

Childish Things

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[0:00] I want to talk about childish things. Childish things. I think every real Christian wants to know how can I grow spiritually?

! How can I grow spiritually? How can I know stronger faith?! I'd like to think that everyone here would like to be a strong Christian. Maybe you think you already are one. That's a good thing. Strong faith. Strong conviction. Strong resolve to be growing, to be maturing, to be thriving as we progress along that road to Christian maturity.

As it says in Hebrews 6 verse 1, in part it says, let us go on to perfection. Let us go on. It's as if it's a roadway. There's a progressive unfolding. A walk. A heading towards perfection. Towards a maturity. A speaking of full growth. Of maturing.

But for some reason, for some sad reason, there's roadblocks on this roadway to perfection.

There's roadblocks on this road to Christian growth in people's lives.

People are blocked from beginning to be all that they can be. From becoming what God wants them to be. The enemy of our souls would like to keep God's people in a kind of spiritual babyhood.

[1:28] I know I've heard another brother talk about spiritual grey-haired babies. And it's true. I'm grey and hopefully I'm not a baby still, spiritually. But we all know that we're lacking. We all know we could do more. We all know we could grow more.

But the enemy would like to keep Christians in a perpetual state of babyhood. Spiritual babyhood. And that churches will be just some kind of nursery or perpetual childcare centre for such people. And that the pastors will run around listening for the next squeal or squawk to put the pacifier in, the dummy in. Attending to every squeal. Satisfying every demand. Pampering, fussing, especially those who want and demand immediate attention.

Changing nappies. Soothing, supplying the baby powder. It sounds like Brad's house and Phil's house at the moment. The sippy cups. The teddy bears and the dolls and the blankets. Wiping the noses. The pastor giving them a rattle or a toy to play with at the appropriate time. Dealing with the squabbles and the infighting and the pettiness.

And cleaning up all the accidents that happen with such things, with such babies. It's happening, people. It's happening in churches all around the world today.

[2:52] There's a problem of a lack of spiritual maturity. In churches, in Christians, where we have perpetual spiritual babies. Never growing Christians. Never growing. When will they grow up?

The answer from the Bible is clear. In 1 Corinthians 13 verse 11. 1 Corinthians 13 verse 11. Paul says, When I was a child, I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Now, a question for you. Are you growing up or just getting older? You know, there's some old people. There's some more elderly people that I know that are still big spiritual babies.

I want to talk about childish things. Childish things. Childishness, it's a problem. Spiritual immaturity is a problem. Immature Christians. Immature Christians speaking as a child, thinking as a child, understanding as a child.

Paul tells us, I put away childish things. We need a mature faith to deal with the challenges that confront us. We need to be growing in God, in Christ, in faith, in our homes, in our churches, and putting away the childish ways.

[4:21] Fact is, some Christians have never graduated from the nursery. Some Christians have never graduated from the nursery. What are the childish things?

What are the childish things? There's some characteristics that I want to put to you today of immaturity. The characteristics of those who are immature that we could do well to put away.

And three areas I'd like to mention. Three areas. The self, the senses or sensuality, and thirdly, the area of stickability.

Three areas of spiritual immaturity. Firstly, the problem of self. It's the me generation that we're living in. Selfish, self-focused, rather than showing humility.

Humility goes against our human nature. It's God's nature. We would naturally rather be like the Pharisees, blowing the trumpet.

[5:30] Do-do-do-do-do. Every little good thing that we do. Look at me. People who are immature are self-centered. Self-centered. They want to be served rather than to serve.

A baby. Think of it. A baby delights in being the center of attention. You know, oh, look at the baby. Goo, gar. Oh, look at that. They like that, aren't they? They just love it.

And we just love to give them that attention too. But if someone else is receiving attention, then the baby starts to notice that. And they get a bit upset. They start to make a few noises. And Christians can be like that too.

You know, the baby wants to have the attention. I spake as a child, Paul says. What do undisciplined children sound like? Give me, give me, give me.

No, you see them down there at the shopping center. Don't you? Ah! Give me, give me, give me. I want, I want. That's mine in the playground. You know, they're selfish, aren't they?

[6:30] Sometimes undisciplined children can be like that. Prone to tantrums, selfishness. And when they get amongst themselves without too much supervision, they start to slap and pull hair and kick and poke and punch and argue and scream.

And often it's a case of engaging mouth before brain. Christians can be immature. Just like that. Hopefully not too many slapping and pulling hair and kicking and so on.

But they can be unthinking. Christians can be unthinking and petty and arrogant. They can be harsh and cruel with their words. They can be gossips. And people can judge a church by such unthinking and thoughtless words that people use.

