if it be a form quickly hurried over, and no deep interest felt in it — we may be sure that religion in such a household is at a very low ebb. While on the other hand, if it is regarded as a sweet and blessed privilege; if there is heartiness and reality about it; if the members of the family feel that something is lost, when for any urgent cause it has been on some occasion omitted — then it is a testimony that the grace of God is there.

I have always regarded the household of Joshua as a pattern for Christian families. Joshua was faithful and whole-hearted in the service of God. He made a firm resolve, resting on the sure promises of God, that, whatever others might do, he would serve and obey and worship Jehovah. And he made this determination for his household, as well as for himself. He regarded himself as their representative; and that which he knew to be good for himself — he knew also to be good for them. Hence he exercised a wholesome discipline in the ordering of his family. He restrained them from evil, and did his utmost to direct them in God's fear and love. "As for me and my house," he declares, "we will serve the Lord." And could we have passed a day with him — we should have seen him worshiping at God's altar with all those belonging to him, and telling them of all the wondrous works of the Lord on behalf of His people in the days gone by, and urging them by every possible motive to remain steadfast in their allegiance to His laws.

So in every family there ought to be the same recognition of God. Those who honor Him — He will honor; and those who despise Him — shall be lightly esteemed. In every relationship of life, our safety, our comfort, our strength, is in having God for us and God with us. In family life very especially is this the case. It is so blessed when the link of God's fear and love binds together the household in hearty dependence on His help, and in a desire to yield up their own will to that which they believe to be His.

"O happy House! O Home supremely blessed,  
Where, You, Lord Jesus Christ, are entertained  
As the most welcome and beloved Guest,  
With true devotion and with love sincere;  
Where all hearts beat in unison with Thine:  
Where eyes grow brighter as they look on Thee:  
Where all are ready at the slightest sign  
To do Your will, and do it heartily."

And what can strengthen this bond more than the constant meeting together in the presence of a common Father in the Name of our Great Advocate, to hear His Word speaking to us, and fervently to seek His help and grace?

Everything also in Home Life, seems to set before us the advantage and comfort of a season of united prayer.

There are family *needs*which concern all alike. Perhaps means of subsistence are small, and there is danger of health failing to the one whose earnings support the rest.

There are family *sorrows*which all alike feel. Perhaps one in the circle is taken away, and each heart in the home is burdened and oppressed with the blank that is made.

There are family *sins*which are preventing the happiness that might exist. Perhaps a spirit of envy or discontent or irritability has crept in, and it spreads from one to another, and all real kindness and love is fast disappearing.

There are family *mercies*day by day received — protection in danger, deliverance from some threatening ill, an increase of home comforts, or the like.

Surely all these should bring a family together to the mercy-seat. There they may bring their needs, knowing that their Father in Heaven will deny no good thing to those who call upon Him.

They may bring their sorrows, knowing that He will assuredly bind up every broken, troubled heart.

They may bring their sins, knowing that He is ready to forgive all that is past, through the atoning blood of Christ, and to give His Spirit to subdue the evil that cleaves to them.

They may bring their mercies before Him in the spirit of true thankfulness, knowing that each mercy will be doubly sweet when the heart realizes the goodness of the Great Giver of all.

Family worship is also a very choice means of securing an unbroken home circle in the eternal world.

Our daily life by our own firesides should be fitting us for the higher and nobler life of the Father's house. Some may be called early and unexpectedly away. Little did I think, just a few months ago, that two of my own dear ones would now be lying in one grave, having followed each other after an interval of only some twenty-four hours — and followed two weeks afterwards, by the death of the faithful and godly nurse who had so carefully watched over them.

But when deep, heavy sorrows like these come to our homes — it is a comfort to look back and think of day after day having knelt together in a Father's presence, and of having read together the Word that tells of a land where partings are unknown. But whether called sooner or later, if Heaven is our home — all is well, and we shall meet again, and shall know as we cannot now, the way by which our Father led us. That meeting will indeed be a joyful one, if all in the family, without one single exception, are found safe in Christ.

When a few years ago, in Edinburgh, an old house suddenly fell, giving but ten minutes warning, one of those within hastily awoke his family — for it was at midnight — and called to them at once to escape. And so they did. Great was that father's joy, to find every one of his nine children safe on the outside, while many had perished in the ruins. And what a joyful scene will that be when Christian parents on another shore meet again the children so dearly loved on earth!

But with some families may it not be far otherwise? There are families where God is not known or loved, where the Bible is never read, where the Savior is never sought, and where no family altar has ever been set up. And if this continues, the children growing up in carelessness and sin, and the parents going

 down the hill of life without thought of the eternity at hand — what will be — what must be the awful outcome? What if the whole family is re-united on the left hand of the Judge? Ah! whom will you then blame? Will it not be yourself? And especially will you remember at that awful moment, your neglect of this blessed means of grace, and how you never bent the knee with your little ones, or invited them to hear the Word of God?

Oh that I could earnestly plead with you to stop and consider this matter! There are no doubt many homes where years and years have rolled by, and yet family prayer is unknown. It may be so in your house, dear reader! But why should this continue? Why refuse to enjoy so great a privilege?

Perhaps you see great difficulties in the way. You think it quite impossible in your circumstances. You say that you have no time. You go out early in the morning, at five or six or seven o'clock, and you return at night, wearied and tired, and you think it better not to attempt it. But, friend, in spite of hard work and long hours, you make time for food and sleep, for five minutes' talk with a friend, and for buying necessities for your home. Don't you think, if you really wished it, that you could get a few minutes to feed upon the manna of God's Word, and to rest in the Savior's love, and to talk with your Father above, and to obtain from Him things necessary for the soul as well as for the body? A little system and management, with persevering effort, and a sense of its unspeakable value, would overcome many obstacles.

And if in some cases it is impossible to have family prayer in the morning, might you not have it in the evening? And if now and then one member should be absent — is it not better to have it with the rest than to omit it altogether?

It may often require self-denial. It may require a few minutes earlier rising in the morning. It may require a little effort to prepare the home for the prayer in the evening — but surely it is worth while to give this to secure the blessing it will bring.

Perhaps you are afraid of beginning. You have never had family prayer, and you are ashamed of kneeling down for the first time before children or brothers and sisters. But do not let this hinder you. Take up the cross, and bear it manfully for Christ's sake. He was not ashamed to bear His heavy cross for you. Will you shrink from bearing this lighter one for Him?

A few hints may be useful to such as purpose to begin, or desire to make prayer in the family more profitable than it has hitherto been.

Let there be true genuine piety in those who conduct it.

If you wish to make family prayer a power for good in your home, seek that your own heart first may be filled with humility and faith and love and prayer. If your own cistern is full to overflowing — then those around you will be able to drink of the living water which Christ has given you. "The mouth of the righteous is a well of life." His words, his prayers, the very tone of his voice, will testify of the grace dwelling within. And this because the water which Christ gives is in his heart "a well of water springing up to everlasting life;" and "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."

Be sure of this. Nothing so surely tends to make this ordinance profitable, as true spiritual life; and nothing so hinders the blessing, as a dead formal spirit in him who leads the devotions of the rest.

Study continually to make family prayer a reality, and watch above all things against mere lip worship.

Do not make it wearisome by too great length. A few verses of Scripture — not more than twenty or five-and-twenty; the prayer earnest and hearty, whether it be extemporary or a written form; if possible let a hymn be sung — at least occasionally. If anything particular has occurred in the home, let notice be taken of it, either by the selection of the Scripture which is read, or in the prayer offered, or in both. Great also will be the advantage if you are able to make a few short comments on the passage read, so as to bring home the lesson taught to the hearts of those around you.

Variety in the prayers offered is also very useful in keeping up the reality of worship.

If a book of prayers is used — yet it is well sometimes to lay it aside. You might occasionally, if not regularly, utter in your own words your desires to God on behalf of your family. The words may be very simple and few, nay, even lacking in good grammar, but they may reach the heart of God and the hearts of those who hear them, if only they be dictated by a longing after God and His righteousness.

Strive to be very punctual. If possible, have a set time, and keep to it. Let the young people know the time, and be always ready for it. Very sad it is to see, often in the homes of truly godly people, a son or a daughter coming in when prayers are half over.

Above all other directions, I would say, honor the Holy Spirit.

It is He alone who can give the desire or the power to pray. It is He alone who reveals our need of grace and help. It is He alone who can show the conscience-stricken soul that the veil is rent in twain, that by the death of Jesus the barrier which our sins had raised is broken down, and we have the right of access with boldness to the mercy-seat. It is He alone who can fix the eye on our faithful and merciful High Priest pleading His all-sufficient merit before the throne. And this gift our Father has promised to bestow: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children —  how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Depend on the Spirit's help. Entreat the Spirit's grace. And the Comforter shall come, and make your worship here a foretaste of Heaven's own joy.

Chapter 3. A Talk with Fathers and Mothers.

There is great advantage in speaking from experience. A sailor can give a better opinion as to seafaring life, than a landsman. A farmer can give a better opinion with respect to the cultivation of land, than one engaged in merchandise. And so a Parent can speak better to Fathers and Mothers, than those who have never known the comfort and the concern that belongs to a flock of little ones around the fireside.

Perhaps I may add that a parent who has had the bitter grief of parting with those dearly loved, has another claim to be heard. For sorrows like these make us look at our homes with a different eye, and lead us more than anything to desire for our children the best and most lasting happiness. So I hope, dear reader, you will bear with me. I am speaking to myself while I speak to you; and I write these lines with sorrowful and yet blessed recollections crowding upon me.

First of all, let us talk together of our mutual responsibilities, and how great is the charge committed to us when the Good Shepherd gives into our care the lambs so dear to Him!

A little child — what is it? That little boy or girl lately born, and now lying so helpless on a mother's lap — or that little one just reaching its third or fourth summer, and whom you love to take on your knee when you have a few minutes leisure — what is it? Whence its origin? What its value? What its destiny?

We all know how precious is a child to its parents, except in the case of those who, through some degrading vice, are dead to all natural affection.

"I am worth many thousand pounds," said a poor man once; "for I have many children, and not one of them would I part with for a thousand pounds."

Yet after all, do we reckon their value as high as we should? Do we not often regard them in a wrong light?

A child — what is it? Not a superior kind of animal, raised just a shade above the rest of the animal creation, as some would seem to teach us.

Neither is it a mere toy or plaything which is to please and amuse us, and occupy our thoughts while as yet it is young, and then to be turned adrift to do the best it can for itself.

Nay, friends, it is far otherwise. That little child has been made for immortality; it is created to shine in the image of God, and must live on as long as God Himself. Its life has had a beginning, but will never have an end; I mean its true and real existence, which lives on in spite of death.

Think of the child with reference to the body. It grows on and develops with increasing years. First we see it so utterly helpless that it is wholly dependent on a mother's care. Then we see it as the little child just beginning to run, and then to speak. Then we trace the course of life as we see the schoolboy with his satchel and books, or the schoolgirl with her young companions, learning day by day something needful for life's duties. And then we mark its progress — the youth, the maiden passing into full age; and after awhile following those who have gone before to the silent grave.

But this is only the outer life. The child has an immortal soul, a mysterious principle, a ray of eternity, that which no waters can quench, no power destroy, no possibility of events ever annihilate! Yes! when your home has long been leveled in the dust — when the busy toil of life has ceased its perpetual whirl — when yon glorious sun has ceased to shine — when the present scene has given place to "the new heavens and the new earth," your child will still live, and will live on forever.

But how and where? God is Just and True. His Word cannot fail. And while He has opened wide the doors of His kingdom to all who trust in His dear Son — yet the unbelieving sinner must reap sin's wages, and those who choose sin here must receive the sinner's doom by and-by. Yes, friend, it must be Heaven or Hell for each of our children, as they are prepared for one or the other by their life here.

What a thought is this! My child must live forever in the fair world of glory — or must forever be cast away into the region where hope never enters! How it should stimulate us to make our children the objects of our prayers, to watch over them, and try by all means to train them in God's fear!

Sin has a vast hold of our poor fallen nature. A child is not like a sheet of white paper on which you can easily write what you will. It is not the mere child of example, as easily copying the good as the evil. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." It is bound up with it from its very birth. What anger, what selfishness, what strife, yes, what deceit and pride also — do we see in very young children! Watch the rising of temper, the cry of passion, the dark, scowling look, the refusal to obey, the tiny hand uplifted. Who that has watched children, but must believe that we go astray even from the womb!

And there is the power of evil around, to increase and draw forth the evil within the child. The whole world lies in wickedness, and the Tempter is ever at hand to lead us into sin. Multitudes are hurrying along the broad way; lying, and profanity, and ungodliness of every kind stalk abroad — and all this increases a hundred-fold the peril in which the child is placed.

"A child left to himself brings his mother to shame." Had Moses been left to himself by the river-side, and no friendly hand been stretched out to save him, soon would he have perished by the venomous reptiles that abound there. But your child is in more peril than Moses by the river. Perils infinitely greater are around to destroy both body and soul! Father, mother — watch over your child!

Were a garden left unsown, uncultivated, without the continued care which is needful to free it from noxious weeds — what would be its produce? What would you find there, but an upgrowth which was utterly worthless? A child's heart is a prolific garden. It is full of thoughts and desires and feelings; but if untended, unwatched — then no pleasant fruits, no holy thoughts, no right feelings will grow there. Father, mother — watch over your child!

