

As a Child

Matthew 18:2-5- “And after calling a little child to *Him*, Jesus set him in their midst, And said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, there is no way that you shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore, whoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name receives Me.”

I have always loved this scripture as it truly exemplifies the conduct God desires of us. It is a simple image of how God wants us to approach Him in our seeking His truth, guidance, and the understanding of His Word. He wants that “childlike” innocence. We can see this demonstration every Sabbath as the little ones are running around the study area and then off to their room for their Bible lessons. There are over 3200 verses in the Bible that use the word child or children.

I actually used Webster’s Dictionary definition for child as it seemed the most fitting. They defined “child” as: a young person of *either sex*, especially one between infancy and youth, hence one who exhibits the characteristics of a very young person, as innocence, obedience, trustfulness, limited understanding, etc.

When we approach God in our studies, Bible readings, and prayers, do we do so in the same childlike manner? Or do we, as some, read simply thinking it is a fairy tale or with a challenging attitude that we know more of what God's Word actually says?

I love the photo we have of little Emma looking up on our website. I doubt you can find a better example of looking up with innocence. That is the contrite heart and spirit that is in a little child that God so desires us to have toward Him. We see how the "know-it-alls" fare with this attitude in their false devotion and puffed-up attitudes. Most of the TV preachers validate this observation by their bragging on "how many years I have been in the word" and how much scripture they can spew without living a word of it. Maybe they have a mega church and a great music show to entertain their attendees but they will not receive any of God's Truth.

1 Corinthians 3:18-20- "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God's sight*. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God for it is written, "He entraps the wise in their own craftiness." And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Pride will always overtake the humble attitude if we let it.

Jesus also emphasized the parallel between children and His Kingdom.

Matthew 19:13-14- “Then little children were brought to Him, so that He might lay *His* hands on them and pray *for them*; but the disciples rebuked *those who brought* them. But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

To make sure we get a grasp on this scripture it is critical to know the meaning and its use of every word. “Such” is the word to pay attention to as it signifies the common characteristics of children (innocence, trustful, obedience) and that of His Kingdom.

Jesus adds a warning in Mark 10.

Mark 10:13-15- “Then they brought little children to Him so that He might touch them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. And after seeing it, Jesus was indignant, and said to them, “Allow the little children to come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall in no way enter into it.”

This is a scripture that could be another essay for “Cut and Paste Christianity” as “no way enter” is misconstrued to mean a destination. “When we act like a child

we'll go to God's Kingdom" which will further fragment into a trip up to heaven.

Wrong!

The fitting definition for Kingdom I found in the Free Dictionary as: "the Spiritual Sovereignty of God and Jesus Christ and the realm of Their dominion or rule."

This covers the entire universe and is not limited to just the Third Heaven. So, to be brief, to *receive* God's Kingdom like a child simply means to *welcome* God's Power, Control and Authority with the innocence and obedience of a child.

If we are puffed up with pride and arrogance, we will in no way be fortunate enough to fully understand God's Word and His Way of life. It is not rocket science but we all know we live by EVERY word that proceeds out of the Mouth of God. Knowing the meanings of such simple words and how they are used will shed light and provide understanding.

Luke 9:48- "And said to them, "Whoever shall receive this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever shall receive Me receives Him Who sent Me. For the one who is least among you all shall be great." So much emphasis is on our attitudes in how we seek God in our hearts.

Luke 18:16-17- "But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Permit the little children to come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I

say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall in no way enter into it.”

I am sure we all understand these scriptures and the character God desires of us.

We see “child” used many times throughout the Bible as we are referred to as “the children” of God and we will become the sons of God.

1 John 3:2- “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is.”

Matthew 5:9- “Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God.”

Acts 17:28- “For in Him we live and move and have our being; as some of the poets among you also have said, ‘For we are His offspring.’”

And if we are His children, we will become His Heirs.

Romans 8:14-17- “For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the*

children of God. Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him.”

Galatians 4:6-7- “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, “Abba, Father.” So then, you are no longer a servant, but a son. And if a son, *you are* also an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 3:26- “Because you are all offspring of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Revelation 21:7- “The one who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.”

As a parent, we strive to teach and instruct our children to seek wisdom. We desire the best for them just as God desires His best for us. Providing a foundation for wisdom is critical to our little ones.

