

As Children

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[0:00] Matthew chapter 18, from verse 1 through 6, it says this, At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And 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, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Amen. So we see our Lord commending this little child as an example to us. And our Lord commends childlikeness. Of course, childishness is another thing, being immature and childish.

[1:14] But childlikeness is something to be commended and recommended. Our Lord calls us to such a quality. And so I wanted to unpack that a little. I know some of us are blessed in being in the children's ministry, the Sunday school ministry.

It's mostly a blessing, I'm sure. Yet some challenges. I know as a church, we've long ministered to children of different ages. And in time past, we had, Julie was saying, we had about 60 children at one time.

And they used to like coming to our Sunday night service, for one thing. And years back, we were running three buses bringing children. There was quite a number of children that did like to come. And we kind of encouraged that.

Mind you, it put a lot of bad odds coming off to our church, I think, but still. But children are a blessing, aren't they? And ministering to children is a blessing. And our Lord commends children here.

And he says that we should be as children, like children. And so some things about children I put to you that we could think about and wonder, how am I like a child? Am I got that childlike quality that our Lord commands?

[2:15] And for one scripture we could see in Luke 18, verse 17, which is in similar vein to the one we've just read. And our Lord says this in Luke 18, 17.

He says, Verily I say unto you, truly I say unto you, this is true. This is the truth. Amen, he says. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

I put to you as a first point, a child learns. A child learns. It's a time of learning, hopefully, isn't it? If you've got a child that wants to learn, ideally a child wants to learn.

And I guess for us as God's people, likewise too. We should want to have that receptivity, that teachability, shouldn't we? As God's children, we should want him to teach us to learn.

And you think of a child, ideally, a child wants to find out about life, what it's all about, about what counts, about what they need to learn and know.

[3:18] They want to learn and to grow, to explore, and they ask a lot of questions. So our Lord says that we should kind of be as a little child. And I think there's some of that there, that we should be receptive to God.

We should want to learn about him. Children have a thirst for knowledge, don't they? I know, thinking of myself as a child growing up, often asking my dad all the curly questions of my mum, and likewise my children to me, they just want to know things, don't they?

They want to ask you things. And what about spiritually so? May we also keep that desire to learn? Shouldn't we want to learn about the Lord? It's not about, I mean, we know that salvation is there, we're saved by faith, that's it.

Yet there's a growing that he wants for us. There's so much more that he wants for us, to learn, to grow, to develop, to mature spiritually. May we also keep that desire to learn.

Here's some scriptures that talk about learning. Of course, he wants really, especially, he says, that we learn of himself. He says, Matthew 11, 29, that familiar one, where he tells us, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. [4:33] So, especially that we learn of Christ, amen? And something not to learn is in Jeremiah 10, verse 2, where it reads, in part, the Lord says, learn not the way of the heathen.

It's sadly the case now, isn't it, where our children are being barraged with ungodly messaging, even in the schoolyard, even in the school place, from the very school teachers, bombarding them with ungodly truth.

Well, ungodly truth is lies, isn't it? That's what they're getting bombarded with, with lies, such as evolution, and such ridiculous things.

However old we are, we're still learning, aren't we? They call it in the workplace, continual learning, don't they? The workplace should be, they would have a culture of continuous learning.

And it should be in the church too, shouldn't it? That we should have that continuous learning. Are we learning of him? Learning, relearning, maybe unlearning stuff we ought to let go of, like the way of the heathen, and learning the good things of God.

[5:44] Are we learning of him, of our Lord? He says, learn of me. He should be our subject, our teacher. Learn to listen to your Father. A wise man will listen.

A wise man will hear, it says, and will increase learning. It's commended that the wise man is one who's going to listen, is going to hear, and they're going to learn, and increase learning.

So, I put to you tonight, that God makes us, to be as children, to be teachable. When you get someone who's not teachable, you can't teach them anything. They're not going to grow, they're going to stay stagnant, stuck, stale.

But when you have Christians that are hungry and thirsting, they're wanting to study, they're wanting to get to study, they're wanting to get to fellowship, they can absorb more knowledge, more easily. And they love to learn.

