

Becoming Like Little Children

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Not long ago I was watching a little child play in the mud. There had been a thunderstorm that passed through the area and after the storm a child was playing in the muddy water. The little boy found a great treasure in a mud hole where he could play and get muddy from head to toe. I'm not sure what his mother thought about it but this little guy was having the time of his life.

Did you ever stop from the frantic pace of life and just watch a little child play in the mud? Have you taken the time recently to watch a little child examine a bug on the end of a branch or how they seem to find great joy and delight in the simple things of life? Have you seen the thrill in their hearts and the desire that they have toward Jesus as they are told the stories of Jesus and informed about God and His greatness? Have you taken the time to notice the faith that a child has in God? Have you noticed the honesty, sincerity, tenderness and softness of heart that a little child possesses?

In today's message we want to discover how we can become like little children again. You may say, "I don't want to become like some little child again. I am grown up and mature. I will act like an adult and think like an adult and live like an adult the rest of my life." To your own surprise you might like to be informed that Jesus said that we must become like a little child.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3:

"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."

Dear friends, Jesus Christ has called us to childlikeness. He has called us to possess the soft heart of a child and the faith of a child and so live our lives with a child's heart and enthusiasm. In the midst of our fast-paced living and our busy schedules of life Jesus is calling out to us to become like little children even within our adult lives. He is asking us to go back in time so that we might possess a child's heart and a child's life once again. And as we study the Scriptures we

discover that there are several ways that we can become like little children once again. Let's state our transition very clearly.

There are three ways that we can become like little children.

1. We become like little children when we express faith in Christ.

In Matthew eighteen the disciples were arguing about who might be the greatest in the earthly messianic kingdom.

Matthew 18:1

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

It's funny how we are concerned about greatness when Jesus is concerned about smallness! That is why He took a small child before the disciples and began to teach them how important it was to become like a little child. And the first lesson Jesus taught about children is that they possess faith in God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18:2

“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.”

The Greek word for child (“paidion”) identifies a very young child, sometimes even an infant. This particular child was perhaps a toddler, just old enough to run to Jesus. Mark 9:36 adds to the record that Jesus also took the child in his arms. This is a lovely scene. Wonder of wonders that God would hold children! It is certainly true that:

“Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow black and white,
They are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.”

Mark 9:36 says:

“And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them.”

We should note that Jesus called a little child and the little child came to him. Why was this? No doubt it was because children saw something in Jesus that compelled them to come to Him. Children were not afraid of Jesus. They saw that Jesus had a genuine love for them and that He had joy in his life and heart. Children are good judges of character. And the way children responded to Jesus during his earthly ministry would indicate that Jesus was a joyful, kind and loving person. Why else would children be drawn unto Him? This tells us that Jesus loved children and He especially loved little children. And if we are going to be like Jesus we will possess this same love for little children.

Matthew 18:3 goes on to say:

“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.”

By this statement Jesus makes it very clear that little children are saved before God's presence because they possess faith and are converted to God. The word converted means to “turn” or “twist” and is used to describe people whose minds and hearts are turned to God. Children are converted. They have already turned to God in their thinking and heart through possessing faith in Christ, which explains why they are going to enter the kingdom.

Matthew 18:6

“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.”

Of course, this is not saving faith (belief) or faith that is placed in Christ for the salvation of the soul. This is because infants and little children do not recognize their sinfulness, depravity and separation before God. They have not grown to the place of awareness that they have broken God's moral Law and deserve judgment. Infants lack moral awareness before God about their sinful condition and are incapable of making moral decisions (Deut. 1:39; Jonah 4:11). Therefore, they cannot intelligently exercise saving faith in Christ,

which results in a conversion or turning to God from the penalty of sin. Only people who reach the age of accountability about their sinfulness before God can possess this kind of saving faith in Christ, which results in their salvation. **The faith expressed by a little child is an intuitive faith, which all children possess about Jesus Christ, spiritual truth and loving God. It is a faith of innocence, purity and acceptance about God's existence and the person of Jesus Christ and all of His claims even before understanding them in any detail. It is an inbred faith implanted in the heart of infants and little children. They always say yes to the truth about God and Jesus Christ as it is presented to them.**

Matthew 19:13-15

“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.”

Now let me just inject something here that is very important to grab hold of for our own lives today. First, we must understand that Jesus took time for children. Should not this be a lesson for us as parents today who have children of our own? We must take time with them even in the midst of our busy schedules and responsibilities in life. Even in the midst of all the responsibilities and burdens that Jesus had He still took time for children. Should not we emulate Jesus or copy His pattern today? If parents would take more time with their children and even see their children during the day, America might not be in the predicament that it's in within this present hour.