A mother goes to see her son who has been condemned to death for a cruel murder. For awhile he looks at her in silence. Then he addresses her: "Mother, if it had not been for you, I would never have been here."

"How can you say so?" was her reply. "I am sure I never taught you any harm."

"I am sure," he said, "you never taught me any good."

We may be sure of this, that neglect is ruin. I need not teach my child evil; if I but leave him to himself, if I neglect to teach him how to overcome sin, if I neglect to implant in his mind right principles and right motives — Satan and the world and his own corrupt heart will soon teach him enough to bind him down, it may be, to a life-long bondage of evil.

Fathers, mothers, will you remember that the greatest power to influence your child in the right or wrong direction, must be the home training? It must be so. As a rule, nothing can equal the effects of a parent's example, and the every-day life that a child sees. I am quite aware that God does often touch the heart by the faithful preaching of the Word, or by the loving instruction of the Sunday-school, when the home influence is in an opposite direction; but for the most part it is the work and prayer and life of the Christian parent, which are the means that God employs for the conversion and salvation of children.

Fathers, mothers, you love your children; you would guard them carefully from fire, from any dangerous precipice, from any fierce animal that might harm them — will you permit me to warn you against a few special dangers that are likely to prove injurious to your little ones?

(1) Drink. What an injury is this to tens of thousands of helpless, unoffending little boys and girls, who but for this might grow up happy, useful members of society! The money which should go for the food and clothing and instruction of the little flock which God has given — is all wasted and squandered, and the children are left in rags and misery!

In the story of George and the Dragon, we read of a fearful dragon lying in a marsh at the gate of a city, and laying hold day by day of one or two of the children of the city. A still more fearful dragon is STRONG DRINK, which is daily ruining — body and soul — men, women, and children, and hurrying them along the path of hopeless misery. Fathers, mothers; watch against this danger for yourselves and your children. Bring up your children never to touch it — and they will never require it. And if you feel there is the very least danger to yourself, seeing the greatness of the peril, abstain altogether. However great the sacrifice at first, it is far wiser and safer to bear it than to risk the awful possibility of a drunkard's home.

(2) Beware of ever using language that you would not wish your children to copy.

A year or two ago, a poor little girl about six years of age was brought into our Hospital after being fearfully burnt. She died after a few days, but meanwhile her lips were filled with awful curses and blasphemies. But where had she learned them? Who was responsible? Was it not the parents, from whose lips she had learned them, or who had permitted her to use such language unchecked?

Oh, parents! never use language you would not wish a child to use in a dying hour! Great was the contrast between this child and another little girl who died in the parish of which I had charge in Suffolk, from the same cause. In her sufferings she was continually repeating the hymn that her mother had taught her. Her last words were:

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
 Can do helpless sinners good."

(3) Beware alike of harshness and false kindness.

Many children grow up from their earliest days in an atmosphere where all better feelings are nipped and checked by constant sternness or unkindness. They are continually chilled and frozen by harsh looks and speeches, accompanied very often by rough blows. Sometimes the cause is that the mother is unwell or unhappy, and so is irritable, and worried by a variety of little trials; and it all comes down upon the head of the poor children, who need all the forbearance and kindness that a mother can show.

"I've beaten my boy until he's black and blue. I'm always scolding him, but he's no better for it."

Nor is it the least likely he should be. If anything is certain to make a bad boy worse, or to turn a good one into a bad one — it is this wretched system of perpetual scolding and beating.

I am not recommending you to let your child have his own way, or never to punish him. By all means punish your child in due measure for a lie or for a serious fault, especially if it is repeated. When you say anything, stick to it — though be careful how you threaten. Be as firm as a rock, so that a fit of pettishness and crying shall not lead you to depart from what you have said. Let there be no taking contrary sides, so that if a mother punish a child, the father comes home and takes its part. Both pull the same way, if you wish to benefit your children. If father or mother thinks that the other has made a mistake, speak of it afterwards, but let not the child see any dispute in the matter.

Never punish hastily or in anger. Be careful to weigh the character of a child's faults. Do not give a severe punishment for something which may be only an accident, because it may very much annoy you — while you let a real sin pass by without notice. Be wise, be just, be gentle, be forbearing. Chasten as God does, to make His children better and holier, and with love and pity in the heart, while there is a rod in the hand. "Your loving correction shall make me great."

There are a few other points on which I should like to add a word or two.

Make home a happy place. Nothing has a greater influence for good on the lives of the young, than the remembrance that they were happy when young at their own fireside. It is said that a house cannot be healthy if the sun never shines upon it; and I am sure a home cannot be good for old or young, unless the sunshine of happiness and peace and kindness is found there.

Some people have such an unfortunate way of driving happiness out of a house. There may be good points in them in other respects, but they are always suspicious, or grumbling, or they give the worst reason for the conduct of others, or always look as if every one were wronging them — so that there is no rest. The children and others, cannot help feeling that there is no real happiness in that home. But for the welfare of your children, be sure this is not the case in your house. You may have trials and difficulties; but do your best under the circumstances, and let your countenance, at least, always bring a ray of Heaven's sunshine wherever you go.

Make Sunday a profitable day. The way in which Sunday is spent has, no doubt, an influence on the whole week. And I can imagine nothing a means of greater blessing to a family growing up than father and mother, and all who are old enough, going together to God's house. And then, at home, joining together in singing hymns, or reading Scripture, or some helpful book or magazine, and thus each Sunday pointing them onwards to the blessed Sabbath which remains for the people of God.

Be careful about the young ones being taught carefully in the Word of God. Send them to such schools, week-day and Sunday, where they will be earnestly instructed in the best of all knowledge. A parent should value all knowledge for his children: but, for my part, I reckon that knowledge far above all the rest, which will give my children . . .  
strength to resist the temptations which surround them,  
comfort and solace in the sorrows which befall them,  
and a blessed hope when the hour of death comes.

If other knowledge is silver — this is golden; yes, more, each truth indeed learned out of God's Word, is as a precious ruby or diamond, which we shall be able to carry with us as a treasure into the future world.

Name your children daily before God in prayer, and beg Him to bestow His grace on each.

Be not content to pray only in general terms, but pray for your children by name. Mention each one — John, Arthur, Ernest, or Annie, Jane, Gertrude, etc.; and ask, for Christ's sake, that each one may be saved and guided into the way of life.

The prayers of parents are most acceptable to God. In the life of Christ we have more examples of the prayers of parents for their children, than of any other supplicants. And not one was rejected. And remember Christ is ever the same, delighting now as then to hear prayers on behalf of our children.

Then, one other point, and it is one of the most important, Let us be careful to live consistent lives.

Let us give our children an education, a Bible, our prayers, and the benefit of a holy example — and we have done all we can for them.

"I wish you would walk straight," said the crab, in the fable, to her young one. "Why do you go sidling along in that awkward fashion?"

"When I see you walk straight, mother, I will do the same," said the young one.

The lesson is a needful one. Example is better than precept. It is here we should be most on our guard. The daily home-life of the parent will be copied in the life of the child years afterwards, perhaps when the parent has long been lying in the grave.

Fathers, mothers, let us endeavor, by God's grace, to walk before our children as the true servants of the Most High God. Let us walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Let us be careful in little things. Let us often seek help from above.

"Oh help me, Jesus, from on high;  
I know no help but Thee;  
Oh help me so to live on earth  
As Yours in Heaven to be."

Chapter 4. A Talk with the Little Ones.

I don't know a greater pleasure than being surrounded by a flock of little children with their bright looks and happy faces — and then telling them a story which they love to drink in; or giving them something to remember, which perhaps may do them good when years have passed.

In the last chapter I tried to speak a few homely words to Fathers and Mothers; but now I imagine I see before me hundreds and thousands of little Children in the various homes to which this book may come; and I would be so glad if I could tell you a story that might interest you, or say something that you might think of afterwards.

And what is it that I wish for each young reader of these pages? It is that each of you may be a true little Christian, a real disciple of the Lord Jesus, and that you may have Him as your Friend, right through your journey, and that He may welcome you at the last to His happy home above.

But I imagine I hear a little voice among my readers speaking somewhat in this way: "I don't wish to be so religious yet. I'm quite young, and I see most boys and girls never think about religion; and I wish to amuse myself; and when I'm old or ill, then of course I will become religious; but I shall have plenty of time — so I shall wait before I begin."

Now, if this is what you are saying in your heart, like a great many older people, you are making quite a mistake. You do not understand what religion is, or what Jesus wishes to do for you.

Look at it in this way.

Suppose the Queen were to make a great banquet at Buckingham Palace, on some special occasion, and while she invited many who were grown up, she were to add your name to the list, and were to send you word that she wished you to come. Would you not think it was very kind of her, and if you could, would you not go? Would you say you were too young — and therefore did not wish to go? Now the Lord Jesus has made a feast of spiritual blessings, and while He has sent out the invitations far and wide, He has particularly included you. He has said He wants you there: "Let little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

Or suppose one day I were to come to you and offer you a valuable present. It might be a gold watch, or a purse, or a desk, or a special book. I had bought it for you, and, because I loved you and thought it would make you happy, I wanted you to have it. What do you think you would do? Would you say, "Thank you, but I can do without it," or, "I'm too young yet to have anything so valuable — when I am older perhaps I may have such a gift?" No, no; you would not say this; but you would at once accept the present, and it would make you happy to think of the kindness of the friend who had bought it for you.

Now this is just what Jesus does. He has bought you a precious gift, and it has cost Him more than all the gold and silver in the world — even His own life; and this gift is so valuable that it will ensure your happiness while you live, and when you die, and forever and ever.

Eternal Life is the gift, and it includes forgiveness of your sins, and the comfort and help of the Holy Spirit, and a home in Heaven with God's people. Now Jesus offers you this gift, and will rejoice that you should take it at once. What will you say to Him? Will you say, "No, Lord; I don't want You or Your gifts. I am quite happy enough, and rich enough. Or at least I don't want them yet. By-and-by perhaps I will come and ask for them." Instead of this, will you not thank the Savior for His kindness, and tell Him you are but a poor, sinful child, and ask Him to give you the gift of life which He offers you?

Or look at the blessing of being a true Christian in another way.

I dare say some of my young readers have a very happy home. You have a kind father who loves you dearly, and you often run to open the door to him, and it gives you pleasure to sit on his knee, or to be with him. Now think of the privileges of the true Christian. He has a Father in Heaven, kinder, richer, wiser, more powerful far than any earthly father, who thinks of him every moment, listens to every word he speaks, comforts him when in trouble, and guards him from every danger.

Some of you may have no father whom you can love, and to whom you can go when you want anything. But how happy will you be if you believe in Jesus, and have God for your Father; for He will be better to you than any father on earth ever could be. An orphan boy was reading the 27th Psalm. Presently he came to the verse, "When my father and my mother forsake me — then the Lord will take me up." When he read this, he fell on his knees, and said, "O God, be You both father and mother to me!" God heard his prayer and taught him of His great love.

I think you must see, then, that it is a good thing to be a true Christian now you are young.

I once had a friend who had two little curly-headed boys that he loved very dearly. When any one asked him what he wished them to be, he would say that his only wish was that they should be "Christians indeed." He did not mind if they were blacksmiths, or laborers, or farmers, or whatever — if only they loved the Savior. There was a good deal of wisdom in his remark. Whatever you are, you are safe and happy if you have Christ as your Friend; and if you have not, you may be the richest merchant in England, or the highest noble in the realm, but you will never know true peace or comfort, and when you die your soul will be lost forever.

Is it not, then, a happy thing to be a true Christian from your earliest days? If you are, you will always have a Friend by your side who will love you and listen to your prayers, and be ready to help you when trouble comes. You will be happier in your brightest days, for the love of Jesus casts a sunshine on everything. A peaceful heart makes every earthly comfort sweeter. You will always be safe. He who never slumbers nor sleeps will be your Guardian; and if your life should be spared until you are sixty or seventy, He will be with you, and never leave you nor forsake you. You will be safe too, if God should send for you in early life. Early death will be early glory, and you will join the chorus of happy spirits that are before the throne.

In a dark, wretched attic in Edinburgh, a little boy lay dying. On his pillow were a well-worn Bible and hymn-book, and the Bible was his continual comfort. "Oh, speak to my mother and pray with her," he said. "I'm wearying to go home, I'm so happy to go. The only thing that grieves me is to see mother not willing to part with me. Oh, mother, just say that you'll let me go to Jesus, and promise to follow me there — and my joy will be full." Shortly afterwards he was asked if anything could be done for his comfort; but he said, "I need nothing, and I'll soon be where I'll have everything."

Happy indeed are they who, like this poor lad, have early learned the secret of a Savior's love!

But perhaps among my young readers a little voice may be heard asking for help: "I would like to be a true Christian, but I do not know how. Tell me what I must do and how I must begin, and help me to love and follow Jesus."

Well, I will try, and I shall be very glad if I am able to help you a little on the way to the better land.

A few months ago I was in Scotland, and I was struck with seeing so many beautiful mansions. At the entrance to most of the parks in which they were situated, you would notice a large iron gate and a lodge, and there was often some difficulty in getting permission to enter, and see the grounds or house. Then I thought of another mansion and another gate, and over it I could see in golden letters, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Thank God, there is a gate of mercy, a gate of welcome, to God's house and to God's love; and the poor and the sorrowful, and the sick and the sinful, may come, and never will be sent empty away. And the kind Savior is ever watching by the gate. He stands there day and night ready to open to all who come.