I speak as a child. People have been put off our church here because of such careless words. Let's face it. Because people can be selfish.

People can be selfish. They come to church with a bad attitude and they put others off and want others to get grumpy like them. Selfishness. Babies can be very selfish.

[7:38] They can get upset over the smallest things. They throw tantrums. You know, see them in the shops. Jumping up and down, screaming and yelling. They throw tantrums when they don't get what they want.

Christians could be just like that. They throw tantrums. They could be immature. People who are immature are selfish. They'll often be irresponsible as we read in Proverbs 25, verse 28.

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls. No rule over their own spirit. The immature can be undisciplined and without control.

They don't take rebuke. Well, selfishness, isn't it? It's self. We've all got to fight it. Me too. We've all got to fight selfishness. The self-centered way of thinking.

A self-directed kind of life. We've got to guard against that. People, all of us have to. These are the qualities and characteristics of childish ways, of immaturity.

[8:39] Paul says, I put away childish things. The self. Number one, the self is one characteristic. Another characteristic of immaturity, of those who are immature, is in the area of the senses.

The area of the senses of sensuality. Sensuality. What do the immature need? The immature needs to be entertained. Not only do they say, gimme, gimme, gimme.

They say, entertain me. Entertain me. Some Christians are like that. Some churches feed that. Where their faith rests on how they feel, rather than, thus saith the Lord.

The scriptures. In churches today, they're catering for this. Where pulpits become stages for entertainment. Where preachers fall into the trap of being entertainers, rather than messengers of the truth of God.

The word amusement is interesting. Amusement. It comes from muse. Muse. It means to meditate or think. With an a in front of it, which means non.

[9:44] So amusement means not meditating or thinking. Amusement means no think. So where a church is geared for amusement, it's no wonder God's truth is lacking there.

The people are no longer challenged by God's truth. Because it's a sensuality, it's a sense-driven kind of fellowship. And immaturity is seen in this gearing for the senses, this gearing for sensuality, where people feel they want to be feelings-centered.

And when their feelings get hurt, they get upset and complain and get detoured. They get fleshly and pout. Babies are very sensitive, and their feelings are easily hurt.

When things don't go their way, what do the baby do? They whine, they cry, they pout, they sob. I'm sure yours don't, but some do. And they throw tantrums. Yes, and Christians too.

They get offended. But Psalm 119 says, Great peace of they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them. Psalm 119, verse 165.

[10:50] That's my dad's memory verse. You know, he's still learning too. He's almost perfect. But no, the sensuality. Is it the senses that drive us, or is it the scriptures that drive us?

Another aspect of this sensuality is this obsession with the senses, with an accumulation of toys. How many Christians are likewise distracted by the toys and trinkets of the world?

Preoccupied with the toys and things of the world, so much that they don't value the things of God as highly as they ought. And because they are senses driven, they're not scripture driven.

They're not going beyond the ABCs. They're a bunch of spiritual babies. We've got to guard against that. People, saints of God today. Another thing about children and their senses, is that they can be insensitive to danger.

You know, I was just at a birthday party yesterday, and there was a little child with his dad there, her dad, and she wanted to keep running out onto the road, because they lived across the road.

[11:57] And immaturity in children can be seen in an insensitivity to danger. A lack of road sense.

It's something that you learn through life, hopefully. And in the church, there are dangerous doctrines and teachings. Many Christians are ignorant of the devil's devices, just like a child who lacks road sense, because their senses have not been exercised.

So, someone put it like this. Here's a quote. Just so you know, it's not me having a go at you. It's someone else saying this. A baby never ceases to whimper and cry for things.

He's hungry, so you feed him. Then he's tired, so you give him a nap. Then he wakes up with a wet nappy. You change the nappy, then he wants to play. You refuse to play, so he cries.

Then he's hot. Then he's cold. This is what Joshua and Sophia got to look for. Then he bumps his head. A baby is just never satisfied. Never satisfied. It goes on.

[13:05] Many of God's people are like this. They whimper about everything. The preacher preaches too long. He didn't shake your hand today. He didn't smile at you. Sally's dress is nicer than your dress.

George's wife is prettier than your wife. Doesn't old Fred know that he's sitting in your pew? By the way, he authorised that new wallpaper. No one consulted your opinion. Our churches are filled with this kind of never-ending nagging and murmuring.

While the mature Christians are studying, praying, working or winning souls, the murmuring little babies are being used of Satan to hinder and frustrate the real work of the ministry.