And we think, as a child, again, the picture of a child, what are children really good at learning? As far as languages. Learning a foreign language, they just excel, don't they?

[6:44] Learning music, that's kind of a language, isn't it? Children are readily picking up knowledge, and it's like they soak it up like a sponge. And a child can learn a foreign language a lot easier than an older person can.

That's evident, isn't it? But what about spiritually so? Have we got that thirst for knowledge, that thirst for learning about God? Will we be like children? Are we wanting to learn the things of our Father?

The things that our Father wants us to know. Are we going to be a wise man who's going to hear? Are we going to be willing to learn from those whom the Lord has placed in our lives? There's older brothers, older sisters that we can learn from.

It says the older women should teach the younger women. You know, there's a twofold thing there, isn't there? Older women here, you're meant to be teachers. Younger women, listen to the older women. It's likewise you could say that, of men too, isn't it?

That men should sharpen, iron sharpening iron. We can learn from one another. That's about the church, isn't it? Exhorting one another, encouraging one another, comforting one another, that togetherness, that brings that learning.

[7:47] And that's what we're doing tonight. Hopefully there's something you're learning. You're picking up knowledge and learning some truths that you can make application of. So be a learner, be a student of the Word of God.

We see that familiar scripture, study, to show thyself, approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Will we be one who will be a student?

A child is a student. They're learning. Will we be as a young child, like a piece of living clay with a soft and yielded heart, a yielding heart?

Or will we be clay that's hard and not soft and sensitive to the father, the potter? Will we have that same childlike desire to learn about God and be willing to keep on learning?

Will we be like little children? The Bible commends us, exhorts us, our Lord exhorts us to that, to keep that childlike spirit of wanting to learn and grow. We offer Bible studies because they're an opportunity.

[8:51] There's opportunities, of course, outside of Bible studies. There's personal Bible study. There's opportunities and I can commend some good books. I can give you some books.

I can recommend some Bible study courses as we've got on the wall there. Online studies. You might say, I'm too busy to go to Bible study. I'm working. Well, there's a Bible study course. There's a Bible school there on the wall. You can tap into that and you can fit it around your busy life. So there's no excuse. Study. Study. You know, little children don't know it all.

That's another thing too, isn't it? They're not teenagers yet. You know, when they get to be teenagers, they know it all. There's that kind of saying, isn't there? But children have got that sense, actually, I don't know it all. And it's the same spiritually being as little children.

We need to know that we don't know it all and we've got lots of opportunities to learn. And I think along with learning, there's a humility that we want to learn. We realise we need to learn.

[9:49] There's a humility angle there, isn't there? And really for us that are older believers too, as far as our knowledge goes, we've really only got a bucket load of the ocean, haven't we?

Even us that are well advanced, we've been a Christian for decades, we've only got a bucket load of the ocean, haven't we? As far as what we can learn.

So may we be as little children, even us older Christians too. Here's another thing we can appreciate about children. Another way we could do well to be as a little child is that a little child laughs.

You know, you see children, they're laughing and skipping and mostly they look like they're having some kind of fun, especially in the Sunday school. We know that they like to play games and enjoy the moment.

And what about spiritually so? Do we have that true joy of Christ? Christ in you. Christ is our true joy. Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

[10:47] There's a certain joy factor, isn't there, in being a believer? That we have life. Children love life. They know how to enjoy life. They know how to play. Let's not lose that.

I think sometimes as grown-ups, we sometimes can lose that kind of joy. We maybe can get too serious or too busy. But we don't take time to enjoy life.

And that life more abundant, which is what's more that we have that our Lord wants for us. Think of children. They get on with life. They find ways to have joy and fun.

How about us? Is there a blockage in our kind of joy in our life? We can sometimes get weighed down, can't we? And forget the joy that we truly have.

That joy that we have. We're not talking about putting it on or plastic smiles or kind of a fake joy. But we have got a joy that's deeper than our circumstance. And sometimes it comes out in our faces occasionally, doesn't it?

[11:47] Could we be the reason our joy is getting blocked? Let's humble ourselves. Could there be something that's hindering that joyfulness in us? That maybe there's a need of forgiveness that is causing that joy to be held back.