If you went to the gate of a large house, and you wanted to go in, but you saw a fierce dog, or a man who looked cross and angry — you might be afraid and ready to run away. But if you saw someone who looked kindly at you, and asked you what you wanted — you would be encouraged to go in. And this is just what Jesus does. He waits to receive you. He is full of tenderness and pity. He will not be angry because of the sins you have done, but will forgive them at once when you come to Him.

Now I want you to believe that Jesus is willing with all His heart to receive you, and forgive you, and give you His Holy Spirit to make your heart

 humble and holy and pure. Go and knock at His gate — that is, go and ask Him to receive you and bless you, and do everything for you. He is quite willing to open the gate, but He wishes you to ask Him.

When I was walking along a road between Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine, I came to a gate which was locked, and a little girl came running out, and said, "Please, sir, you must say, 'Please to open the gate.'" I was very much amused; but I soon understood how it was. The owner of the road was quite willing that travelers should pass, but he wished to keep the right of way in his own hands. So he ordered that none should go through the gate without asking permission.

Then I thought of the gate of mercy. Jesus is quite willing that we should enter; but it is His will that we should ask, trusting in His kindness and love. He throws the gate wide open, and we may come in. So I hope each little reader will go and ask Jesus to open the gate; and I am sure He will not refuse you.

It is now more than ten years ago, since a village Sunday-scholar knocked at the gate of Jesus, and was admitted. One night she lay awake on her bed, and she said to herself, "I am not very strong, and if I die young, where would I go? I never pray, I do not love the Savior, and I fear I am not ready. But I will begin."

So as she lay on her bed, she lifted up her heart in prayer: "O Lord, forgive me all my sins, through the Savior's blood, and give me Your Holy Spirit, for Jesus Christ's sake." Thus she prayed; nor was her prayer or resolution forgotten the next morning. She began to read her Bible and resist temptation. Satan tempted her very much. He tried to persuade her that she could never be forgiven, and that the Bible was not true. And then she was very unhappy because her father and mother and brothers and sisters did not seek the Savior. But she would not turn back. She went on praying and reading the Scriptures; and soon the light began to shine brighter, and she trusted more in Jesus, and lived and died as a little missionary.

Many in the village will never forget Jane T — as long as they live. And when Jesus comes, she will have the bright crown of those who "turn many to righteousness." May you too knock, as she did, and follow her as she followed Christ!

Among my young readers, I seem to hear another voice: "I have done as you have wished me. I have knocked at Jesus' gate, and He has received me and forgiven me, and I believe He is now my Friend and my Savior. But now tell me — how shall I live? How can I best please Him? How can I do the most to show my love to Him who died on the cross to save me?"

One pastor, in talking to the little ones, used to say that true religion was wrapped up in five short words, "Come unto Me! Follow Me!" You have come to Jesus — now you want every day to try to be like Him, to think as He thought, to speak as He spoke, to act as He acted.

Here is a beautiful prayer in a verse of a hymn that may help you:

"Your image, Lord, bestow,  
Your presence and Your love;  
I ask to serve You here below,  
To reign with You above."

Offer this prayer very frequently, and Jesus will put His beauty and His Spirit upon you. I have read a tract which gives a motto that may help you. It was written over the mantelpiece of a clergyman, and taught many lessons to him and all who lived in the house. It was this — What Would Jesus Do?

Try to think of this motto, if you would live a holy life, and be a little sunbeam in your home and do good to those around.

It teaches you how you must try and show piety at home and requite your parents. Try in everything to obey and please them. Remember how Jesus went down to Nazareth, and was obedient to Joseph and Mary, though He knew He was the Son of God. And if Jesus, who was so great and glorious, was yet subject to those who were appointed over Him — then much more should you be.

A little boy who had wished to go out to sea, determined to remain at home, because, he said, "he would never cause his mother a needless tear." Let this be your aim and wish — never to cause sorrow to father or mother, or brother or sister, but to strive to help them in every way you can.

It is wonderful what a help a little girl of nine or ten can be to her mother at home — if only she gets into the habit of doing what she can. And just as great a comfort a little boy may be who can always be trusted when he goes out, or when he is doing anything for those at home.

But the motto, What WOULD JESUS DO? may teach you more than this.

What Would Jesus Do? This may teach you to be kind and humble, and not to be vain or conceited, or cross or self-willed or selfish; but to overcome all pride and bad tempers, and be meek and lowly in spirit.

What Would Jesus Do? This may teach you to learn all you can of His Word; and to thank God for all your many mercies, and to bring to Him all your little cares and troubles, and ask Him for the daily grace and strength you need.

What Would Jesus Do? This may teach you to be diligent in your lessons and work, and never waste time. Every day has its work — and you can never bring back a day that has been lost.

What Would Jesus Do? This may teach you above all things to hate sin in every shape — every lie, every impure word, all theft and envy and malice; and to seek to do God's work, and lead others to love Jesus, until Jesus comes again in a bright cloud. Then He will give you a joyful welcome, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant — enter into the joy of your Lord!"

Chapter 5. A Talk with the Young People

I shall not soon forget an incident in Swiss traveling which might have ended very seriously. I was quite a young man, and had not much experience; and without sufficient consideration, I engaged a guide to direct me through a comparatively unknown part of East Switzerland. I soon found myself in difficulties. My guide could speak neither French nor English; the horse became so lame that we had to lead him; and worse than all, the guide knew nothing of the way. He led me hither and thither, backwards and forwards, sometimes coming to the brink of a river, sometimes to the edge of some deep pit, sometimes into a forest from which we could scarcely find a way out. At last it grew dark, and it seemed that we should be benighted, and have to wait until morning to proceed.

It was a dangerous path and was past midnight, when in the providence of God we saw a friendly light, and we were then able to find a comfortable shelter in a road-side inn until the next day, when I could inquire my way, and go forward in the direction in which I wished.

I have often thought of that night, and it has seemed to me a sort of parable of the way in which the young and inexperienced are in danger through bad guides, and how likely it is they may lose their way, and, it may be, perish in the darkness which surrounds them.

I wish in this chapter to talk a little to young friends who are setting out on life's journey. Many young men and young women, I trust, will read these pages; and it may be that some of the thoughts I would suggest will help them to avoid the dangers that may be near.

Who then, I would ask, are these bad guides that may possibly lead you wrong, and bring you into danger?

I think the first I should mention is an ungodly companion. In every village and town there are to be found those who are very easily led, and when a wicked companion has gained influence over them, they are too often hurried on from one evil to another until their peace and character are lost, and their prospects injured, if not blasted for life.

A young man was sentenced to death for the murder of the young woman to whom he had been engaged. When asked the cause of his fall, for he had once been a Sunday scholar, he gave it in few words: "I left off reading my Bible, I left off prayer, and going to church, and I took to bad company, and this brought me here." Among other evils, it was bad company which led to such a terrible end.

"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil!" [Exodus 23:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 23.2). I do wish each young friend would be decided in refusing to go with those who will lead astray. It is so easy to do what others do, and go where others go, and think as others think; and it is so hard to say "No!" and to stand out against everything that is wrong. And yet it is a brave and noble thing to be willing to stand alone, and to set examples rather than follow them; and on the other hand, if you are led by others, you know not in what pit of misery it may end.

Too many young people know in their hearts, that the way in which they walk is leading them wrong, farther and farther from true happiness, farther and farther from God and Heaven — and yet they follow the crowd. They must just do as James and Arthur and William do, or as Mary and Jane and Eliza do; and they dare not turn away, or say a word to offend; and so they reap the bitter fruits of evil which they might have escaped.

Another bad guide, is a teacher of socialist or infidel principles.

Many such are to be found in workshops and where many are gathered together, who have a gift for declamation, and have picked up a few objections against the Scriptures, and can talk loudly about the hypocrisy of Christian professors, and the iniquity of the laws of property; and if they could, would break up all churches and involve the throne, law, and religion in one common destruction. You will not find it wise to listen to guides like these. Before you do, at least ask them if in their wisdom they have anything better to give you than that which they would destroy.

Can a guide of this class find you a better Bible, or a kinder Savior, or a mightier Helper in sorrow and temptation? Ask him if he can prove that, if everything is overturned in our land — we shall have more liberty, more quietness, more opportunity for the intellectual and steady to rise in life. And if he cannot, then remember it is the counsel of the wise man "to fear God and the king, and not to meddle with them who are given to change."

Another guide to be avoided is the sin which draws away so many young people.

Paul speaks of such sins as being so fearfully dangerous that it is well to keep at as great a distance from them as possible. "Flee youthful lusts." The secret of many a hopeless, unhappy life, and of many an early death — is drinking the poisonous cup of sinful self-indulgence.

How many a young woman whose life promised much blessing to herself and her parents — has fallen, never to rise again, and perhaps her end has been self-destruction!

How many a young man has who arisen afterwards from the power of this sin, has had reason to the close of life to mourn over the evil which he has brought upon himself or others! Ah, the terrible remorse that has dogged a man's footsteps even to the grave, as he has thought of a young person whom he has drawn into sin, whose peace he has thus ruined, and whom he can never restore to comfort and hope!

Young friend, flee from this sin as from an adder — a viper whose sting is death. Avoid the word, the thought, the least approach of impurity!

A story is told of the late Mr. Nisbet in his early life, that shows how much may depend upon a single temptation resisted. A young friend had come up to London from Scotland a few months previously, and took him for his first walk after his own arrival. This friend, at the end of their walk, led him into a blind alley, where some loose-looking characters beckoned them to come in. Young Nisbet shrunk with horror from the thought, and besought his friend at once to turn away; and when he could not persuade him, he fled as quickly as possible from the spot, bitterly grieving for the temptation to which his friend had yielded.

Years afterward, when respected and beloved in the Church as a faithful servant of Christ, he ever looked back with thankfulness to the grace which enabled him that night to overcome the snare that had been laid for him.

The love of gaiety and pleasure and dress is another guide which turns aside many a footstep.

A young lady of delicate constitution, was repeatedly warned by her physician to avoid late hours and never to go out in the evening air. But her delight in the dance and the theater led her to disregard his advice, and one day he was called in to see her, as she was suffering from a chest complaint, from which she never recovered. This time he spoke most to her of the hope she needed in prospect of death; and though at first she was angry — yet she learned that in the blood of Christ, there was a peace which was far sweeter than the passing pleasures for which she had sacrificed life.

But remember, the love of pleasure cost her no less than precious life. And in ten thousand instances, mirth and mirthful society, and the concert hall and the ballroom — prove the death of all better impressions, yes, the eternal death of the soul!

The secret of victory here is to know something better, something sweeter than the pleasure which earth can afford. Perhaps you think you cannot part with some amusements to which you have been accustomed — but learn to know the love of Christ, and you will not want them, for He will give you His own peace and joy. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [John 4:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 4.13-14)

The last guide I wish you to avoid, is a very crafty and dangerous one. His name is Self-will. Many have been led by this bad guide into perils which they were never able to escape.

Here is a young man who will just follow his own way, and will give no heed to counsel from parent or friend, or teacher or pastor. He may be rash and impetuous, and make the greatest mistakes — but his own way is the right way in his sight, and in that he will walk. Money is wasted, friendships are formed which will do him no good, the favor of those who could further his prospects in life is lost, the heart of father or mother is almost broken — and all might have been avoided had he been willing to listen to five minutes' kind advice, instead of taking his own way, and running headlong into trouble!

It was this guide which led young King Rehoboam astray, and cost him the best part of his kingdom. He followed the counsel of the young men, because they advised him in accordance with his own will — and rejected the good advice of the old men, who bade him speak gently and kindly to the people. So the ten tribes forsook him, and he reigned only over Judah and Benjamin.

If my young friends who read these pages would be willing to pay more heed to those who have had experience of life's dangers, and less regard to those who are still but as inexperienced as themselves — they would be able afterwards to reckon up more gains and fewer losses than if they took a different course.

I have spoken of some bad guides whom it is dangerous to follow. Let me now commend to you a safe Guide, a true Guide, One who is thoroughly trustworthy, and who will never lead you astray.

I had one such guide in Switzerland. His name was Francois Feoret. I felt perfectly safe in his hands. He knew every step of the way. He carried my knapsack for me, which would have hindered my climbing the mountains. He held my hand when the road was steep and slippery. He was kind and considerate, always ready and able to help, possessing, in short, all the qualifications that a guide requires.

But I know a better guide than Francois Feoret. JESUS CHRIST is the true and faithful Guide who can befriend us as we journey on through life, and bring us safe home at last. He knows the way. He alone sees the dangerous places you have to pass.

He sees the snares and traps which Satan puts in your way.

He sees the special sins which are likely to do you most mischief.

And He can provide against them.

He can give you a warning out of His Word that will enable you to resist the temptation.

He can grant you that needful grace.

He can hold your right hand that you shall not fall.

Then, too, He will carry all your burdens. Your heaviest burden, your sins, your past neglect, your evil deeds and thoughts and words — He takes from you and casts into the depths of the sea! Upon Him were those sins laid when He died for you on the cross, and now He completely and immediately forgives such as trust His salvation. He likewise will carry your griefs and sorrows, small and great. Every care and anxiety you may lay on Him, assured that He cares for you.

