

GNITN

#455

The Secret of Childlike Faith

The Faith Of A Child

For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me. (Matt 2-5, MSG)

In this passage of Matthew's account of the life of Jesus, He made a point about to contrast the kind of faith that the religious leaders had and what kind of faith gets you closer to God. In **Matthew 17** the disciples heard their teacher talk about the faith of a mustard seed among other things, and then He uses children to make the point. Mind you, at this point in His ministry, Jesus had access to all the knowledge He had before He laid it aside to grow up like one of the children He talked about. He befuddled those with a religious spirit at every turn, leaders who studied the Bible daily and debated about it over, and over, and over again. Some would say they literally should have known better when Jesus was right in front of them, but their "faith" betrayed them to the point that Jesus became a threat to them and they had to kill Him. Jesus tried to tell them the error of their ways and in this illustration He at least told His disciples how to defeat the thinking that they were better because they knew Jesus who the apostle John said that there was no way to write all the things He did and said even if they had the largest library ever (see **John 21:25**).

What Is Childlike Faith?

As I meditated on what I should teach on now, I was struck by how many very learned people I noticed that were suddenly turning away from what they earnestly believed in all their lives. It was like they somehow were deceived all that time and there was some new revelation about say, the Rapture or speaking in tongues. How foolish they were to even entertain such silliness and now, it all makes sense to them. Their view of Kingdom theology is now more nuanced and mature and they see the truth they missed up until now. Some even start their refutation of these doctrines by asking their hearers to tell them something they used to do or say that now they laugh at now. Inevitably, the answers they give center on things that seem foolish to those in the world. In an attempt to be the smartest people in the room, they belittle things that are crucial to surviving in these last of the last days. End-time faith requires that one hold on to the core teachings that got the three Hebrew boys through their trial of faith, that allowed Daniel to endure a long night with hungry lions or kept Noah on track when he had to build an ark in place where it had never rained. Abraham's faith meant going through the process of sacrificing the son of promise simply because God told him to do it. And now we're being told that preparing for an event like the Rapture is foolhardy and ridiculous and praying in a language we never learned which allowed even the Apostle Paul to withstand pressures you and I most likely have never experienced. Rather than think our way out of the essentials, we should welcome these kingdom bedrocks just as Jesus wanted us to welcome the least of these in His day.

A Possible Misunderstanding

When Jesus told a parable or gave a hard saying to people, the actual point got lost in translation. And in the case of this example, many people missed the main point to develop ones that were never meant by Jesus. Here, we make a rather easy point hard by over analyzing how children act when they're young and take the good points and reject the bad ones. Some even talk about new believers as if they go through the growing phases of children as they live out their Christian walk. I've heard people look at immature behavior in young believers like "oh, they going through the terrible twos" because they've only been a Christian for two years. The attitude mentioned in these instances in the Gospels are meant to help us continue to welcome the doctrines we learned "growing up" as a child accepts what they are told when young. I like how Bible teacher *Philip T. Morrow* breaks it down for us in an [article](#) on the topic:

The next statement from Jesus is a really big deal. We can tell because he made a habit of fronting some of his best one-liners with Amēn [Amēn] lego humin, "Truly [truly] I say to you . . ." So whenever we hear this, we ought to know that whatever comes next is front and center of the dialogue. And here, it's a pretty scary warning: "Whoever would not welcome the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

*You may have noticed that this time, I used the word "welcome" instead of "receive." They're about equally valid translations of the Greek *dexētai*, with their main difference in English being that "receive" is slightly more passive (an experience that happens to us), whereas "welcome" is active (a thing we choose to do). In English, you can accidentally, or passively, "receive" all kinds of things, but you have to actively choose to "welcome" something or someone. *Dexētai* can be used in both ways, and it just so happens that Mark tells us another story that focuses on the active idea of this word; the same story that guided Origen's reading of this one.*

Did you get that? These kingdom principles and teachings are to be actively "welcomed" not passively "received."

Ask Questions, Though

Some of the most profound reveals in the life of Jesus are when people didn't understand something and asked for clarification. In fact, in prophecy it was when the disciples wanted to know more about when the end of the age would be and He told them with vivid examples still talked about today. It's alright to be inquisitive when it comes to understanding the Bible. However, if we start to try and fill in our understanding gaps with things that take us away from the essentials we may not lose out on our faith, but we just might live out that faith with less power and effectiveness than intended. And when it comes to prophecy, simpler is almost always better no matter how counterintuitive it feels. Yes, dig deeper, but don't "discover" truths that make you move farther away from things that were easy to grasp earlier in your faith. Let the added information build your faith and not deconstruct it. Holy Spirit will keep you on track if you let Him. In the aspect of being like a child in your view of the kingdom I think the example of a child taking the instructions given them and running with them is a good idea. We just need to make sure that the basics are sound. If you're building on sound teachings you will not end up having to start the building process all over again. Unfortunately there are respected teachers who are seemingly talking themselves out of sound doctrine by questioning what they had right to begin with and rather than strengthening their beliefs, they tear them down and start over again.

We Can Disagree As Well

At this point I want to say that in my study of revivals they usually end when unity is destroyed. People get up in arms about signs and wonders or the kind of people attracted to the church when Jesus is lifted up. Things that can be only a matter of style and not substance and can be handled by everyone agreeing that we can all have differences in how God moves in and through us keep the door to be open to new things and not be divided over it. I know churches there were on the cusp of exploding and didn't because people starting coming to the services that were different in their approach to learning about God and they were criticized and not welcomed for it. Because of them being belittled, a lot of churches were started by these discarded believers when they could have grown stronger together. On the other hand John Wesley saw signs and wonders in his revival meetings that made George Whitfield uncomfortable and rather than the two parting ways over it, Whitfield saw that there was nothing wrong with people reacting to Holy Spirit moving differently and actually embraced them as Wesley had done. Because of this, the two saw much more success and the awakening spread as God upset the norms of a stagnant and stale church. I think we can put up with people that are now talking about different views on the Rapture and being Pentecostal because as long as we realize that neither views will keep us from being saved and going to Heaven. It is when one side accuses the other of being demonic for their beliefs and that they are going to hell because of them that a line is crossed. I usually tell someone that doesn't believe in a pre-trib Rapture or a Rapture at all that we'll have a good time in Heaven no matter how we both get there.