There's things we need to get right. Put them right. He wants you to have that heart of joy, that delight in your father's world. And we want our own children to be happy, to be content, to know that we love them.

And that's what our Lord wants for us too. He wants what's best for us. And we see that scripture as we talked about in recent times. Love God with all your heart, your mind, your soul.

And he fills you with joy when you have that filling of God in all of you. That you have that kind of fulfilment. that he gives to you, don't you? That joy, that joy unspeakable and full of glory. As we get relationships right where there's issues, we can deal with them. As we get our relationship with God right, we've got reason to enjoy life. And look, I'm not meaning to sound like the faith, wealth, health, prosperity preacher saying your best life now and that life's always going to be rosy and fine.

[12:57] But there's a gladness deep down within. There's a gladness no matter what's going on. There's a joy in our heart, deep down in our heart. It's interesting when they were persecuted, the Lord says, rejoice, doesn't he?

There's a sense, jump for joy is the sense of it. When they persecute you, it's got the sense, the word, and he says, rejoice when you're persecuted. I've jumped for joy. It's like, it's even a blessing and a joy even when the tough things happen and people are against you for Christ's sake.

So I put to you believers here tonight, he puts a smile in our soul, doesn't he? He puts a laugh in our heart, a joy in our life. One day there was a little girl, Brittany, that came to her mum and said, mum, I know that Jesus lives inside my heart, but how do I tell him I love him?

Do you think if I write I love you on a piece of paper and eat it, he'll get the note? I just wanted to give you a bit of joy this evening. Can we have that kind of childlike simplicity?

Amen? That childlike simplicity. I want Jesus to know that I love him, to know God's joy in my heart and life. And even in the toughest of times, brother, sister, you can know God's joy.

[14:05] There's a joy in our life deep in our heart. Here's an example of that. In 2 Corinthians 7 it reads, in part, it reads, I'm exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Get that. Joyful in the tribulation. We were troubled on every side, without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, that God, that comforted those that are cast down, comforted us.

You can have a joy even when things are tough for you. And so let's be alike to a child. Alike to a child. Another way that we can be alike to a child is that a child looks for help.

A child knows they're dependent. A child knows that they need help. We know a child can't cater for themselves. They can't really feed themselves or go about ordinary life without help.

And friends, brothers and sisters here tonight, you've got a father who cares for you. And you can cry out to him. A child knows they're weak and they're helpless.

[15:11] They know that they need help. Psalm 12, 1 starts off with two words of prayer help Lord. Children are dependent, aren't they? Children look to their parents.

When they hurt, when they have a fall or a cut, they go straight to their mum or dad. They don't know how a band-aid works or how to protect their cut from infection, how to stop the bleeding, how the blood clotting is going to help.

They just know that they're hurting. And where do they go? To their parent. And a child knows when it's hurting that their parents will be there for them to make things better.

What about you and me? Do we be like children when we're hurting? Who do we go to? Sometimes we don't go to God first. It's like we kind of neglect that, don't we? But our Heavenly Father wants us like children to go to him for all that we need.

And we can call out to him. We can look to him for our help. We can in simple trust and dependence on him know the fatherly care and have faith in that. And I know a scripture I touched on this morning too.

[16:16] But here's that eternal God. Underneath are the everlasting arms. Think of it. That your father has big arms to hold you and carry you, doesn't he? There was a man and his wife teaching at children's church and he says, I was telling the boys and girls ranging in ages from four to eleven that we are all born in sin but by grace are saved through faith.

One of the younger girls looked puzzled and said, I wasn't born in sin. I was born in November. But of course we are all born in sin, aren't we? We're all lost sinners. We need a saviour.

It's coming to that realisation that we need his help. We need his salvation. We need his guidance, his leading. And as God's own dear children we can know that we're loved and accepted by him.

As we read in Ephesians, it talks how we're accepted in the beloved. It says we've got access by his spirit to the Father. It says, he says to you in Christ that he that cometh to me, he says, I will in no wise cast down.

So think of it. Being like children. Think of these childlike qualities of calling on him to help you.