Numbers 11.1 it says, And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord. God's displeased with murmuring, with whiny Christians.

Paul says, I understood as a child. Christians who are immature, who are sensuality-driven or centred, will lack the understanding, the discernment that comes from the Word of God and obeying it.

[14:08] Believer, watch out that it's not your senses that lead you, not how you feel that drives you, but you're developing a godly understanding of life that's led by the Scriptures.

It's led by the Spirit of God. And so we see the immature, marked by self. The ego, the number one. The self.

Marked by the senses, by sensuality, by feelings, by wanting your needs met. And the third one I'd like to mention, another characteristic of those who are immature, is in the area of stickability.

Stickability. The immature do not have endurance or stability. Immaturity is giving up when things get difficult. Those who are mature will have perseverance.

It's a faith that will go the distance. Gold standard faith. That will pass the test of patience. Maturity will see things through. No matter what.

[15:09] No matter what the opposition. No matter what the inconvenience. No matter what the setbacks. Maturity will make a decision and stand strong and stick with it.

Proverbs 24.10 it says, If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. Don't faint in the day of adversity. Dig deep.

Dig deep when that happens. Children can be very changeable and inconsistent. They often can run from responsibility. You know? Ask for a volunteer and everybody looks at their feet.

You know? We don't do that in this church, do we? Children can be very changeable and inconsistent. They can often run from responsibility. And they can't finish a job.

They can't finish a job. God calls his own people to be men and women of convictions. What does it say in 1 Corinthians 15? Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

[16:08] For as much as you know that, your labour is not in vain in the Lord. God wants us to be growing. Growing towards maturity. In that faith, that walk with Christ.

It's 1 Corinthians 16.13 it says, Watch you stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. In other words, act like men. Be strong. When I became a man, I put away childish things.

What we're talking about here is discipleship. Discipleship. The immature are undisciplined. They have a lack of knowledge. They have an unteachable nature.

They're unwilling to listen from an open Bible. The mature can be corrected. The mature will seek out godly company and fellowship. Proverbs 13.20 it says, He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

It's biblical discipleship. I know we long for that. I know there's many zealous for that. And we all need to be, ought to be, have that spiritual discipleship. Where we want to be growing.

[17:12] We want to be in training. We want to be trained. We want to be instructed. We want to be taking instruction and growing in faith. So friends, think of those three areas I've talked about.

Of acting like a child. Of the self. Of the senses. And of our stickability. Of our maturity in Christ. Challenge yourself in those areas. In the area of self.

The area of self. Learn humility. Learn to develop genuine humility. So that nothing will offend you. The self. In the area of the senses.

In the exercising of the senses. There's a developing of spiritual muscles. Of our understanding. Of spiritual discernment. It says in Hebrews 5.14. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.

Even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised. To discern both good and evil. Think of food for a minute. Someone's put it like this.

[18:07] About the foods that children like. Of course children love spinach, don't they? You know. A child's foods are usually three things.

Sweet, soft and served. Sweet, soft and served. God's word is sweet. It is sweet. But it can also cause bitterness.

Like with Ezekiel. Sometimes there's some bitter things in here. Some confronting things in God's word. It's not always sweet. Soft. Some Christians can't stand hard preaching.

They can't stand preaching that is confrontational. That will make them feel a bit unsettled. Maybe perhaps by God's spirit convicted. Christians who are baby Christians like soft preaching.

They can't stand hard preaching. And served. Served. Baby Christians won't dig into the word on their own. They just want to come once a week or whenever they choose to get a little bit of a top up.

[19:08] And leave their Bible gathering dust the rest of the week. But we don't want to have that mentality that the only spiritual learning we do is fed to us.

Spoon fed. As it were. So the mature Christian will use the Bible constantly. Applying it. Exercising their senses. Discerning good and evil. So in the area of stickability we see maturity develops. As servanthood. As responsibility. As it goes the distance. Think of how baby eagles are stirred up. I know Brad's talked along this line before. How an eagle prepares the nest for the egg to be planted. The nest of an eagle.

The mother eagle starts out with thorns and broken branches and sharp rocks and other pain inducing items. That are entirely unsuitable for raising her young. Then she lines her new nest with a thick carpet and feathers of fur or other soft things she can find.

[20:12] To make the nest comfortable for her egg. When it comes time to lay the egg. And she works hard. And then as the chicks are born to nurture. To feed.

To care. But then the time comes when the young birds will learn to spread their wings. To leap out into space and fly. To leave the comfort of the nest.

The luxury of the free meals. But the mother must first stir things up. The mother eagle flexes her talons.