He can guide you wisely at difficult turns in your history. You may not know what best to do. Two paths may lie before you, and you know not which to take. But bring the matter to Him on your knees. Ask His counsel, and you will find afterwards that He directed your way, and led you to take the best course.

And this merciful and faithful Guide can open a way for us, and extricate us from troubles which we have brought on ourselves.

A young man had been living a very profligate life, and by his wicked practices had turned against him every one who knew him, except his father. One day his father said to him that if ever the time should come that he himself would be dead, and the son had no one in the wide world who would care for him — that even then if he confessed his sin and turned to the Savior, He would not despise or reject him, but forgive him his sin, and lead him into peace. And he found it true. Houseless and friendless and desolate, his father being now in the grave — he sought the Savior's mercy and found it. He found a Friend in Heaven who never failed him, and helped him to rise to a holier life.

If any reader of this chapter should have gone far astray, but now has a desire to come back — let me say, Turn at once to Jesus, and He will forgive and welcome you, and restore you from all your wanderings, and bring you into His safe fold.

It is a blessed thing to trace the tender and merciful leadings of our gracious Lord in His dealings with each of His people. He is indeed a Faithful Guide to all who are willing to follow Him.

It is almost thirty years since first I sought Him in prayer. I was then a young man, living amidst the temptations of a great city; and I saw very plainly that it was only the people of God who are safe and prepared for all emergencies. So one evening while going to my lodgings, I lifted up my heart to the Savior and asked Him to forgive and save me. That evening I took down from the shelf a copy of the New Testament, and began to read it, and the day following, by the help of God, I began a new life. And I can testify of the goodness and faithfulness which the Lord has shown me since that day. In temporal things, He has often shed a light when the way seemed dark and uncertain; and in sore temptations and trials, He has mercifully helped me through.

I name this as an encouragement to any in early life who will give themselves to the Savior. It will not be an easy path, but it will be a very blessed one. You must expect ridicule and harsh words occasionally, and perhaps special sorrows may come to try your faith; but in spite of all, you will have heart-rest, and strength to go on, and hope to brighten the future. And if you are faithful, you will find increasing joys, and it will be a comfort to you to think that the best part of life has been devoted to the best Master; and the proof will not be lacking that your influence and daily example are useful to others, and many through you may choose the narrow path.

Before I close this chapter I would say a few words to young people in Christian service.

I know you have many difficulties, and often but few privileges; but still I am sure you will find it a good thing in any situation to have Jesus as your Friend, and to endeavor to please Him most of all and first of all.

I had a nurse in my family who lately fell asleep in Jesus. She had been for some years a true Christian, and she tried to talk to the little ones and lead them to the Savior. A few months before her death, she wrote to me when from home, and in her letter she said:

"I mean to give myself afresh to Jesus, to serve Him better, and to do His will. Your prayers are abundantly answered; and we are now no more separate, but of one heart and mind, serving God. I have borne the gloomy days; may I now rejoice in the bright ones. My full desire is now to walk in the steps of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

And then she closed her letter with a hymn —

"To walk with God is my desire,  
Whatever others do;  
And lest I weary grow, and sin,  
I'll lean upon Him too.

Yes, gracious God, I'll lean on Thee;  
Your promises, Your Word,  
My strength and my support shall be  
Along this painful road.  
  
And when my journey here is done,  
Oh let me come to Thee!  
And sit with Jesus, on His throne,  
His glorious face to see."

And her end was peace. She could bear witness that she felt herself in safe hands. And her last words were words of prayer and of kind interest for the souls of the little children she had loved.

Dear reader, may this comfort also be yours! One thing is needful — that you should have Christ for your own, and that your daily life should witness for Him.

Make time every day to read a little of your Bible.

Kneel down and ask pardon for your sins through the blood of Christ, and the strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit.

Trust the Savior's promise, and believe that He loves you — and then strive to be thoroughly consistent.

Let there be no double dealing.

Be genuine and sincere and trustworthy in small things and great.

Be honest, be true, be forbearing, be kind to all others.

Cast aside vanity and pride and the love of dress.

Mind what companions you make.

Make a conscience of using well your time and your money.

Never say a word against those you live with.

Above all, live in God's sight. Set Him ever before you. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Therefore keep Him in mind. Let your prayer and desire continually be: "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

"Your image, Lord, bestow,  
Your presence and Your love:  
I ask to serve You here below,  
And reign with You above."

Chapter 6. A Talk with My Aged Friends.

I think it is well that for every one in the house, there should be a word of help. And, no doubt, among my readers there will be not a few who can look back on a fairly long lifetime, who have passed the fiftieth milestone on life's journey, perhaps the sixtieth, or even one beyond this — and who feel something of the decay which years bring with them. Perhaps there may be a good many years still to come before the journey is over.

I had an old friend who died at the age of ninety-three; and to the end she could hear and read of the Savior whom for seventy years she had faithfully served and truly loved.

But still, as far as health and vigor are concerned, your best days are over, and there are many signs that the earthly house in which the spirit has been dwelling, must by-and-by come down. How much I wish that I could say anything to help you during these last years or months of your sojourn below — so that your last days might be your best days — and the last day of all the very best, because you knew that you would soon be welcomed to the Father's House above!

But if I am to give you any real help, we must be quite honest with one another, and I must say just what I think and feel about the way to obtain it.

The most sorrowful sight to me on earth, is an old man or woman who has trodden so many stages of the journey, and who is yet without any good hope for the eternal world to come.

A friend of mine who has long since gone to his rest, was once traveling in a stagecoach with an old man who took no interest in the best things; and when my friend asked him how life looked to him after so many years of it had been spent, the old man lifted up his hands and exclaimed, "It is nothing! It is nothing!" The words reached the heart of one sitting by, who was but young; she saw how soon life passed by, and how sorrowful it was for one in old age to be yet far from God — and it was not without a lasting blessing to her soul.

How is it with yourself, my friend? Have you found peace with God? Have you the comfort of knowing that all the sins of bygone life have been put away through the Savior's blood? Can you lean on the Savior in your heart as your only hope and strength, as perhaps you lean on a staff you may carry in your hand?

Or is it just the other way? You know nothing positively about all this. You have no certainty. You do not think very much about your old sins, for a dull insensibility has crept over you, and you seldom think of death, or of the danger you are in. And yet your sin is still unforgiven and your soul unsaved: and if you die thus, where is your hope?

Ah, friend, you think, perhaps, that you have not very much to answer for, and that your good character and the respect of those around you will stand you in good stead by and-by. Not so. Your sin is far more than you imagine. The shutters have been closed and the light has been shut out these many years, so that you are quite unaware of your true condition. If you had been living in a house fifty or sixty years, and it had never been cleaned during all that time, though perhaps you had become so accustomed to it that you did not mind — yet surely there would be a terrible accumulation of dust and filth that needed to be cast out.

And is not this the case with you? For these many years sin has been at work in your heart and life, and yet you have never sought cleansing through Christ's blood — nor has your heart been purified by His Holy Spirit. Yet Christ is still willing to come in and sweep the house and cleanse it from all its defilement. He will show you your sin, and then wash away its guilt, and make you hate the things you before have loved, and delight yourself henceforth in doing the will of God. Will you not earnestly seek this great blessing?

Speak the truth to your own heart, and perhaps it will be something of this kind: "I am getting on in years, and I know that I am yet without Christ and without hope. I have been trifling away a whole lifetime of opportunities, and am now fast going down the hill, and have but a short time to live. One by one I have lost the companions of my earlier days, and I shall soon follow them. Alas! my feet will stumble on the dark mountains, and I shall fall and have none to lift me up." But lo! even now by your side there is an Almighty Savior. He knows the "uttermost" of your sin, and is prepared to save you from it all.

I will tell you a true story. A few years ago an old man was now and then seen in a church near London. His life had been one of open and unblushing iniquity — and this in a position which demanded very specially consistency of walk and character. Those who knew what his previous life had been, scarcely dared to hope for anything better in his last days. But the Spirit of God is not restrained. The Word of God reached his conscience, and the old man was bowed down in the dust at the recollection of his wicked life. But he found peace through the blood of Christ. Three years he lived to manifest the reality of the change, and died in the faith, thanking God for the marvelous peace which had been extended towards him.

So willing, so ready, is the Savior to welcome all who truly come to Him. And He will welcome you likewise — if you will only come. But delay not. The time past can never be recalled. Far too long have you waited already. Your days are well-near spent. This very hour, this very moment, lift up your heart, and cry, "Lord Jesus, save me — or I perish!" Go and knock at His door, and ask Him for mercy. Believe that He will hear, for He is pledged not to reject you.

But no doubt among the readers of this chapter, there are many who know and love the Savior. You are conscious of great imperfection and of many failings — but you trust only in the Name of Christ, and desire to follow His precepts.

I know nothing to which you can turn for more comfort, than to the recollection of the Redeemer's faithfulness.

How faithful was He to Jacob during his long and varied pilgrimage! We see the old man, a short while before his end, invoking a blessing on the two sons of Joseph, and in doing so, he bears witness to the faithfulness of the Lord right through life. "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil — may He bless the lads."

We have David in his old age praising God for His continual help and support, and casting himself upon His tender care to keep him to the end: "You are my hope, O Lord God. You are my trust from my youth. By You have I been held up from the womb. My praise shall be continually of You." "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come." [Psalm 71:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 71.17-18)

Then, too, we have the promise, so exactly suitable for your case: "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you!" [Isaiah 46:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 46.4)

I want you often to think of this. Rest your soul continually upon a faithful God and a faithful Savior. Everything else may fail you, but this hope never will.

Memory may fail,  
health may fail,  
sight and hearing may fail,  
friends may fail,  
means may fail —  
so that you may often have a hard struggle. Even children may fail you, and cause you much sorrow by their unkindness — or they may be called away before yourself. Yes, moreover, heart and flesh may fail, and your spirit be cast down — but remember amidst all that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever."

His love is the same,  
His promise the same,  
His tender sympathy the same,  
His power and grace the same,  
and He Himself is your shield, and your exceeding great reward.

He will never leave you nor forsake you; and you shall prove hereafter that not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised, but all has come to pass.

And if the Lord is so faithful to you — then will you not endeavor to be faithful to Him, and honor Him to the uttermost during your remaining days on earth? Will you bear with me while I point out one or two matters of great importance to those who desire to do this?

Endeavor to manifest at all times, a spirit of cheerful resignation to the will of God. There is something exceedingly beautiful in seeing the aged Christian, compassed by infirmity, and having to bear the many trials that come with old age — yet bright and kindly, and ready to sympathize in the happiness of those who are younger.

While on the other hand a murmuring spirit, irritability and impatience, and the like, make the burden of old age far heavier, and bring great dishonor upon the Savior's Name.

Try to repress all such feelings when they arise. Live constantly in the sunshine of God's love — and this will cheer you so that you will be able to maintain a peaceful frame, even in the midst of weakness and suffering. Pray for the grace of "patience." It is but a humble grace, it does not make much show in the world, but it is one of the most precious virtues in the sight of God. Be patient when others vex and provoke you. Be patient when aches and pains continually prevail. Be patient when you lack the comforts which once you had.

Remember the patience of Christ, how meekly He bore the wrongdoing of others, and how willing He was to drink the cup of suffering which the Father put into His hand. And when others try you by not helping you as much as they might, when everything is a burden — food a burden, the noise of children a burden, the least effort a burden — still wait and be patient and hope in God. For soon this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality — and then all our present ills will give place to a life of endless glory!

Strive likewise to be useful, and to do some work for Christ and His Church.

If you cannot now be as active as once you were — yet there is still much you can do for the welfare of others. We have a precious promise with reference to the servants of God in their later years, given in the ninety-second Psalm: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green!"

Through the grace of God, the Christian may be strong in spirit and useful, and may bear fruit, even to his last day.

Who shall tell the good which may be effected by the aged believer who is living near to God, bearing on his heart in intercessory prayer his relations and kinsfolk, and also the Church of God in its various necessities?

Some thirty years ago a godly old man would sit in his garden in summertime while a merry company of grandchildren were at play round about. Sometimes they would come very quietly, and run away with the cap which the old man wore. And often they heard the old man praying for one and another of them, and through this, one at least traced back first impressions as to the blessedness of serving Christ.

But in other ways also the aged Christian may do good service for Christ. Kindly loving counsel to those who are setting out on the way to Zion will be doubly precious from one who has long been walking with God. And visits of help and sympathy to the poor, though they may not be many, will be the more valued when it is at the cost of real effort to do this service for Jesus.

I have before my mind two very bright examples of the blessing left behind by words spoken for Christ, and efforts made for Him, in the last stage of life's journey.

I can see now an aged Christian woman, who lived in Cornwall, and fell asleep in Jesus some time ago. She was but poor in this world's goods, but she was rich in faith, and her words led others also to seek the true riches. She often talked of God's goodness to her during the forty years in which she had trusted in Christ; but her favorite theme was God's holiness. "Oh, I love God, because He is so holy!" she would exclaim. She would often press upon children and young people not to be discouraged because of difficulties, and would add, "Jesus never turns a dull scholar out of His school" — and then she would tell them of His sympathy and tenderness. I heard one day that the old lady was very ill and not likely to recover; so I went to see her, and found her in bed. I asked her of her spiritual peace. "I'm on the Rock!" was her simple and sufficient answer. It was the last word I heard from her lips. The next day she was called home to her rest.

