

A CHILDLIKE FAITH

Luke 18:15-17

"People were bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"

Children are fragile. Handle with care!

Like the delicate Christmas present, they need a sign hung on them: "Fragile. Handle with care!"

Our Lord loved little children, He gave them top priority in His ministry, and dealt with them gently.

Many do not.

The statistics on child abuse both physical and sexual are alarming.
Perhaps more subtle, but just as violent and much more prevalent,
is emotional abuse.

- 200,000 children are physically abused each year.
- 60,000-100,000 are sexually abused
- 15-20% of American families abuse their children physically or sexually (and that doesn't take into account emotional abuse victims!).
- 2/3 of all child abuse occurs with children under 4 years of age (1/3 under 6 mos.!).
- The #1 killer of children under 5 is child abuse.
- 4,000 children die annually because of child abuse (reported cases—unreported cases estimated to be 50,000).
- Child abusers are found in every level of society, including religious people. Even in "Christian" homes, the numbers are alarming—not all that different!

Those are just the statistics on physical abuse!

They don't include the emotional damage parents cause.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me!"

I wish that were true.

Parents harsh words DO hurt.

They cause irreparable damage to children.

The injuries don't show on the outside; they wound inside.

Children show an incredible ability to bounce back but if they continually hear they are stupid, lazy, or worthless,
it eventually sinks in and does its dirty work.

Children need to feel loved and lovable.

Our Lord wants to communicate that message to children.

He loves kids and wants them to understand His love for them.

As His representatives, it's our responsibility to communicate that message to them.

"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world."

Will they learn that from us?

CONCERNING ENTRANCE TO THE KINGDOM 18:15-30

Two incidents are described through which Jesus speaks to His disciples about requirements to enter the kingdom.

DEPENDENCE ON THE FATHER 18:15-17

Access to the kingdom of God is for those who have a childlike dependence on their Father.

When the disciples rebuke those who bring children to Jesus and interrupt His "more important" activities, He uses the occasion to teach them that **access to the kingdom of God is for those who have a childlike dependence on God.**

THE PARENTS' ACTION 18:15a

People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them.

"Babies" is used to describe infants from fetus to toddlers (even bear cubs!)

They bring their children to Jesus, so He might touch them.

What did they expect from Him? We don't know.

Some may have been ill.

Whatever they're hoping to accomplish, they come to Him and place their children in His arms.

They demonstrate trust and acceptance.

To place our child in the arms of another shows trust.

It's like the small child who places a favorite toy in the hands of a guest.

It shows you've arrived in that child's eyes. [Our granddaughter, Abi]

The parents show trust and acceptance!

THE DISCIPLES' REACTION 18:15b

"When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them."

The disciples see this as an interruption—an intrusion on His time.

They seek to turn the parents away.

They (lit.) "*give them what they have coming*"! = to censure or bawl out (< to show honor to, raise the price, mete out due measure)

They censure them for their action.

The disciples chase them away.

They have "more important" business to see to than to care for children.

Children are too insignificant to take up our Lord's time.

They aren't following Him in order to watch Him babysit!

The disciples don't realize the implications of that attitude.

How does God see *any* human, adult or child, powerful or weak?

We're *all* like grasshoppers in His sight.

How does He have time for any of us?

David expresses the proper perspective in Psalm 8; When he considers the greatness of God, he asks:

"What's man that you remember him? ... that you care for him?"

If the disciples had understood that perspective they'd never have tried to shoo off the children due to *their* insignificance!

JESUS' RESPONSE 18:16a *"But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,'"*

Jesus calls the children to him
and corrects the disciples.

Jesus loves the children and is responsive
to the faith of the parents who brought them to Him.

***Jesus' followers are to let the children come to Him;
not hinder them.***

"Let them come to me." "Stop hindering them."

The reason:

JESUS' MESSAGE 18:16b-17 *"for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

There's an issue here about giving time to children; not rejecting them.

No work is more Christlike and none more blessed than the care of little ones that Jesus loved!

Nurture of children, bringing them up in fear of the Lord and in love, is a priority. It's a supreme need of the times in which we live.

Too often we take the disciples' attitude: we have more important matters to see to.

"We have to sit at the Master's feet and soak up His teaching ourselves.

Send the children home! As long as they leave *us* alone.

We have to learn about God."

Jesus says, "Bring them to me!" Who will do that?

We're only authentic servants of Jesus when we make a commitment to give time to children, to teach them to love and follow Him!

God doesn't call everyone to that ministry. But He does call some.

Too many are too busy doing other things, including sitting in church, listening for ourselves, when a higher priority needs to be given to gathering children and teaching them to follow Jesus!