She tears away the carpet of feathers and fur and other soft things. To reveal the rocks and the sharp brambles and thorns. And then the nest, once a place of security and comfort, becomes uncomfortable and undesirable.

And that's when those half grown birds face the crisis of maturity. The crisis of maturity. It's now time for those young eagles to spread their wings and fly.

[21:15] We need to spread our wings and fly. We need, brothers and sisters, some of you are older Christians than me. Some of you are wiser than me.

By far. Spread your wings and fly. Don't hinder that spiritual growth. That is God's will for your life. Be planted.

And grow. So, someone has said, your spiritual growth is your personal responsibility. Don't blame the church. Don't blame the pastor or whoever's preaching.

Your personal spiritual growth is your personal spiritual responsibility. You know, I love that Psalm 1. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.

[22:19] His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit with leaves that flourish. Some people are not going on to perfection.

They're not going on to perfection. Their spiritual growth is stunted. They are not mature because they are not planted. They are not fruitful. They are playing games with God. But we all can do that. I look back in my life, in all of my adventures as a Christian growing, and seeing many failings, many wrong judgments. Friends, we've got to be considering, how can I put away the things of the child?

[23:22] Of course we know the word says we're to be childlike, in all the good ways that a child can be innocent, and devoted to parents and so on, of that wonderful nature of a child, as a childlike nature.

But the childish things are things that God wants us to shed. Because it's time to get out of the playpen. It's time to get out of the playpen.

To stop playing church. To be that people who will grow in understanding. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14, Brethren, be not children in understanding.

Howbeit in malice be ye children, or in other words your nature of innocence and so on, as the ideal would be of a child. But in understanding be men.

God wants us to be men in understanding. To be mature. To have a thirst for the word. For training. 1 Timothy 4, Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

[24:24] It goes on that godliness is profitable. It's something that's got a benefit in the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Exercise yourself. You know, I love the sense of the Greek word.

It's got a sense of a gymnasium. It's the sense of going into that training place. That place of training. And that's what a church should be. That's what we should all have that mentality. We're going to the gym today. Before we're going to have a workout. And, you know, Mick's muscles are going to be that bit bigger. And Eric's going to be that bit taller. And, you know, you're all going to be more handsome and more, whatever the appropriate word is. But, you know, you're all going to be more vibrant and alive and fervent and favoured as you exercise yourself rather unto godliness.

Let's not settle for the mediocre. Let's not settle for a settling down and an ease and a laxing of our spiritual muscles, but rather a developing of them.

[25:26] And so Paul says, put away. Put away childish things. Recognise your immaturity. If there's things that I've been speaking about today that have spoken to you, maybe God's challenged you in the area of self.

The area of self. That ugly thing called self. Let's face it. And put it away. When we want to be selfish like a spoilt child, let's put away the self.

That kind of nature of selfishness. The preoccupation with our senses. So we've got to be pampered and made comfortable and so church is about some kind of pet me up, pick me up, and if it doesn't suit then I'll go and find somewhere that's a bit more, going to pamper my feelings a bit more.

There's all of these things that we could consider. And then stickability. Stickability. Let's press on. Let us go on to perfection.

Let nothing deter you. And that's not meaning that this church will always be your home. There might be other places of ministry and service and fellowship where God can use you even more than in this place.

[26:36] But let's stop playing church wherever we are. Let's stop playing church. Let's recognise brethren, be not children in understanding. Let's recognise I'm going to put away childish things.

I'm going to stop playing in the pig pen, the play pen, having that nursery kind of mentality of Christianity. And I'm going to get out of the play pen. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you do care for your spiritual children.

We're born again. We made yours by faith as your Holy Spirit transforms us from the inside out, Lord. And yet, we know there's a growing process that you want us to be engaged in.

Help us, Lord, to see areas where we still hang on to the childishness, that immaturity that will stunt our spiritual growth. Help us to see that, to recognise it for what it is, it's sin, and help us to repent of it.

Let us go on to perfection, Lord. Help us to learn how to do that, how to grow, how to grow to be more mature, how to find that fullness of faith, of walk in Christ.

[27:45] Help us, Lord, that we might be stirred and be others around us that we can stir up and train and be a discipler as well as a disciple, that we might encourage others to grow in their faith, to encourage those newer in faith that they might grow stronger in their faith too.

Convict us, Lord, where we've fallen short. Let it not be just a word that will cause a tingle and a tickle here today, Lord. Let it be something that stirs to action.

Let it be something that people will say, I'm going to make a commitment today to stop mucking around and play church and to really rise up as a man and woman of God. I faith in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless.

Thank you.