The other example is that of a Christian lady of large means, who has recently passed away. The name of Mrs. Thorneycroft is well known in our neighborhood, and she will not soon be forgotten by those who knew her. She had a great care for the poor, and never ceased, up to her last illness, looking after those who belonged to the congregation with which she met. When unable to climb the stairs, she would go again and again and speak below a kind word to the sick one who lay above. She spoke kindly to all. She was never ashamed of her Master. She was able to drop a word in season to rich and poor, and many a sharp-pointed arrow has found a lodgment in the heart of those whom she addressed. And her end was peace. Surrounded by a large company of near relatives, she could boldly testify of the security she had in Christ, and that her hope was firm and sure.

May you, dear reader, thus honor Him who has bought you. To grow old in the service of such a Master is no small privilege, and shall bring no light reward. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness." Be faithful to the end, and may the Lord Himself "keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!"

Chapter 7. A Talk with Those Who Are Seeking the Savior.

I remember many years ago a knock at my door late one evening. A young friend was there who wished to speak to me about the way to Heaven. He had been to church regularly, and had tried to live a better life; but he did not feel happy or satisfied. I tried to give him the best help I could, and I believe it was not in vain. He found the Savior, and then endeavored to walk in His footsteps.

It has occurred to me that there may be many of my readers very much in the same position as that young friend. Whether old or young, whether rich or poor, it matters not; there is in your heart a desire to be a Christian indeed. If you only saw the right way, you are willing to walk in it. You know that there is no true peace while you are living without God, and that if you were safe in the Savior's care, all must be well. I am sure there are many who feel in this way, and yet see nothing clearly. They do not understand God's way of saving them. They do not understand what Christ has done and is willing to do for them, and what He calls them to do. So they go on without much comfort or hope, and are in danger of being turned aside into some wrong path.

I will try to help you if I can. I will point out a few great and necessary truths. I will endeavor to show you how very near is the blessing which you desire, and how surely, by God's grace, it may be obtained.

If you desire to be saved, let me remind you, first of all, you must be willing to take the lowest place.

In yourself you are guilty, condemned, lost, blind, helpless, unable to feel aright or act aright, unable to overcome one sin or to advance one step on the way to Heaven. Ever remember this. Lay aside all self-confidence. Be willing to be saved from first to last, on the footing of a sinner, of a criminal condemned to die.

Be sure you begin here. Acknowledge your guilt. Confess honestly, as far as you know it, all you have done amiss. Make no excuses. Do not try to palliate sin. Plead guilty before God's tribunal, and cast yourself wholly upon His mercy in Christ.

Then my second word of counsel to the anxious sinner is — Look up and see Christ, the merciful and gracious Savior, bending over you in most tender compassion.

He is very near to you. He marks . . .  
each sigh,  
each desire,  
each tear,  
each prayer.

He thinks upon and yearns over you. He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. See too, He holds in His hand a gift which He is offering to you. Read that which is written upon it: "A Free Pardon! The Grace of My Spirit! Eternal Life!" Do you ask, What are the terms on which He offers it? Who may obtain it? Hearken to His reply: "Without money and without price!" "Whoever will." You are welcome to it, just as you are. You have nothing to bring with which to purchase it. No amount of sin, no length of former neglect, no lack of deeper feeling — will hinder His bestowing this blessing upon you, if only you will deal honestly with yourself by taking your true position as a sinner, and then stretch out your hand to take the gift which He offers. Accept this gift, and it is at once your own. Trust Him to give you life and salvation of His own free love, and He cannot disappoint you.

And then, henceforward, let this always be your one ground of hope: "I can truly say that I am a great sinner — but I can thankfully say that I have a Great Savior."

Yes, Jesus Christ is a great Savior.

He saves great sinners.

He saves from a great destruction.

He saves from great sorrows and great temptations.

He bestows a great salvation, including complete forgiveness and justification, the power of His Spirit, and, to crown all, a bright and glorious mansion in the skies!

Dear reader, believe in this mighty and merciful Savior, and at once, if never before, commit your soul to Him to cleanse you in His blood and to make you fit for His kingdom above.

But you must remember further, that it is needful to hold fast to the end this blessed hope.

Christ has said, "If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Rely constantly on the word of Christ, and not on your own changeable feelings.

Young Christians are sometimes over-confident in themselves when their feelings are moved — and then ready to despair when they feel dull and cold. But you must not feel in this way. Remember that the promise of Christ is at all times the same, and the Savior is always the same. Your feelings may change toward Him, but His feeling does not change toward you. He saves you as you are, and you must trust Him to do this. He promises you the living water, the grace of His blessed Spirit, to quicken you, to give you life, and love, and earnestness.

He will work in you whatever is needful for your sanctification. Therefore do not look inward at your own feelings, but ever be looking upward to Him who is the wellspring of grace.

"Regard not feelings, good or bad,  
Trust only what He says;  
Looking away from all to Him —  
This is to live by faith."

Then you must continue diligently searching the Holy Scriptures. Make use of Bible-classes where you have the opportunity. Read other books that may assist you, but let nothing lead you to neglect the daily study of Scripture.

Continue also in very careful obedience to all Christ's precepts and commandments. Every willful act of disobedience is like going back into the dark, or like closing a shutter to hide from you the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Be forgiving and forbearing, kind and loving to those around you, careful about your common every-day duties, and endeavoring day by day to please Christ rather than yourself.

Continue to value all the ordinances and means of grace which Christ has appointed. These are like pasture fields, where the flock of Christ are fed and nourished. The Scriptures, the House of Prayer, the Lord's Supper, the Throne of Grace, the fellowship of Christians — will all greatly aid the young believer who would grow in the likeness of the Master. Use them in the spirit of faith. Go to them looking for the Holy Spirit to bless them to you; and then you will see more of Christ, and be strengthened to serve Him more and more.

Continue steadfast in your profession of Christ's name, and do not turn aside because a few stones may be thrown at you. I know it is very hard for young Christians to meet with ridicule, and to have unkind things said about them or to them; but this is the way of the cross, which every Christian must be willing to tread.

It will do you good rather than harm in the end. It will strengthen your faith, and make you rely more upon Christ. The tree gets more firmly rooted in the soil, when the winds have blown it about for a while. So go on your way, in spite of the laughter about your being so strict, and in spite of a few hard names. Never be ashamed of being a Christian; never be ashamed of your Bible, or of kneeling down in prayer. Never be ashamed of attending a Bible-class, of going to God's house, or of speaking a word to warn others of the danger of sin, or to lead them to the Savior.

"The righteous are as bold as a lion." If Christ be on your side, why need you be afraid of anyone? If you have Christ for your friend — then what does it matter though the whole world hates you? The King has all power in Heaven and in earth: He will never let others hurt a hair of your head; and by and-by, when mockers and scorners are put beneath His footstool — He will raise you to sit with Him on His throne.

Continue faithful to Christ, though the world's enticements would draw you away.

Perhaps Satan may come and whisper in your ear: "Give up Christ and religion, and I will make you far happier in the world's pleasures."

"No, never!" must be your answer. "Shall I leave the pure water of the river of life — for a stagnant pool whose waters are deadly and poisonous? Shall I cast away the calm and blessed peace which Christ gives — for the hollow mirth which is but for a moment?"

Never be like Balaam, choosing the gold and silver of Moab, rather than the blessing which belongs to Israel. Never be like Demas, who forsook Christ, having loved this present world. Never be a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God. Be sure that Christ alone can give those pleasures which are really worth possessing.

There is no comfort, but in His bosom.

There is no safety, but by His side.

There is no strength, but in His arm.

There is no holiness, but in His footsteps.

I must close this chapter with a few words to those who are yet undecided, and have no earnest desire after better things.

I wish you would put to yourself a short question which I met with years ago, and which I have often suggested as a profitable subject of inquiry: A Christless soul, or a saved sinner — which?

Oh, answer this question to your own conscience and to your God! Are you yet living in the far country, forgetful of the Friend who died to save sinners? Why not come back at once to Him who stretches out His arms to welcome the lost and perishing? Why not flee to Him this very day, this very hour, as the only refuge of your soul? Tomorrow may be too late. Today all things invite you to be saved. The mercy and grace which are in Christ can meet every need.

Come then at once. "Then Jesus told them: You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." [John 12:35-36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 12.35-36)

Chapter 8. A Talk about the Family Bible

It is a very common thing in our English Homes to have a large Family Bible. Sometimes it is given as a wedding present; sometimes it is bought by careful savings a little before or after marriage. Then in this Bible are written the names of the heads of the family and the time they were married; and then often are added the names of children and when they were born; and sometimes too the sad record how they have early been taken away. No home, it seems to me, is complete without the large Bible, around which all in the house may gather, and learn from its pages those blessed truths which alone can make the home really a happy one. If Family Prayer is like the roof of the house — the Family Bible is like the bright lamp within, which sheds light on all the household. It also seems to me suitable that the story of births, and it may be of deaths also, should be registered in this Holy Book. For where else can there be found any better help and guidance and consolation from the cradle to the grave?

And may we not well speak of the Family Bible, because it sets forth so truly the various duties of the members of the household?

Fathers and mothers are instructed to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by loving correction to guide their footsteps in the way of life. Children are taught to honor and obey their parents, to requite them for their kindness, and to show piety at home. Husbands are exhorted to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and to forbear all bitterness and harshness. Wives are bidden to submit to their husbands and to show them reverence; and both are enjoined to live together as heirs of the grace of life.

Those who have servants are told to deal justly and faithfully by them, since they too have a Master in Heaven. Servants are told to do all things as the servants of Christ, living daily under His eye, striving to please Him in their daily duties — and He will pay them better wages than man ever gives.

We have various precepts and examples which will almost bring down Heaven to earth, if they are in any measure followed, and will make each family a type of the Great Family above.

So that the Bible is indeed a Book for the Family; and where it is best loved and practiced, we shall find the most genuine and lasting happiness.

The word Bible signifies Book; and when we call it the Bible, we mean that it is the Book of books — the best Book, the wisest Book, the Book that will do us the most good of any in the world.

If all the other books in the world were destroyed, however great and irreparable the loss — if men still had the Bible, they would be far better off than if this were destroyed and all other books remained.

It is the Book that alone can tell . . .  
how sin can be forgiven,  
how temptation can be overcome,  
how trouble and sorrow can be met,  
how tears can be wiped away, and  
how death can be the gate of everlasting life.

It is indeed the best companion . . .  
for days of trial,  
for the day of sickness, and  
for the hour when we must part from all below!

I remember a long time ago hearing a story of a young girl traveling by railway with a clever skeptic. He went on arguing for some time with his fellow-travelers, and trying to prove the Bible untrue; when at last this young girl said that the Bible gave her all the comfort she had in the world, and as he had been trying to take this away from her — could he give her anything better? He could make no reply to this appeal, and said no more on the subject.

Something of the same kind is told of the mother of the historian Hume. She had loved the Scriptures, but he persuaded her to give them up. When in days of sickness she wrote to him, asking him for some comfort, it is said he never answered her letter, for he knew not what comfort he could give her.

We often find the words, "The Holy Bible" in gilt lettering upon the back. These words seem to me to be very suggestive. It is the Holy Bible, because it is the gift of a Holy God. It tells of a Savior who is "Holy, harmless, and separate from sinners." It is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and the great object of it is to make men holy, as God is holy. Every one who reads the Scriptures with prayer for the teaching of the Spirit becomes more and more holy. Thousands and tens of thousands who were once slaves of sin and evil — through the knowledge of the Word, have become humble, holy, happy Christians, following in the footsteps of Jesus on earth, and preparing to live with Him in glory.

Oh what a treasure is a well-read Bible! It is . . .  
a mine of gold,  
a hive full of honey,  
a field covered with a rich harvest.

It is a tree of life, of which every twig bears precious fruit.

It is an ocean full of pearls.

It is a river full of the purest water of life.

It is a sun whose beams warm and cheer the heart.

It is a bright star that can guide the pilgrim through the darkest night.

It is a granary stored with the finest of the wheat.

It is a medicine-chest, from which we may find a remedy for every malady of the soul.

It is a Mount Pisgah, from which we can view the promised land of Canaan.

All this and much more, is the Bible to those who love to search it and explore the depths of heavenly wisdom which it contains.

Dear reader, whatever you forget, never, never forget day by day to read something out of this precious Book.

We are told of one who found a Bible covered with dust. He took it up and wrote on it with his ringer the two letters, very large, "S.S."

When asked what he meant by those two letters, he said, "S.S. signifies SLOTHFUL Servant." He meant to say to its possessor, "You have had God's Word in your house — but you have neglected to read it. God has told you in this Book all that you need to know in order to be saved; but you have taken no pains or trouble to learn that which God has revealed."

But the letters might have had another and encouraging meaning. "S.S." might signify "Search the Scriptures." Whatever you have done hitherto, begin now to search them daily as for hidden treasures. Go deep into this precious mine. Ponder what you read. Compare one part with another. Compare the commands and precepts with your own daily life. Bring its promises to bear on your heart and temptations.