We need to learn the importance of ministry to children.

We won't have the ministry God intends us to have unless we give proper priority to children's ministry. To bring children to Jesus!

That's *not* the point of the incident, but it *is* true!

And it *is* part of the message of this passage!

Main lesson Jesus wants to teach us: fundamental principle concerning entrance into His kingdom.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS MADE UP OF PEOPLE LIKE THEM. 18:16b *"for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."*

Disciples think they should be dealing with "more important" people.

This is GOD's business!

JESUS WANTS US TO BE LIKE CHILDREN. 18:17 *"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

What does that mean?

CHILDREN ARE DEPENDENT AND TRUSTING

An unspoiled child illustrates trust and dependence.

They have to depend on their parents for the basic necessities of life.

Small children believe that their mom or their dad, can do anything!

Their teacher knows everything!

Sometimes I wonder whatever happened to that simple trust.

Adults are suspicious by nature.

We've learned there's "no such thing as a free lunch."

So when somebody offers us something, we're naturally suspicious.
to know "what's the catch?"

We always want

We don't trust anybody!

Small children aren't like that.

They have to *learn* to be suspicious.

CHILDREN ARE ENTHUSIASTIC AND EXCITED

Have you noticed how little it takes to entertain a child?

One of the greatest frustrations parents face at Christmas is that small children don't always respond to the best gifts.

We buy an expensive toy, and they leave it sit and play with the box, or with the gift wrap!

They haven't learned how expensive presents have to be before we can enjoy them!

They're content with the simple things God provides.

They haven't lost the wonder of it all.

They aren't inhibited.

They're spontaneous

They're curious about everything

We have to *learn* to "calm down" and not be so exuberant!

It isn't until later in life that we learn how grey life can be and begin to get tired of it all.

Every bit of good news becomes tainted by some negative thought.

Things just can't be that good.

We're more comfortable with the negative, critical spirit, than with the child's zest and enthusiasm for life, and enjoyment of the simple things God has given to us.

Being childlike means that we can receive God's unconditional love with spontaneous and enthusiastic gratitude.

We can say "Thank you!"

We're not suspicious and doubtful.

We just take God at His Word.

Jesus indicates that children, in their simplicity and unpretentious trust represent the essence of the kingdom.

It's made up of people like them!

WHAT LESSONS DOES GOD WANT US TO LEARN FROM THIS INCIDENT?

● ***IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN***

It's important that we pray for our children and teach them about Jesus while they're still children and still ready to receive His invitation to come to Him.

● ***IMPERATIVE OF BECOMING LIKE THEM***

Whoever doesn't become like them, will never get into the kingdom.

The great and mighty, the rich and powerful, will never make it.

There are too many obstacles in their path.

God has chosen the simple, so that He gets all the honor and glory.

Some of you say, "I feel so ignorant.

There's so much to learn about Him, and I have learned so little."

That's just the point.

Children have little, but they're eager to learn more.

Are you childlike? Are you simple? Be of good cheer!

Of such is the kingdom of God!

H. A. Ironside said, "*That used to trouble me.*

*I knew I was saved, yet when I came to that verse I used to wonder if I had qualified in this way:
I'm not a child; I'm not as innocent as a little child;*

*I have not the same hopeful attitude toward life as little children.
How can I, a sinner by practice, ever get back to the comparative purity and goodness of a little child?*

Then I noticed that "Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them and said, 'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children . . . "

He called and the child came.

That's what He means . . .

It's when we heed His blessed call

and come to Him in unquestioning faith that we enter the kingdom..

Think about that. He calls adults and they are too busy.

Too many commitments call for our attention.

A small child comes.

The people of that generation didn't respond to His call and come.

The children did.

He called and they came.

It's not the proud recital of virtues, like the Pharisee,

that opens the door to the kingdom,

but rather, the whole-hearted trust of the child.

It's totally impossible to get in, except in the way that a child receives the kingdom:

TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON THE FATHER.

Statistics reveal that the largest percentage of people who trust Christ do it during childhood.

The older we become, the less likely it is that we will turn to Him.

We become set in our ways, and hardened in our opposition.

It becomes too late.

Children stand the best chance of turning to Him,

while they still look to Him with fresh and open minds.

Make me, O Lord, a child again, So tender, frail and small,

In self possessing nothing, and In thee possessing all.

O Savior, make me small once more, That downward I may grow,

And in this heart of mine restore The faith of long ago.

With thee may I be crucified--No longer I that lives--

O Savior, crush my sinful pride By grace which pardon gives.

Make me, O Lord, a child again, Obedient to thy call,

In self possessing nothing, and In thee possessing all.