Proverbs 1:8- “My son, hear the instruction of your father and forsake not the law of your mother,”

Proverbs 4:10- “Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of your life *shall be* many.”

Proverbs 4:20- “My son, attend to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.”

Proverbs 2:1-5- “My son, if you will receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding; Yea, if you cry after knowledge *and* lift up your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver and search *for* her as for hidden treasures, Then you shall understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.”

Proverbs 3:1-2- “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments; For they shall add length of days, and long life, and peace, to you.”

Just as we teach our children, God is teaching His. He is speaking to us, through His scriptures. His words have promises attached that will be fulfilled ***if*** we are obedient. When we were young, most of us were taught some form of fearing God. Perhaps it was the Catholic “everything is a sin” guilt trip or “the bad man is going to get you” as my mom and grandmom so often said. But this type of fear is misplaced and incorrect. We are to have a reverent fear of God, a respect for His radiance, power and majesty.

Psalm 34:10-11- “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing. Come, hearken to me, you children; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”

Psalm 103:13- “As a father has compassion upon his children, so the LORD has compassion upon those who fear Him,”

When we learn this reverence, we come to a place of wanting to please God in every aspect of our walk with Him.

As with teaching our children, we must include discipline. Discipline does not always involve punishment and punishment is not abuse. So many parents nowadays are afraid to discipline their children. They expect the state to raise them. Kids have run amok and behave without consequence.

I remember one incident when Robbie and Kristin were little, we used to go to the neighborhood pool in the afternoons. Other dads and their kids were there as well. I am sure we have all seen the parents who say “don’t make me tell you again” thirty times to some bratty kid who never once ceases from the bad behavior. The incident I am sharing was one such dad who was conducting the repeated threat of “don’t make me tell you again” when his son hauled off and smacked him right in

the face, knocking his glasses off! The dad's only response was "now that was uncalled for."

Proverbs 13:24- "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him."

Robbie can probably agree that I would have held the kid under until the bubbles stopped. If we truly love our children, would not we want to stop bad behavior that may end up getting them hurt?

Proverbs 29:17- "Correct your son, and he shall give you rest; yea, he shall give delight to your soul."

As we correct our own children, God too will correct His when we get out of line.

Proverbs 3:11-12- "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be weary of His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, even as a father *corrects* the son *in whom* he delights."

Hebrews 12:6-9- "For whom *the* Lord loves He chastens, and He severely disciplines every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God is dealing with you as *a Father* with *His* sons. For who is the son whom *the* Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you

are bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had our fleshly fathers who chastened *us*, and we respected *them*; should we not all the more *willingly* be subject to the Father of spirits, and live *forever*?”

Age is but a number. Most of us are still kids at heart and refuse to grow old gracefully. Acting one's age can be difficult as I have yet to find the manual on 66. I think I have been stuck at 12 for 54 years now. But there comes a time when we must grow up in certain aspects.

1 Corinthians 13:11- “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I set aside the things of a child.”

This does not mean we put on the coat of arrogance or turn our nose upward because we have achieved a milestone in our lives. You can have accomplished many significant things in your life and still be an idiot. Just look at Hollywood and Washington, D.C.

While our mental state may have surpassed the third grade as the years pile on, we must not become haughty in certain attitudes.

1 Corinthians 14:20- “Brethren, do not be children in *your* minds; however, in *regard to* malice be babes, but in *your* minds be fully mature.”

When we grow in our relationship with God, growing in the likeness of His Son, we will come to that place of spiritual maturity and maintain the humble, child-like attitude. We will be able understand and to apply His word with clarity.

As our children are blessings to us, we too can become the apple of His eye.

Psalms 17:8- “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings”

And grandchildren? Blessings upon blessings.

Proverbs 17:6- “Children’s children *are* the crown of old men, and the glory of children *are* their fathers.”

To become His child, we must have the innocence, trustfulness, and obedience in our character. It will require our best efforts. It is not just something that saying a “sinner’s prayer” will receive nor is it something that we are entitled to. We could never earn it. Our salvation, sonship, and inheritance were paid for with the costliest price ever paid, the life of our Savior Jesus Christ. Nine to ninety, no matter how old we are, by His shed blood we have access to become the children of God. We will never walk in darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5:5- “*For* you are all children of *the* light and children of *the* day;
we are not of *the* night, nor of *the* darkness.”

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