Or "S.S." might signify "Savior of Sinners." This is the great message of the Bible. It tells of Christ coming into the world to save the lost. It tells of Him as able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. We are therefore to read it that we may lay hold of the great salvation which He brings to us. We are to learn out of it, His fullness and all-sufficiency to meet every need, and His readiness and delight to save those who come to Him.

"Blessed Lord, who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of Your Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ."

We see here that when we read or hear the Scriptures, we should pay good heed to each word — to each verse and sentence. There are depths and heights in many of the simplest verses that we can never reach. Therefore we ought to turn them over again and again in our minds. We must "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" them. A few verses or even a single verse well thought over, and still better, well prayed over — will bring more profit and help than many chapters listlessly or carelessly read.

I remember a Christian man who would write out on a piece of paper in the morning the verse or verses that had most struck him in his morning portion, and walking through the fields or by the wayside would ponder the passage through the day.

The great aim of the Scripture is to lead us to embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of the Gospel.

We are like shipwrecked sailors. We are in great danger by reason of our sinful and lost condition. We are in peril of eternal death, and of sinking to a more fearful abyss than that of the great Atlantic. But in the Scriptures our merciful God throws us out the rope of salvation. He declares that Christ has died for our sins, and that there is salvation in Him for the greatest sinners. But we must "embrace and ever hold fast" this blessed hope. As the sailor must take hold and then keep hold of the rope — so must we in our hearts believe in Christ and cleave to Him. By the calls and promises of the Word we are invited at once, without any delay, to come to Christ, to trust our souls to Him, to accept a free pardon, and the help of His Holy Spirit.

This is the first great object of the Bible, namely, to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

But a second great object for which the Bible is given, is to enable us to hold fast this hope.

We must "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." And the Bible shows how it is possible to do this. It warns against rocks that are near. The fear of man, the allurements of worldly pleasures, the snare of pride, the temptation of doubt and unbelief — against these we must watch.

The Bible gives great encouragement to persevere. It leads us to "patience and comfort," by the assurance that Christ is ever at hand to support us when we are tempted, and to hear our prayers. It brings before us the faithfulness of God to His people, and the blessed truth that He will never leave nor forsake those who trust in Him. It points us to the Heavenly City where there shall be no more sorrow nor sighing, and where the former things are passed away. Thus we are taught to "hold fast" the blessed hope until we have passed safely through the waves of this troublesome world and have reached the haven where we would be.

There is one more thought before I leave this subject. It seems to me that the possession of a Bible brings with it a great responsibility. If you have had a Bible, but have never followed its blessed lessons — will it not prove to be a millstone around your neck in the Great Day?

"Ah," you will say, "I had a Bible. It told me plainly that the sinner must perish. It told me that only One could save me — He who died for sinners on the tree. It told me of the glories of Heaven and the woes of Hell. But I never cared for my soul. I never thought of my sins. I never trusted in my Savior. I never prayed for the help of the Spirit. And now that Bible bears witness to me that my ruin lies at my own door!"

Dear reader, let this never be the case with you. May your experience be like that of a Hindu who had a copy of the New Testament presented to him, and who learned the secret of peace from its pages: "I read, I pondered, I wondered, I believed. I gazed upon the cross of Christ, and as I gazed the ponderous load fell off my heart; I rejoiced in Jesus."

Chapter 9. A Talk about Sunday

One Sunday morning, many years ago, a man engaged in large ironworks throughout the week, was seen on his way to the house of God accompanied by his family. This was no unusual occurrence, for the man valued God's day, and loved to go with his wife and children to meet with God's people. But on this occasion there was a shade of anxiety on his brow, and he could not enjoy the services as much as at other times.

To account for this, I must tell you, that in the previous week a large government order had been sent in to the firm under whom he worked. The demand for its fulfillment was urgent, and the men were required to work overtime, and on that particular Sunday to work instead of taking their usual day of rest. But this man, who held a very lucrative position, refused to do so. He would not do that which was against his conscience. If he refused, he was told that the consequence would be his immediate dismissal. Still he feared God rather than man. Though knowing not but that he and his family might be reduced to the utmost straits, he went as usual to the church where he was accustomed to worship.

But it turned out that he was no loser by his faithfulness. His character for trustworthiness was so well known that his employers could not spare him; and in time he rose to be the head of the firm. So truly was it fulfilled in his case, that those who honor God He will honor.

This man, we notice, valued the Sunday for his family as well as for himself; and I am persuaded that nothing is more essential for the comfort of "Home Life" than the due observance of God's holy day. I trust all my readers will think over the matter, and endeavor to make the Lord's day for themselves and their families, the happiest and most profitable day of all the week. There are many reasons which may be given why we should employ each Sunday in the service of God.

It is my DUTY to do so.

I love the Old English word DUTY. Nelson's saying is a grand one, and may well be referred to far higher matters than fighting a battle. "England expects every man to do his duty." It is my plain duty to honor God's Sabbaths. Before man had sinned, God ordained a day of rest in Paradise. The command is found in the heart of the moral law, binding together the two tables, and linking together our worship of God and our relative duties in the family.

If a father has given to his child six shillings for ordinary purposes, withholding one for some other object, will a dutiful child steal the seventh shilling from his father? My Father in Heaven has given me six days for work, and has set this day apart for rest and worship; and shall I rob Him of the day, and use it for my own pleasure and convenience?

But I must keep my Sundays holy, for it is a very pressing necessity for me to do so.

I need a weekly rest from toil, and so do others; and therefore I will neither work myself nor cause others to do so, unless the cause be very urgent, and such as will justify me before God.

But I still more feel the need of my Sunday when I think of the difference between my two lives. I have a short life to live here on earth, and I know not how soon it may be over. It is but a short candle, and even if it burns down to the socket, sixty or seventy years will soon come and go. But then I have a long life in the far-off land of Eternity. This life stretches onward far beyond all thought and conception. A thousand years, yes, ten thousand times ten thousand, are nothing compared to it. And this life, for weal or woe, hangs upon that which I am living now. Do I not need one day out of seven to

 think of this coming life, and more particularly to prepare for it? During the six days of the week, are there not so many distractions and temptations that I am too frequently filled with the cares of the short life which so soon ends? And therefore do I not require the Sunday, to stop and see what I am doing and where I am going, and to learn how to run my heavenly race more steadfastly?

If the life to come is only a dream, a fable; if when I lie down in my grave all is over, and I lie there in one long unawakened sleep; if I am like the dumb cattle, finishing my existence with my few short days on earth — then indeed I may spend six days in work, and the seventh in thoughtless mirth and levity. But if this cannot be, and I must live on in endless joy or hopeless despair, surely one day in the week is not too much to give, that I may the more fully be prepared to welcome the everlasting Sabbath rest that is prepared for God's people.

But even for the present life, great is the profit and blessing that follows a well-spent Sunday.

How many can trace back a long course of crime and consequent misery, to a Sunday spent with ungodly companions. That "Sabbath breaking sins, bring heart-breaking sorrows," is the experience of a very large number of those who have fallen deep into the mire of evil. In the Pentonville House of Correction, the chaplain searched out the causes of crime in those who came under his notice, and a very large proportion had been led from step to step through the neglect of Sabbath privileges.

On the other hand, to use the Lord's day well contributes greatly to our present happiness. It preserves the young from many a dangerous pitfall. It binds together the different members of a household in love and affection. It assists in forming those sound principles of conduct which alone can guide us through the shoals and quicksands of temptation.

Thus in every way this day is a very precious gift of heavenly love. Many are the gifts which our Father has given us. He has given us His Word. He has given us His dear Son, to live and die for us. He has given us His Spirit to be our Teacher and Comforter. But it is on this day, that all these gifts are seen more clearly in their true value, and we are able to make use of them the more for our everlasting welfare.

Nor should we forget that the observance of this day greatly honors the Triune Jehovah.

We honor the Father, because the seventh day was originally set apart to commemorate His power and goodness in creating all things. So that as long as we enjoy the blessings of creation, we ought to observe the day which was intended to be a perpetual memorial of Jehovah's six days' work.

We honor the Everlasting Son, because we now keep the Sabbath on the first day of the week, the day of His Resurrection. So that if we would duly honor the Savior for His love in redeeming our lost world, we must keep this day holy.

We honor likewise the Eternal Spirit. For on this day the Spirit came down in mighty power, with a rushing mighty wind and with tongues of fire resting on the heads of the apostles. And still it is on the Lord's day that the Spirit grants His presence and grace very especially in the conversion of sinners and in building up the people of God. So that to keep holy the Sabbath day brings honor to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

But how can I best use this day? How can I make it most happy and profitable?

I will regard each returning Sunday as a spot of holy ground. Not one out of the fifty-two Sundays of each year will I despise or neglect.

A nobleman has a flower-bed in the garden of his mansion, which is planted out with the rarest flowers and shrubs, and he bids his children take care not to trample it down or put one footstep upon it. So my Father bids me "turn away my foot from the Sabbath." I must not regard it as common ground, but to be kept sacred and holy. I will not make this day one of mere carnal pleasure. It is not to be spent in visiting, in going hither and thither, in idle talk, in laughter and jesting. It is not to be spent in any ordinary work, in buying or selling, in the labor and toil which is needful on other days. But this day I will give to God, and will endeavor to find my chief pleasure and delight in His worship and service.

I will have my regular place in His house, and it shall never be empty if I can avoid it. If friends and visitors come in, and would interfere with my going, I will tell them that I have a particular engagement to meet the Best Friend, and I trust they will come with me, for I cannot break my engagement. Morning and evening, God willing, I will always be present. Rain or shine, summer or winter, unless absolutely hindered, I will not miss the blessed privilege of uniting in the worship of the sanctuary.

Then I will throw heart and life into the worship that is offered. I will ask for the help of the good Spirit of God. I will think of my own particular sins when I join in confession. I will think of my own special needs and those of others when I unite in the prayers. I will cherish the spirit of gratitude when I take part in the praise. I will hear the Word which is read and preached, as if God were speaking to myself. I will aim at profiting by every sermon that I hear. For I have a part in all the service as the minister has his, and I will not neglect it. It will stir up my own heart and that of those around me if the services are hearty, and we all unite.

Nor will I neglect to come from time to time to the holy Table, to which the Savior so lovingly bids me. I know I am altogether unworthy; but Christ invites the sinful and the lost, and such am I. If I go trusting only in His Name and in His precious blood, He will not reject me or send me empty away.

I will be careful also to improve the intervals between the services and the leisure hours of the Lord's day. I will endeavor to make use of every hour and of every moment. I will make it a bright and cheerful day to those around me as far as I can. It may be I can join with a few little children in singing the songs of Zion, or perhaps I can teach a company of young ones about the Savior's love. I will get time for special reading in the Word of God, and in some Christian book. If I have time for a walk, it shall be with someone whose conversation will be a help to me.

Thus will I reckon the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable. Each Sunday shall be to me as a Pisgah top, from which I can cast an eye towards the fair Canaan to which I am hastening. Each Sunday shall be a milestone on the road to the Celestial City, or a step on the ladder that leads me to my Father's house. And when all my Sundays and week-days are over on earth I shall not regret it. I shall have learned by these earthly Sabbaths to sing the new song, which I shall sing with saints and angels before the throne of God.

Chapter 10. A Talk about Jarring Notes

Family life is one of the great proofs of our Heavenly Father's love. He declares that it is not good that man should be alone. So "He sets the solitary in families." He links together husband and wife, and wills that none shall separate them whom He has joined. He gives little children to increase the comfort and joy of our homes. So that perhaps we might have imagined family life would have been chiefly a scene of pure and holy pleasures. We might have thought that it would be like a well-tuned harp, every touch bringing forth some melodious note.

What united songs of praise and happiness,  
what happy union in prayer,  
what rejoicing together in the promises of the Word of Life,  
what kindly interchange of mutual affection —  
might we not have looked for!

But who knows not what a very rare picture this is of actual life, even where there is something of the fear and love of God? Who knows not how the slime of the old serpent is seen on the family hearth, how sin has crept in and brought trouble and discomfort into the home as everywhere else? Alas! alas! the harp is very often out of tune; the strings are loose or broken; the sweet notes of joyful harmony are few and far between. As to constant happy, loving fellowship — it seems in some cases well near impossible.

Let us not be surprised at this. It is not as our Father purposed it. He "saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." But the fall of man is still bearing its bitter fruit. Everything is out of order, everywhere sin is a disturbing element: "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Not until sin has been cast out, not until the day when good shall finally triumph over evil — shall we see the curse removed and perfect peace and harmony restored.

But what shall be done meanwhile? Because our home life is not all that it ought to be — shall we think it in vain to look for a remedy? Shall we cast the blame one on the other, and thus make matters worse? Not so. Let us quietly look and see what evils are destroying our home comfort, and endeavor to bring in some guiding light from the Word of God. Let us remember the mighty power of God's grace. Let us take such a precept as that given in the twelfth of Romans: "Do not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," and we shall soon find matters not quite so bad as they were; and with a little patience and a bright hope of good things to come, we shall be able to see much for which to thank God, though we may still be sometimes sorely harassed and tried. We shall find some of these jarring notes regaining their harmony, and giving forth their notes of sweet music instead of the former discord.

Let us look more particularly at a few of these jarring notes, and consider how best to deal with them.

And perhaps one of these, that brings as much evil as any, is a lack of thorough trust and confidence between the different members of a family.

