

**J.R. Miller:**

No word is more frequently used by young people in these days than the word consecration. Indeed, it is used so frequently, and falls from the lips so glibly, that there is danger of its true meaning not being always appreciated. Precisely what do young Christians mean " or older ones when they talk about consecration? What effect has their act of consecration upon their life?

Consecration is personal devotement to God. By this act we profess to set ourselves apart for God and for God's service. We confess that we belong to Christ because he has bought us with a price; and we say that we recognize his ownership, and lay ourselves upon the altar for his use. If our act is sincere, we will regard all our life as belonging to him. Our hands are his, to be used in doing his work; and they must be kept clean for him, and do only worthy things. Our lips are his, to speak only for him, and words only that will please him. Our heart is his, to cherish only the affections, feelings, and motives which are consistent with his Spirit and his will. Our feet are his, to walk with God, and to run on his errands. Our money is his, to be used by us for him. Our whole life is his; we are not our own, and we are to live for the honoring and glorifying of Christ's name.

But precisely what does all this mean? The difficulty lies in bringing down this lofty ideal of consecration from its spiritual and ethereal heights, and interpreting it into the common life of our common days. We do not live among the stars; we live yet on the earth. We have to do with earthly things. The greater portion of our time is taken up with what we call secular work and duties. We must live in human relations, in our home, in society, mingling with people in business, in school, in amusements. How shall we carry out the principles of our consecration in this earthly life?

For one thing, we must live out the teachings of Christ in all that we do, in our daily life in the world, as well as in our relations with God.

If young people are at school, they must be diligent in their studies, and kindly and unselfish in all their relations with schoolmates and teachers. That is, they must be Christians at school.

In home life they must manifest, in all their relations with the members of their household, the affections and dispositions which are inspired by Christ. They must be thoughtful, kindly, patient, unselfish, not easily provoked, thinking no evil, ready in all ways and at all times to serve.

If they are employed in any business or calling, they must do the duties which are assigned to them with faithfulness and with alacrity, never taking advantage of kindness to shirk work, always honest and truthful, always patient and courteous.

In their social relations they must maintain the principles of Christianity, never forgetting, when they meet worldly or wicked people " that they belong to Christ, and are to live worthy of him.

This does not mean that they should be talking all the time about religion " there is a time to speak out boldly for Christ, and there is a time when silence, even concerning religious matters, is better than speech. But it means that they are never to do anything inconsistent with the Christian life, anything that would bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

A little girl, applying for membership in a church, when asked by the pastor what she thought it would be for her to be a Christian, replied: "I suppose it will be to do what Jesus would do, and to behave as Jesus would behave " if he were a little girl and lived at our house." There could be no better definition of a consecrated life. We are always to ask, "What would Jesus do?" and then try to do the same. A Christian is always a Christian, wherever he may go. He is never off duty. He always represents Christ. He must always strive to be what Jesus would be " and to do what Jesus would do in his place.

One of the most common weaknesses of much of our consecration, is the effort to grasp the thought in too large a way, to make the consecration once for all, rather than in detail. For example, each morning, as we begin the day, we may give ourselves to our Master just for the one little day. We may ask him to take us and keep us and use us.

We then take up our allotment of tasks for the day, feeling that it is Christ's work we are doing, and therefore that it is holy. It is just as much a part of our Christian duty, to learn a lesson in school, to sell goods in the store, to perform a duty in the office, to plough in the field, to sweep a room, or to cook a meal " as it was in

the early morning to go apart for prayer and Bible-reading. We are to regard all the tasks and duties of the day as holy, and as part of our consecrated life.

If, then, in the providence of God, there breaks into our plan for the day, interruptions â€” human needs, for example, which require sympathy, thought, time, or money â€” we are to regard these as fragments of service sent to us from God. They are bits of God's will breaking into our human plan; and we are to regard them as sacred, and do them cheerfully, even if they take our time and cost us trouble.

Living thus, holding our whole life to be used by the Master as he would use it, diligent in our business, losing no moment of time, we are to fill our day with tasks and duties, well and faithfully done. This is consecration. No other kind of living is worthy of the name. We cannot be always at prayer, or always reading our Bible; and it is a mistake to think that consecration has to do only with these spiritual acts and exercises. It has to do quite as much with the secularities of life, although, indeed, this spirit makes all our duties holy.

Even our amusements and our pleasures are to be considered part of our life of consecration. Therefore, nothing must be entered into which would dishonor Christ. We should go to no place which we would not be willing to have Christ see us entering. We should engage in no activity which would make us ashamed if his face were to appear in the doorway.

There is a too common impression that nothing is Christian, except what is essentially religious in its form. Thus many people fail to carry their consecration outside the church and the prayer-meeting. They are very devout in their feeling and manner while the church service lasts â€” but fail to live devoutly when the service is over, and they are mingling again with their fellows.

We should remember that consecration is not a matter of feeling â€” but of disposition, of conduct, of character, of words and deeds. If, therefore, it is something only for a holy place, or for a sacred service, which fades from our face and life when we go out, it is not genuine. Consecration is not a feeling â€” it is a life.

It is never encouraging to see people put on an unusual solemnity of manner in an effort to be consecrated Christians. There are some good young men and women who seem to think that consecration should make them grave and somber. They talk in solemn, unnatural tones. They are oppressed with a kind of spiritual self-consciousness, which makes them anything but lovely or lovable Christians in the eyes of other people. They may be thoroughly sincere; but their assumption of sanctity, as it appears in their bearing, makes them very imperfect representatives of Christ. It even leads some people to suspect the genuineness of their religion. Thus, instead of honoring Christ by a goodness which is beautiful as well as true â€” they hurt their influence as Christians.

Religion should be natural; anything that is unnatural is un-Christlike. "Whatever things are lovely" is one of Paul's phrases describing the ideal Christian life. Sanctimoniousness is very unlovely. People who put on holy airs, imagining that thus they are proving themselves consecrated, are only showing their religious self-conceit. Simplicity is a mark of all beautiful Christian life. Moses was not aware of the shining of his face. The truest, most divine goodness, is never conscious of itself.

True consecration does not require that a child's religion shall be that of the full-grown man or woman. One of the dangers of a young Christian's life is in this direction. He is apt to take his ideal from older Christians, and to imitate them. We know what happens if we try to open a rosebud and hasten its unfolding; we only spoil the bud, and hinder it from ever becoming a lovely rose. It is the same when a young Christian tries to be a grown-up Christian. The charm of the young Christian character is spoiled, and the life is so hurt, that it will never be what it might have been, if it had been left to develop naturally.

Consecration in young Christians, therefore, means the beautifying, enriching, and sanctifying of their youth. Jesus himself waited thirty years in quiet, before he entered upon his public ministry. His consecration led him to obey his parents, to help in the carpenter shop, and to do the common duties that came to his hands. There can be no higher example for any young Christians. They are to do the duties that belong to their age, thus preparing themselves for the more serious responsibilities and tasks of maturer years.