We must understand that Jesus always allowed children to be part of His earthly life. He did not distance children from His life. They were not a bother to Him. Instead, they were a blessing. Jesus had a special love in His heart for little infants and children who were so helpless and dependent on others in life. He was deeply concerned about their well-being and expressed love and kindness toward them. If we want to be like Jesus we will be interested in children and take time to entertain them.

George McDonald said:

“I do not have faith in any man’s Christianity if children are not found occasionally playing at his door.”

Second, we should understand that children should be brought to Jesus. Of course, we cannot take them to Jesus as people did while He was living upon the earth. But we can take them to Jesus in prayer and dedicate them before Him and ask that He will bless their lives. I’m afraid that many parents have not dedicated their children to Jesus and turned them over to Him for His blessing and use. They have their own plans and goals for their children but have not turned them over to the Lord. They have not allowed them to jump in the lap of Jesus and let Jesus direct their lives and bless them. Hannah gave Samuel over to the Lord and God blessed her for doing it.

1 Samuel 1:28

“Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.”

It’s a wonderful thing when you allow your children to jump in the arms of Jesus so that Jesus can bless their lives and know that you are interested in having His will accomplished in their lives. Well, these injected thoughts were a side street. What I really want you to see is that Jesus did not baptize children so that they might be saved. This is because they were already saved before God. There was absolutely no reason to baptize them. However, Jesus prayed over them and blessed them.

Matthew 19:13-15

“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.”

Little children will enter the messianic earthly kingdom because they are already converted (Matt. 18:3). Their minds and hearts have been turned to Jesus Christ through belief (Matt. 18:6). This means that children already possess an intuitive or implanted faith in Jesus Christ from conception. They intuitively accept the person of Jesus Christ

and all of His claims as being true even before they can fully understand about their sinful state before God and be held accountable before Him. Children's hearts are pulled in the direction of Jesus, as seen by the children coming to Jesus, because they automatically believe that Jesus and His claims were all true, even before fully understanding all of them. As a result, they are willing to jump in His arms by faith. And I don't care what your philosophical system of hyper Calvinism teaches concerning babies and toddlers being damned to hell. I'll tell you what Jesus said during his earthly life. ***Jesus said that children are not going into hell they are going into the kingdom!***

Matthew 18:14

"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Who will you believe? Some man who says that Jesus hates non-elect babies and little children and has predetermined to damn them to hell? Or will you believe Jesus who takes little children in his arms and says that they already believe on me and are converted and will enter the kingdom? Some extreme Calvinists have a terrible time talking about their children for fear that they have brought children into the world who could die at any time and go to hell. Well, dear Calvinist friend, I would have a problem with that as well.

The fact is this. **Little children already possess faith in the Lord because their mind and heart has been intuitively turned toward God in some measure through God's working in conception. Therefore, they accept truth about God and Jesus Christ even before they know about their sin and the expressed way of salvation before a holy God.** Apparently this inbred and innocent acceptance of God and the personal claims of Christ, prior to the age of understanding and accountability, allows God to graciously apply His saving work to children's lives and cover them from damnation or judgment during their infant and early childhood years. What a wondrous and gracious working of God this is for these precious little jewels! **God apparently has a pre-saving work for the lives of babies and little children and then a post-saving work that must be accepted or embraced at the time of their age of accountability before God.**

Jesus was talking about this gracious pre-saving work of God upon the lives of children when mentioning how they were converted or how their little hearts were turned toward Him. Children possess an innocent and inbred faith in God and Jesus Christ so that they openly accept His person and claims without argument. This is why children believe the record that God gives to them about His existence and about Jesus Christ His Son.

You never must explain to a child the cosmological argument, which tells us that the cosmos or arranged world in which we live, must have a cause. Every effect must have a cause and the cause of such a wonderful effect as the earth must be God. You don't need to tell that to a child because a child already knows this to be true. They already believe in God's existence. You don't have to inform a child about the teleological argument that says there is intricate design in this world and all of the design points to a divine Designer who is God. You don't have to tell this to children because their mind and heart are already converted to God and they already believe that He is the Creator and Designer of the world. You don't have to explain the anthropological argument to children which says that man has been given an intellectual, volitional and emotional design that represents God in some way and explains that God must have created man. You don't have to explain the Christological argument to children, which says that Christ lives because of the Bible, fulfillment of prophecy, His miracles, the influence of Christianity in the world and the moral and spiritual change in the lives of people. The answer why all of these things are true is because Jesus Christ is alive. You do not have to explain this argument to little children because they automatically believe that Jesus is alive.