Some people are naturally somewhat of a jealous, distrustful spirit. They have a painful way of looking at things from a wrong light. If a picture is ever so perfect, if you look at it from a wrong stand-point, it may probably look like a mere daub.

So it often is in a family. A walk with a friend, a few words of conversation with another person, a letter you have written, some simple remark you have made, something you have done without the least intention of evil, something that has been forgotten — through lack of confidence, these and similar things give rise to misunderstandings, to painful surmisings, because taken in a wrong way. Then the evil grows. A sense of injustice repels the suspicion, hasty words are spoken and returned, the breach is widened, and then comes passion and anger, or perhaps what is worse, a high barrier of ice, a frigid civility; brothers and sisters, or even husband and wife, are cold and distant; the morning or the evening greeting is almost dispensed with; and a sad separation arises in the household.

What is to be done with reference to an evil of this kind? It seems to me that the only remedy is for all the members of a household very determinately to be on their guard lest they mistake one another; and where lack of confidence has been unjustly shown, to take it as a cross and wait until all is smooth again. Be very open, frank, and honest with those about you. As long as you possibly can, draw forth the confidence of others by putting trust in them. Let parents take their children into their confidence, and entrust to them the knowledge of family affairs. Let husband and wife, brother and sister, be unreserved with each other; and, if any difference should occur, in a kindly way endeavor to explain the matter, instead of harboring a sense of wrong. If there were more of this considerate care and thoughtfulness, it would tend greatly to knit families together in mutual love and sympathy.

Another of these jarring notes in home life is a difference of religious opinion.

It is a very sorrowful thing that this should be the case, but there are few things that are making a wider breach in many homes than this. I imagine that during the last few years it has been felt more than ever before. Perhaps one goes to one church — and one to another. Perhaps one holds very strong Protestant views — and another has turned aside to embrace tenets of a very extreme character in the opposite direction. Perhaps one values the church of his fathers and will not forsake her, in spite of the faults which nevertheless he sees — while another has left the old paths and is trying with a few brethren to find a perfect Church. Perhaps a child has left home and joined a sisterhood, or has imagined she could find rest for a weary spirit in the Church of Rome. Who can tell the intense sorrow, the lifelong bitterness, caused in thousands of homes by separations of this kind! It is not easy to know what to do in such cases. But in some respects our duty is plain.

Parents ought to be honored and respected. Let their wish have very great weight. It is true. that where an earthly parent wishes a child to disobey in any way some plain precept of Holy Scripture, it becomes the duty of the child to obey the Great Father in Heaven first; but I am sure in numbers of doubtful matters, filial obedience ought to decide. Self-will, paying no regard to the opinion or wish of a kind father or mother, is not the way to secure the favor and blessing of a Father in Heaven.

Then let those who would avoid strife and contention beware of spiritual pride. Many young converts to a new opinion are so puffed up with an idea of their own superior wisdom that they quietly assume that they must necessarily be right, though all the world is wrong. "If you are really a child of God, you will be taught this or that," is heard from the lips of many who have need to unlearn a good deal which they profess to know. A few more grains of humility, and the consciousness of imperfect knowledge, would often do much to restore peace and harmony in the home.

And then let people remember that the less of religious disputation in the home, the better it will be. It usually does harm to all who take part in it. Now and then a quiet, solemn talk with one in presumed error may do much good, but let it be in love, and with the evident desire not to win a victory in argument, but to help one whom you believe to be a loser by that which he holds. In minor matters agree to differ. Try to get nearer to the center of unity. Try to get nearer to Christ, and the bond which His love supplies. Strive to provoke one another to love and good works; and never forget that wherever sin is hated, Christ trusted, God loved, and the world's allurement overcome — there is spiritual life. Whatever mistakes and errors there may be, there is salvation.

Then Christian brother or sister, you must live the life of Christ. Manifest His love and tender pitiful sympathy towards all, however much they may differ from you. If the barrier is high, do not make it higher by your suspicion, or by failing to realize the good there may be in those who are widely separated from you in many things. Remember that true religion is comprised mainly in the two great commandments: "That we should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment."

Among other jarring notes, the most common are those which arise from the various unruly tempers and dispositions which are found everywhere.

Sometimes we find fiery passions breaking out in the home, bursting forth like the volcano, beyond all control — and the burning lava of angry, wrathful words spreading misery and evil in every direction.

Sometimes it is fretfulness and irritation. These arise, it may be, from a multitude of daily worries burdening the heart, or from ill health, or from an occasional headache, or the like. When there is not great watchfulness and care, these things have a marvelous tendency to disturb the spirit, and then people look at everything in an unhappy way.

Sometimes we meet with a readiness to take offence about the smallest matter. You scarcely can make out what it is all about, but some offence has been given, and it is hard to get people to believe that there is no just cause for it.

Then we find sometimes a silent spirit. There is no response to any inquiry, however kindly put. All conversation flags and comes to an end; and the one who at times can be all warmth and kindness, is changed for awhile into something very like a stone pillar.

Or, again, we find not rarely the love of contradiction. It is a intricate twist of the mind, but we often come across those who always appear desirous of asserting their own superior wisdom and knowledge in respect to all events whatever. Something in our poor human nature seems ever to be coming to the surface, and saying, "I must be right — and you must be wrong." It is often about the smallest possible trifles. It may be whether such an event happened on Tuesday or Wednesday, or at ten o'clock or eleven o'clock, or whether the wind is north or south, or something else just as trivial. But the sheer love of contradiction seems to make people stand out and stick to their own opinion, and perhaps risk a quarrel in doing so.

Closely allied to this is self-will. One in a family is determined always to have his own way, and to act as he thinks fit, without regard to the will of the others. Nothing more surely breeds strife than this; for there are many separate wills in a house, and if there is no yielding one to another, there cannot but be confusion, and bitterness, and ill-feeling.

Ah! this strange inner self, with all its mingling of motive and feeling, varying so widely in each individual, and yet in every case having so many disturbing elements — what cause is there here for continual watchfulness and prayer!

It is only by these, that the evil can be remedied. We must remember that our life on earth is to be one of conflict with sin — and not of rest. Girt with the sword of the Spirit, and the weapon of all-prayer, we must strive first of all to see our own faults and to overcome them. And we must ever let Christ Himself reign on the throne of the heart. It is only Christ in us, that can conquer the sin which is in us. We must receive Him, and walk in Him as our all-sufficient source of grace and help. We must realize that He is pledged to overcome all our infirmities and to renew us in His own likeness. For this we must pray and trust.

"Less of the flesh each day,  
Less of the world and sin;  
More of Your grace, I pray,  
More of Yourself within."

We must moreover determine to show all meekness and gentleness and forbearance and humility — even to those who most try us. We must walk in holy love, and be congenial and kindly, whatever we have to put up with. We must ever live as peacemakers. If there are any who fight against us without a cause, and vex and provoke us by unkind words and deeds — we must not return bitter for bitter; but we must endeavor to pour on their heads a constant stream of kindness; and thus at length we may hope to soften and subdue them.

But after all, this poor world is not our rest. Our Heaven is not here. On earth we shall never find everything as we wish it. There will be always something to keep us low, and make us desire a fairer home. But there will be no jarring note in our heavenly home above. If we enter that blessed kingdom through the meritorious death and obedience of Christ, every longing will be fulfilled, every string of the harp will give forth the sweetest melody. No hasty word, no angry look, no opposing will, no strife, no dispute, no envious thought — can enter there. Love will fill every bosom, and be reflected from every countenance. The God of love and peace will calm every troubled spirit, and the Prince of Peace will reign in every heart!

"There shall I bathe my weary soul  
In seas of heavenly rest;  
And not a wave of trouble roll  
Across my peaceful breast."

Chapter 11. A Talk about Family Sorrows.

Family life resembles in some respects our English climate. It has many changes and variations. One day the wind is bleak and cold and the sky cloudy — while on the following day the sun shines brightly, and all nature rejoices in his warm beams. And then perhaps shortly afterwards the tempest lowers and the rain descends and floods the earth. Just so, family life has its days . . .

of cloud and sunshine,  
of storm and quiet,  
of sadness and of joy.

Sometimes the brightest days are followed by the darkest. You have been enjoying the happiness of a quiet peaceful home — and a message, or a letter, or a telegram arrives which scatters in a moment every pleasant thought, and fills your heart with sorest distress.

It has so happened often from the very beginning. We go back to one of the earliest narratives in Scripture, the story of the Patriarch Job, and we find him brought down in one day from the greatest height of prosperity and comfort — to the abyss of misery and desolation. In the morning the sun shone upon him and his tabernacle was in peace — before nightfall a black cloud had arisen and burst in fury over his head, and all was dark and desolate.

Let us watch for a few moments, the terrible hailstorm of sorrow and trouble descending upon this faithful man. What a day of trouble it was — and yet a day begun in prayer! He rose early in the morning, and pleaded with God for his children, and offered a burnt offering on behalf of each of them. One by one he brought them all before God, and sought help and mercy for them at the throne of grace.

What a blessed example for parents! We know not any day what may befall our children — what temptations may assault them — what perils may be near them. Let us at least have the consolation that we have done for them our very best — that we have put them into the hands of One who is almighty to protect and save.

But on this day of sorrow, wave follows quick upon wave, and blow upon blow. Fresh messengers arrive hour after hour with evil tidings, and with no quiet interval between for Job to gather up fresh courage, or to strengthen faith in God.

First comes a messenger who tells of the spoil taken by the Sabeans. They have fallen upon the servants and have driven away the oxen and the donkeys — and but a solitary servant remains to tell the tale.

Then comes a second messenger, who tells of the lightning — how it has fallen from Heaven and destroyed the sheep and the servants that kept them — and but one remains to bring the news.

Then come a third and a fourth. They tell of the Chaldeans making an attack in three bands and carrying off the camels and destroying the servants.

Worst of all, they tell of the death of his children. The great wind has smitten the house where they are feasting, and the house has fallen, and his sons and daughters are buried in its ruins!

Ah! and well we might have imagined that the father's heart would be buried there too, and that from such a calamity he would never be able to rise. Who can comprehend so great a sorrow? All family sorrow in one! Not the loss of some property, but all! Not the loss of one child, but all! Reduced in a moment from a height of prosperity — almost to the depths of poverty! Deprived in a moment of all the children for whom he had lived and toiled and prayed! "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls. All Your waves and billows are gone over me."

Then shone forth the reality of the grace which dwelt within his heart. Then were manifested his deep submission, his faith and love. Human nature would have rebelled and murmured: "Why has God dealt thus bitterly with me? Am I a sinner above all sinners? Why should He thus pursue me even unto death?" Ah, Satan looked for Job thus to repine; yes, and to curse God to His face. But what do we find? Even from this furnace of affliction, thus heated seven times, there comes forth the voice of trust and praise and joyful adoration: Though I am stripped of all I possess; though the hand of God has taken back the gifts which first He gave; though my children lie buried beneath the ruins of the fallen house; though I return to the earth as poor as I was born — yet why shall I complain? Nay, rather, I will bless and praise and magnify His Name. "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away — blessed be the Name of the Lord."

How like was the spirit of Job to that of the prophet Habakkuk! "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls — yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights." [Habakkuk 3:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hab 3.17-19)

Let us mark well what a vantage ground the child of God possesses in these times of family sorrow. These days come to all — but dark and gloomy indeed is the home where God is absent, where there is . . .  
no sense of His fatherly love,  
no experience of His fatherly discipline,  
no firm grip of His faithful promises.

Look at the home of Jeroboam. A beloved child lies ill. Jeroboam desires to know the outcome. So his wife disguises herself and goes to the prophet. But there is no word of comfort for her in her sore distress. Heavy tidings — the death of her son — fresh miseries upon the household — and, worse than all, God's righteous anger! Such is the response she finds when the day of trouble is at hand.

Dear reader, be assured that your home one day will be filled with sorrow. It may come gradually, or it may come suddenly when you look not for it; but, believe me, those dark days will be far, far darker — if now in your bright days God is unsought and uncared for.

"We have great trouble come upon us in our home," said a woman to me once; "and worst of all, I have no God to go to!"

She had lived without God in prosperous days — and now in the day of sorrow she knew not how to seek Him.

But how blessed it is, on the other hand, to have Christ by your side at such times; to be able at once to turn to the well-known Refuge and Hiding-place, and to leave there all your weariness and sorrow! This is light in darkness, and sweet comfort even in the bitterest distress.

"Jesus, my Lord, 'tis sweet to rest  
Upon Your tender, loving breast;  
Where deep compassions ever roll  
Toward my weary, helpless soul.

Your love, my Savior, dries my tears,  
Expels my griefs, and calms my fears;  
Bids every anxious thought depart,  
Sheds light and sunshine o'er my heart."

It very much lightens the heaviest family sorrows, when we can trace distinctly the hand of God.

Job discerned it at once: "The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away." "Shall we receive good at the hand of God — and shall we not receive evil?"

Nothing is more lamentable, than for us to imagine that God takes no concern in the daily life of His children. Some seem to think that God is so great and high, that He has left the world to the guidance of certain mechanical laws — and now sits apart, having nothing to do with the little every-day matters of our present existence, or with the sorrows that come to us from time to time. And so, we are taught, the great wheel of life goes around, crushing some, raising some — but the Almighty Creator cares not for it.