[17:32] Reaching out to him for salvation. He wants us to run to him. And he won't reject us. He won't turn us away. Run into the Father's arms today.

And don't you just love in Luke 15 where the Father will run to you. The prodigal just had to turn his face homeward and start that journey. And the Father saw and ran to him.

That's what our Heavenly Father does for us, doesn't he? He loves us so. And his love is the greatest love any one of us can personally experience. When we're born again into God's very family, call on the Father to help.

There's a time where a man had bought a swimming pool for his family. This father was there swimming in the deep end by the diving board. And his four-year-old daughter, Savannah, came tottering to the shallow end of the pool.

And she had these big orange floaties on. And she can't sink with these big orange floaties on. And she came down the steps and as soon as she saw her father down at the deep end and she said, Daddy, I'm scared.

[18:41] I want to come where you are. And the father said, Savannah, it's a lot deeper down here. She said, I don't care. I want to be where you are. Okay, come on.

And she began dog paddling to the deep end. Three foot, six foot, nine foot, 12 foot deep. And when she came to me, the father says, she grabbed my neck and her look of panic gave way to relief.

Next to her father, she was secure. Even though she was in the deep end, even though it was more deep, more dangerous, what made the difference? The safety of the father. It's the same for you and me, brothers and sisters.

As we, like children, come to our heavenly father, we can call on him. He can help us in the deep times of life. So don't stop asking God to help you. It seems popular these days to have a do-it-yourself kind of religion.

But the Bible faith is calling on him to save, isn't it? Call upon him and find his help. And sometimes our prayers for God to help us can be simple prayers like that one we just read in Psalm 12.

[19:49] Help, Lord. Psalm 12, verse 1. And as we read of a man worried about his son in Mark 9. Lord, I believe.

Help thou, mine unbelief. Again, it's asking for help, isn't it? And then another one of a mother worried about her daughter in Matthew 15, 25. She came and worshipped him saying, Lord, help me.

Just a three-word prayer can be, it's as a child would pray, isn't it? You think of, as children would pray, they can be very simple prayers but very profound and very meaningful, very blessed prayers as these prayers.

And God hears simple prayer. So be as a child and simply pray, even if it's simple. Another thing about a child is a child's trust. Don't they?

There's a simple faith that a child has. As a mum, as a dad, as you pick up your little one, you carry them, they trust you, don't they? They trust, they believe.

[20:53] They're not worried that you're going to drop them. And the child seems to know that he's safe in your arms. Even though he's so far off the ground, he just trusts you.

What about spiritually so? Do we trust our God? Do we trust our Father like a little child would trust their own father or mother? That little child trusts the Father completely.

What about you and me? Don't we believe that he's holding us, that we're in his arms? Or do we doubt? Rather be like a child, just like a child who turns to their mum or dad and trusts in their care.

We can so learn to trust our God, our Heavenly Father, that way, completely. A child has simple trust, do we? As a child, trust in the Lord.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean on your own understanding. Think of children, they don't have to worry about food or clothing, do they? They know that their mum and dad is going to look after them.

[21:55] Don't worry about things. We can get worried about things, about life. Just trust in the Lord. He's going to look after you. And it says, let's be like children that aim for spiritual maturity.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word. We think of the little baby, the newborn, crying out for the mother's milk. Do we desire the Word of God like a baby desires that meal of milk?

What about us spiritually today? Are we hungry and thirsty? Are we desiring for God's Word that we'll be a hungry, strong, mature believer?

As children, as babes, he wants to nurture us, seek that desire for the Word, to have a desire for it, to find it, to search for it, to study it, to search it out, to tap into whatever you can tap into.

Mind you, filtering it and carefully what you do tap into. But to be humble enough to know, yes, I need to grow. I need the Word. I need to long for it and desire it like a baby would desire milk.

[23:05] God wants us to humble ourselves to know simple faith. Let's not overcomplicate it. I think sometimes, I know, as older Christians, we can overcomplicate things, can't we?

That we make it too complex and complicated. But rather, like children, let's seek to humbly know our Heavenly Father. Let's learn that relationship of the Father to the Son, of the Father to the daughter, that Heavenly Father, to turn to Him and to depend on Him completely.