Whoever heard of trying to teach these Greek words and concepts to little children? It's absurd and unheard of because little children are already converted to God. **Children don't need to be taught the theological arguments defending God's existence because the theology of God has already been built into their lives.** Their minds and hearts are born possessing this inward awareness so that it might be said that they are turned or "converted" to God and His ways.

This does not mean that children are born without a sin nature and moral separation from God (Psalm 51:5). But it does mean that little children are born to believe in God and God's Son Jesus Christ. This is done so that a merciful God can bypass their sin, inherited through the sin nature, in their younger years of life. Furthermore, God does not hold sin against them until they grow to a mature level and fully understand their sinfulness before God and their rebellion against God's authority. Only when they become old enough to be conscience of their sin against God (James 4:17) should they be led to exercise saving faith in Christ. This would be in their mature and accountable years of life.

My friend, Jesus said that little children are saved because they have a mind and heart attitude that has turned to God through faith. And this is intuitively placed within them during conception. Therefore, they are converted to God. That is why there is no need to baptize children in order to regenerate them (baptismal regeneration) or bring them into God's favor so that they can be saved. *They are already converted because they possess faith in the Lord.* No water will ever bring salvation into their lives since they are already converted to God. Little children already believe in God and are converted. And this is a statement from the lips of Jesus Himself.

A Sunday school teacher in a modernistic church had to explain the account of Jesus feeding the multitude with five loaves and two small fishes. Unwilling to accept the narrative at face value, she tried to avoid its miraculous aspect by saying, "Children, of course you understand that Jesus didn't actually feed thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes. That would have been impossible! It just means they were so nourished with words of wisdom that they lost all sense of hunger and went home satisfied." After a thoughtful pause, one of the youngsters raised his hand and asked, "But why were there 12 baskets for the leftovers?"

Even children can preach against the liberal churches of our own day and time by what they know and believe. If the liberals would become as children there would be no more liberal churches in America! This account once again verifies that little children do believe in truth and they do not have to be coaxed into believing the truth. When truth is explained to them they will believe it for what it says. In any event, we

need to understand that Jesus taught that lost people can only enter the messianic kingdom when they become “as little children” who are already converted (Matt. 18:3) through faith or belief (Matt. 18:6 - “which believe on me”). This means that a lost person, who is no longer in the category of a child, must come to the place where they place faith in Jesus Christ to be their own personal Messiah and Savior (John 1:12). Only this will result in their conversion, which explains what happens when their mind and heart is brought to the place of belief in Jesus Christ for salvation. ***You see, Jesus taught that children give to us the lesson of faith.*** Since they already believe we should believe as well. We should believe on Jesus Christ to be our Savior from hell.

Acts 16:31

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”

The lesson that Jesus taught was that a lost human race needs to become like little children. They need to turn to Christ through repentance and faith and become converted. Conversion involves a person turning to God for salvation through repentance and faith.

Acts 3:19

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

What a lesson this is for a lost world that needs to be saved. They must become like little children. This lesson teaches us that lost people must repent, change their mind and heart about their sin and need for Christ, and believe on Jesus Christ in order to be converted or saved. **The little children we see all around us today teach us that repentance and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ is what is needed so that we can be converted to God.** We need to be open and honest to God like little children are so that we will repent of our sins and turn to Christ. We must open up our hearts like little children if we are going to get saved.

One pastor received a letter from a child. The letter expresses the openness and honesty of a child’s heart. It went like this.

Dear Pastor,

I like the fruit that you gave me. You are the best person that I ever knew. I have fun with you. I will come to see you. I like you. Do you like me? Answer yes or no. Come and see me sometimes. I like you very much. This summer we will see you and help you. By the way, could you pay for me helping you?

Love,
Bret

That is honesty and openness! And that is the way we need to come to Jesus Christ if we are ever going to be saved. We must be open and honest about our sin. We must repent of our sin before God. And then we must place our sincere faith in Jesus Christ so that we can be converted as a little child. **One of the most important marks of children is that they live by faith.** They live in total dependence on others for everything. If there is a rise in grocery prices or energy crisis a trusting child will still know that his parents will care for them. A little child will jump in the arms of his father or mother and know that they will take care of them. That is a life of faith! And children demonstrate what faith is when they express their belief in God's Son Jesus Christ. In a similar way a lost person needs to become as a child, which means that they must express childlike faith in Jesus Christ to save them.