But the Scripture view is far otherwise: Not a sparrow is forgotten, or falls to the ground, without our Father. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" — and not one can perish without His knowledge. He "knows our sorrows" and apportions them in infinite wisdom, as each of His children has need. "Whom the Lord loves, He corrects; even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights." We are to consider affliction . . .  
as the gardener breaking up the hard soil by the sharp ploughshare,  
or as the vine-dresser pruning the choice branches,  
or as the sculptor hewing the marble statue, that it may be fitted for its intended position in the king's palace.

Thus does our Father send us sorrows and afflictions. He would break up the hardness and stubbornness of our worldly hearts. He would make us more fruitful in His Church. He would renew us in His own likeness, and take away all that is of self and evil — that we may at length be made fit for His glorious temple.

Strangely diverse are these family trials, which are appointed to train and mold us for our better heavenly home. In one case it is the long continued trial of weak health, which puts everything in the home out of gear.

Or it is one member of the household who brings sad disgrace upon the rest, perhaps through the fearful curse of intemperance, or immorality.

Or it is diminishing financial means, with increasing necessities.

Or some particular deprivation, as when Abraham and Sarah had so long to wait for Isaac.

Or the contentions of two brothers or sisters.

Or the loss of a dear child.

Or the failure of some long-cherished scheme.

Or a secret sorrow that burdens the heart — yet may never be uttered except in the ear of the merciful and faithful High Priest.

Sometimes our sorrows come direct from the hand of God, and we say, "It is the Lord — let Him do what seems Him good!" Sometimes they come through the fault of others, and we are sorely tempted only to see the second cause, rather than the permitting hand of Divine Providence. It was, for example, a sore trial to David when the Amalekites took away all he had at Ziklag as their spoil; and again when Absalom was permitted to break up his household at Jerusalem. But in each case, David could see the finger of God.

Sometimes our sorrows come through our own sin and grievous fault — and this makes them still harder to bear. But even in this case, God does not forsake His child, but makes his sin the scourge to chasten and to humble him and to do him good at his latter end.

But, whatever the sorrow, or whatever the cause for it, there is but one wise course to take. It is folly to aggravate our trial . . .  
by mutual reproaches, casting the blame on another,  
or by useless murmurings and repinings,  
or by sitting down in despair and folding our hands, as if there were no help for us in Heaven or in earth. While God lives, and the Bible is still full of blessed promises, no child of God has ever reason to give up hope. The Lord knows how to turn darkness into light, and to bind up the wounds which His hand has made.

What then, is to be our resource in the hour of affliction and sorrow?

First of all, humble yourself before God, and acknowledge the uttermost of your sin and unworthiness. Sin must be discovered, confessed, and repented of, before we can have any solid ground for consolation. Our Jonah must be cast out, before the storm will cease. But if we are willing to see God's hand in our trouble, and take a low place because of our sin — we may then confidently cast upon Him every anxiety and trouble and fear.

There is one passage of Scripture that has been to me an anchor of hope and strength in many a dark and sorrowful day, and I would that it might be cherished in the memory of each reader, and its guidance followed when trouble comes. It is found in the first Epistle of Peter, the fifth chapter: "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." [1 Peter 5:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 5.5-7)

Go then to the mercy-seat in the Savior's name, and bring the whole care and sorrow, and leave it at your Father's footstool.

Consider His Fatherly HEART. "He cares for you." As a father pities his children, yes "as one whom his mother comforts" — so tenderly does the Lord deal with those who fear Him and trust in Him.

Consider His Fatherly HAND. It is the hand of love that smites. It is the hand that has bestowed every mercy, which holds the cup of sorrow. It is the same hand that in due season will remove our trials, and lift us up from our depths of distress, and set us again on the rock of safety and peace.

Consider His Fatherly EYE. It is ever upon us for good, and not for evil. He knows our sorrow, and beholds every affliction and calamity that befalls us. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy."

Consider His Fatherly EAR. He hears every sigh, every moaning, every cry. He bows down and inclines His ear to every petition. "His ear is open to our prayer."

Consider His Fatherly PURPOSE. Read the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, and see how He wills only our good. He would make us "partakers of His holiness." He would purify us from the dross of our corruptions, and make us fit for His presence.

Consider His Fatherly PROMISE. He has promised that He will "never leave us nor forsake us." He has promised that He will make "all things work together for good to those who love Him." "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Ah, Christian, trust yourself wholly to your Father's care, and He will not disappoint your confidence!

"Tried one, wait not in your woe,  
But at once to Jesus go,  
Clouds of darkness He can make  
Hues of rainbow-brightness take.

Cast on Him your smallest care,  
Utter but one word of prayer;  
Tell Him your most hidden grief:  
Sure He'll run to your relief.

He has said it, therefore trust,  
He will lift you from the dust,  
Carry you on His soft wing,  
Troubled heart, look up and sing."

Chapter 12. The Father's House and the Family of Heaven.

Among my readers there may be many lonely, desolate ones. Perhaps years ago you may have known the cheerfulness of a happy home, but of late you have walked alone through life. Your lot is a solitary one. You seem to stand alone, like a pillar in the desert, on which every stormy wind beats. Neither parent nor child, brother nor sister — is near to speak a word of sympathy when you need it. But after all there is a bright side to this dark cloud. There is blue sky overhead, if you will only look for it. If you make the Lord your stay and confidence, and if your trust is in the saving name of Jesus — you are a child in the great family of Heaven, a citizen enrolled in the books of the celestial city; you are not a solitary traveler on the way to Zion, but journeying on side by side with a goodly host, and shall soon share with them the pleasures which are at God's right hand!

In these chapters we have seen much of the evil that mars the comfort and happiness of the home is appointed for us now. From within and from without, from God's chastening hand in sickness, and from numberless causes over which we have but little control — there comes perpetually something that disturbs and distresses us. But we must look beyond. What is lacking in the earthly home, may be found in the heavenly home. What our hearts have long yearned for in vain here below, may yet be found without alloy before the throne of God.

A few words addressed to the believing Hebrews show the lofty privileges and blessed fellowship which Christians possess. The inspired author contrasts the bright and cheery hopes of believers now, with the fear and dread that belonged to the earlier dispensation.

"But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." [Hebrews 12:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.22-24)

We are struck here with the bold, startling way in which the apostle puts forth the present standing of Christians. "You have come," he declares, "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God."

"But how can this be?" might believers ask. "Are we not still in the valley, struggling with our sins and temptations and sorrows? Are we not still in the valley of tears, the land of trouble and woe?"

"True," would the apostle reply; "but by virtue of your union with Christ, you are even now to be reckoned as sitting down in the heavenly places. In Him you are justified, in Him accepted, your name is in the books of the city, and He, your Forerunner, has already taken possession of it in your name."

But what is the Christian's home? Where shall the family be gathered together? The apostle describes it as "Mount Zion," "the heavenly Jerusalem," "the city of the living God."

It is the abode of purity and love. Sometimes we see a spot so fair, that we might imagine that the curse had been removed and that Eden had opened again its gates to the inhabitants of earth; but we find after a while that we have been mistaken. The presence of evil makes itself felt; and the strife of tongues, and sin abounding, soon make the vision vanish away. But within the Father's house, nothing can ever defile. Love reigns in every breast, and God wipes away every tear from the eye.

It is, moreover, the unchangeable city, the city of immortality. It is the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Man can build cities which may last for many centuries, and whose renown for beauty spreads far and wide — but what shall be the city whose foundation has been laid by God Himself, and which He has prepared for His own elect people?

Ah, believer, lift up your eye to that blessed abode of rest and joy. Now we dwell in homes which soon crumble into dust; but there is an abode which shall never be taken down. Now we dwell in a land where sin meets us at every turn — but that is an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. Now we dwell in cities and towns and villages of dying men and dying women, and we with them soon to lie side by side in our cemeteries and churchyards — but then our abode will be the city of the living God, where there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor death.

But let us now look at the glorious INHABITANTS of the heavenly city. We are told that there will be "an innumerable company of angels."

We read of angels as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister" in some way to God's people. We read of the Angel of the Lord encamping round about those who fear God, and having charge over them to keep them in all their ways. We read of angels accompanying the spirit of the believer to the world above. But as yet, while in these bodies of clay, our eyes are too dim to discern those who are thus mercifully sent to guard or assist us. But we shall see them by-and-by. We shall see ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of angels.

We often mourn that the ways of Zion are so unfrequented, and that so few are the pilgrims to the better land. But it is a joyful thought that perhaps for one we have lost on earth, we may find hundreds to take their place. It will be a blessed addition to the Church triumphant to meet with myriads of holy angels who have never known sin, and yet who are all joined with us under one Head, Jesus Christ our Lord.

But not only will the angels form a part of the great family gathered together hereafter, but redeemed sinners, pardoned sinners, those who once seemed the most unlikely to reach the heavenly Canaan.

Heaven is gathering in one by one into her capacious bosom, all the holy and excellent of the earth. From all Churches where Christ has been exalted as the sinner's only hope, from all congregations, from all cities and towns and villages — there come the Lord's children, made fit by Divine grace to sit down in the eternal kingdom.

Here comes a child out of an ungodly family, raised by a special manifestation of God's grace to be a witness for Christ amidst surrounding darkness. Here comes a whole family led on and trained for the kingdom by a devoted Christian parent. Here comes one who for years has been a stranger, a sufferer, living a life of bitter poverty among those who had no sympathy with her, nor shared her hope of coming glory. Here comes one in humble life, a faithful servant, who has used her one talent for the Master's glory, and whose holy, consistent life has left a savor of Christ wherever she has dwelt.

All these form part of that "church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven." These are those who are "the first fruits of earth unto God and the Lamb." These are those who have the birthright and the blessing of the Father's eternal love, heirs of His kingdom, and joint heirs with His dear Son. And as soon the burden of the flesh is laid aside, they are made at once, as to the spirit, perfect.

In this present life they are justified in Christ, sanctified and made righteous by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit — yet still troubled by manifold infirmities. But by-and-by it will be otherwise. We read of "the spirits of just men made perfect." No fears or doubts remaining, no evil in the flesh to be resisted, no assaults of the tempter to be overcome — but every imperfection subdued, and every soul perfected in the image of Christ.

But not only is there to be communion with God's people, but with the Lord Himself. We have come to "God the Judge of all."

"You have come" close in holy fellowship to Him who is the righteous King and Protector of His Church. In the upper kingdom we read of "the throne of God," and that "the glory of God lightens it." And though we may never be able to behold, even in eternity, the full light of the Father's presence — yet still we shall be nearer to Him than even before. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

And there is fellowship with the Savior. You are come "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."

Ah, it is the presence of Jesus which makes Heaven on earth — or Heaven above! Without His presence, all else would be in vain. Heaven would be no Heaven, were Jesus absent.

I have heard of a Christian being asked "what she would do in Heaven if Jesus were not there;" and the answer she made was that "she would ask them to let her out again." Yes; there might be the glorious city, there might be the home where none of earth's trials could ever enter, there might be the countless myriads of angels, and the hosts of the redeemed; but the sun of Heaven's glory would be dark, the light which should illumine the whole would be absent, if Jesus were not in the midst of His glorified Church.

And mark it, dear reader, here is the link that binds all together in the everlasting fellowship of love. How could fallen man ever be united to the holy Jehovah? How could sinners ever have communion and fellowship with the holy angels? Here is the link — even Jesus and His blood. God and angels and man, those yet in the flesh and those now delivered from the bondage of corruption, saints militant and saints triumphant — all are knit together in one blessed family, in one glorious fellowship, by Jesus and His precious blood.

Ah, come to the Savior, and so trust in Him that His precious blood may be sprinkled upon you, and speak to God on your behalf. Abel's blood cried for vengeance — but Christ's blood cries for mercy. It brings down mercy, pardon, salvation, and life eternal on every soul that is sprinkled with it.

If you wish to belong to the great family, the household of God, if you wish to share their glory and partake of their endless joy — then come then to Jesus without delay. He is the Mediator of the new covenant. God has laid up all its precious gifts in His hand — wisdom, righteousness, grace, and everlasting mercy — all these come to us through Him, and by no other channel. And the gracious and merciful Savior delights to welcome those who turn to Him.

A Swedish sailor was on the deep. The Holy Spirit had convinced him of sin, and he could not rest without the mercy for which he longed.

"I was ready to cry out, 'Who will deliver me — who will help me?' And my heart sunk down in despair. What a miserable sinner I felt I was! My heart was sick and sore. I knew not what to do. I had no one to guide me.

"One night I was standing by the helm; I thought of Christ, and my heart turned to Him for help. And with my very first thought of Him, He met me in His grace; and oh, what words of mercy and love I seemed to hear Him speak to me! Come to Me, you heavy laden one. Come to Me; I cast none out. I am meek and lowly of heart. Learn of Me. Take My yoke, it is easy. Take My burden — My grace shall make it light.'

"There at the wheel, the Savior showed Himself to me. I love Him now, because He first loved me. I cannot speak your language well; but Christ understands me, and I understand Him. And ever since I met Him at the helm, I live very close to Him. I hear Him tell me to hold up my sails to the gales of the blessed Spirit, and He will waft me straight to the heavenly land."

May every reader of these pages have the same blessed hope possessed by this sailor! May every day spent in any earthly house be a day of preparation for that Home which shall never be broken up!