And our Lord says, and He underlines it here in Matthew 18, verse 2, in the context they were asking who's the greatest and then He says, look at this child and He says, unless you become converted, become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

A really important question to close here tonight is, are you His child? Do you love the Father? Do you love the Heavenly Father? The first step is to be converted.

And it's interesting how simple it truly is to be converted. But there's not some complex religious ritual or ceremony or some series of qualifying acts that you have to undertake to be saved.

[24:30] It's simply believe, isn't it? It's simple faith. And if we can just have faith, enough, like a simple faith like a child would have. Children don't have a lot of doubts.

They have a lot of trust. What about us and our relationship with God? Let's be quick to believe what God says to us. Now I'm not downplaying we should want meat, we should want to build up spiritual muscles and become in understanding be man.

Of course there's that aspect too. But in terms of simply believing and receiving and being converted it's that humility of a child, isn't it? To be quick to believe what God says to us.

To take it as read. Don't try to reinterpret it or convolute it or put man's manipulation onto it but to simply take it as read.

Be quick to believe what God says. And let's become as little children. Take God at his word and simply trust him. Let go of all the complications and the doubts that can sometimes get in the way.

[25:34] Now I'm not meaning to downplay or say that Christians should jettison intellectual thinking. No, there is reasoning, there is logic, there is use of your intellect, there is application and there is a striving to unwrap some of the complexities of the Bible but in terms of getting saved it's very simple, it's becoming as little children and then it's a growth from there, it's a learning of him, it's a growing in that learning, isn't it?

A deepening of that relationship. Simply take hold of his hand by faith, by simple faith. Take hold of his hand as a child to take hold of their father's or mother's hand.

We should take hold of our heavenly father's hand as a child would and receive that gift that he extends. When a child gets offered a gift they grab it, don't they, with both hands.

I know as we witness, I know Peter in particular likes to use that graphic picture of a gift and offering them his Bible.

Now mind you, he's still got it but he offers them his Bible and he says, you know, if this is a gift then do you have to work for it? Do you have to earn it? You know, maybe just give me a dollar for

it, would that be still a gift?

[26:51] No. Maybe wash my car in exchange for the gift. No, it's none of that, is it? It's a gift as a gift and really a child receiving a gift, yeah, they'll grab it, they'll want it and it should be the same with salvation, shouldn't it?

It's that simplicity. The Bible talks about a simplicity that is in Christ. So to recount, as children, they learn. Let's keep on learning, keep on studying, don't neglect to learn.

A child laughs, there's a joy, deep down joy, there's an abundant life that we have, there's a joy that we have deep down, even in our tribulation we have joy. There's a looking for help, a child cries out for help, they know where to go for help, they know the one to talk to, when there's help needed, they know who to go to, the Heavenly Father.

and as a child, trust. They reach out and they receive. Salvation, this is the context really, isn't it? Unless you be as converted, become as little children.

And salvation is so precious and it's so simple and yet religion and man's mistaken ideas would convolute it and complicate it when really it's so, truly so simple that a child can receive salvation and we see that, I'm sure, in the Sunday school and ministries to children.

[28:16] We've seen children trust Christ even at a very young age. I know there's some preachers that trusted Christ just before they were even 10, they might have been under 10 because children can be so receptive, can't they, like a sponge.

And yet, us adults, sometimes they get hardened, don't they? Especially when we go witnessing, we see that, not interested, too busy, too busy for eternity.

How could you be too busy for eternity? Truly, what a gift that we cannot dare deny it, to refuse it. It's such a foolish thing and it's such a wise thing, a simple thing, a childlike thing to receive it.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that we can be converted, we can become as little children. Help us, Lord, to have that childlike faith, to simply believe, to simply trust and then to grow, to want to grow, to have that hungering and thirsting, that desire to learn, to study, to develop our spiritual muscles as you help us to grow in that relationship with you.

Lord, help us to laugh even when the times are hard and we don't often maybe even feel joy but you give us joy even in our tribulation. And Lord, we thank you for all of these things tonight.

[29:35] Bless each heart, each home. Help us, Lord, to put these things into action. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.