It's interesting that children have no might, power or ability to take care of themselves. They simply trust wholeheartedly in their parents to take care of them. This is why they do not worry or have anxiety complexes. They simply look to daddy and mommy to meet their needs and when they fall and skin their knee they come running to mommy or daddy for help. Why? It's because they are totally dependent upon them.

Children demonstrate faith by their simple, helpless, trusting dependence on others. They have no resources of their own to offer. They are totally dependent on another. They have no achievements and no accomplishments to offer or commend themselves with. And this is what faith in Christ is all about. It's coming to Christ for salvation having absolutely nothing to offer God – no achievements, no accomplishments. We come to Him as a child totally helpless,

trusting and dependent upon Him to save us. This is why I reject the Lordship Salvation teaching. This teaching bargains with God by dangling a promised life of discipleship and good works before Him, which becomes part of a person's faith response toward God. But when we come to faith in Christ, as a little child, we will have no confidence in ourselves and no trust in our own abilities. Salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone would indicate this to be true (Ephesians 2:8-9).

If you think that you can lose your salvation then look at a child hanging on to their mother's neck. Look at a child who is totally dependent upon parents for help and assistance. Then you will remember that salvation is by grace through faith. What a beautiful picture this!

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 says:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the **weak** things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And **base** (lowly) things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."

The Bible teaches that only those who realize their own weakness and lowly position before the Lord will be saved. **Salvation does not belong to the mighty, strong, noble and influential. It belongs to children and those who have a childlike faith in Jesus Christ. It belongs to the weak, insignificant and helpless. That is the kind of people that God saves for eternity.** He saves those who have this childlike faith or trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

My friend, unless you become like a little child and place your faith in Jesus Christ you will die in your sins and go to hell. *Little children do not go to hell when they die and neither will you if you become like a child and express faith in Jesus Christ.* You must come to the place where you are willing and ready to put total trust or confidence in God's Son to save your soul for all eternity. You must come to the place where you understand that you are a lost sinner and that you can do absolutely nothing to earn or merit your salvation. You must bankrupt your life. Like a little child, you must place your hands

around the neck of the Savior and trust fully in His grace to save you. You must simply by faith reach out to Jesus Christ and trust in His finished work upon the cross and His resurrection to save our soul (1 Cor. 15:3-4). It's then that you can be converted as a little child, escape hell and spend eternity with God.

There is also a practical application of this childlike faith even in our own Christian lives after we become converted. Each Christian should become more faith-centered in their everyday living so that they can emulate the faith of a little child. We should strive to grow in our faith by understanding that God is in control of the events of our lives and that we can rest in His sovereign ways. *Faith is a child's way of living as he depends fully upon someone else to meet his need (Phil. 4:19)*. In a similar way we must learn to walk as a child in our own day-to-day Christian lives. We should increase in our faith concerning God's will and program for our lives. We should learn more and more to trust in His strength to pull us through life's trials and turmoil (Phil. 4:13). We can also grow in our faith as we wait upon the Lord for answers to prayer and as we learn to accept how He ultimately decides to answer prayer. Faith is a childlike matter that we need to apply to our Christian living.

I remember when my children were of that age where they needed to be fed baby food from those baby food jars. I always pitied the kids. They had to eat crushed carrots, strained red beets and smashed peas while we were eating hamburgers with french-fries. It just didn't seem fair. Well, I can remember when our children would sit there in the chair and have food all over their mouths and how utterly dependent they were upon mom or dad to feed them and take care of their needs. Certainly a child lives by faith! They live depending upon the help and complete provision of their parents. And Jesus says that we should become as a little child so that we might learn to live and walk by faith. We must learn to depend and rely upon the Lord for everything in life and grow in our faith concerning His ways and will for our lives.

Hebrews 11:6 reminds us:

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

2. We become like little children when we possess humility in service.

Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 18:4:

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

We understand that humility is involved when we repent of our sin and have faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. And all of this is needed in order to “enter” the kingdom (vs. 3). But Jesus seems to be speaking about being “great” in the kingdom in verse four. *Faith is how a person enters the kingdom but humility is how they become great in the kingdom.* And Jesus seems to be talking about the humility of service in this context, as we will see.

The disciples were still anticipating an earthly kingdom and wondering what great positions they would have. Apparently they were self-seeking and were more interested in trying to promote themselves than serving others. So Jesus comes back to answering the disciple’s question concerning who would be greatest in the kingdom. And Jesus points out that a humble serving child will be the greatest in the kingdom. *Greatness in the future kingdom is not necessarily based upon great accomplishments or words, but on childlike humility demonstrated through humble acts of service to others.* This is the kind of humble service that Jesus taught when He washed the disciple’s feet (John 13:5-17). So here is another way that we become like a child. We can learn to humble our lives like a child and serve others. And the reason why we should become like a humble child is obvious. It’s because a life of childlike humility will produce reward and greatness in the kingdom during the next life.

Someone has remarked:

“The great man is the man who does not lose his child’s heart.”

Humility or meekness is part of a little child’s design. They are not concerned about their own greatness but about serving their own parents and pleasing them. Are they living right and pleasing their

parents? Are they doing their parents wishes? Children are concerned about pleasing their parents in what they do. They are not concerned about their own greatness or glory. Rather, they are interested in others and this should be the childlike spirit that we should all possess if we want to be rewarded and recognized in the future kingdom.

Can you imagine what this must have done to the disciple's pride? The disciples were arguing about who would have the greatest position in the coming kingdom (vs. 1) but Jesus silences them by calling a little child into their midst and while holding the child in His arms He says, "the same is the greatest in the kingdom" (vs. 4). **The child was the example of true greatness in the coming kingdom.** In essence, Jesus was saying, "You want to know who is going to get the highest honor and privileges in the coming kingdom? It's this child!" That must have stunned the disciples as the little child was playing with the beard of Jesus. But in saying this Jesus was teaching the principle that the Father was going to honor humility in the coming kingdom day. A little child will humbly serve their parents by possessing the desire to make them happy and meet their requirements. A child really wants to please their parents and give to them in an unselfish way.

All of us have had the experience of a child bringing to us some card or project that they have done for Mother's Day or Father's Day. And it may be full of orange scribbled crayon on the front but we know that our child did this for us without any pretence or without wanting any honor or recognition for doing it. They simply wanted to serve us in this way and please us because they loved us. And the pictures hanging on your refrigerator verify this. Children possess a desire to please their parents even though they can be disobedient and rambunctious at times. They have an innocent and selfless desire to please us. They offer us their devotion and service without any thought of self-glory or praise. They want to make their parents happy in life. And in doing this kind of service there is an absence of boasting or selfish desire, which is trying to be greater than others. This is something that the disciples needed to learn since they were boasting about who would be the greatest in the kingdom.

The next reply of Jesus indicated that His disciples were asking the wrong question. Instead of asking who would be greatest in the future kingdom the disciples should have been asking which people they could serve in the present time. This is because becoming like little children and serving people is what would bring greatness and honor in the coming messianic kingdom.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 18:5:

“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.”

The disciples should have been concerned about serving the Lord, not asking about positions in the kingdom! They had a self-seeking spirit. Their service needed to be directed toward people, even toward little children. This is because Jesus spoke about welcoming a little child or serving a little child, which would be the same as receiving Jesus, and serving Him. The point Jesus seems to be making is this. We must humble ourselves by receiving and serving other people and in doing so we will be serving Jesus. **Humble childlike service is what will bring honor in the future life of the kingdom.** We must learn to humbly serve others and this is what will bring reward and recognition in the future kingdom. And the life of a little child illustrates this kind of humble service. A little child wants to serve and please his parents. **A child is not worried about greatness or glory but service!** Deep down a child wants to serve his parents and is happy when as a child he can please them in whatever he does. A child is not looking for glory. A child is concerned about service and pleasing those ranked above him.

It would seem that in this verse Jesus uses the little child as an example of humility. And the child of God, no matter what his age might be, should also be humble as a little child and reach out to serve and please others. *Like a child, the humble and meek saint neither seeks greatness nor demands any glory for himself.* Like a little child, he is committed to serving others without receiving any recognition or honor. The only desire of the child of God should be to please his heavenly Father by the way that he lives and serves others. Little children represent this kind of humble sacrificial service toward others as they live to please others without any hidden selfish

ambitions of glory. Children are actually an example of the humble sacrificial service of the Lord Jesus.

Philippians 2:7-8 says this about Christ:

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

This is childlike humility – “no reputation,” “form of a servant,” “humbled himself.” This is what a child does as he gives himself to others unreservedly and without any selfish ambition of glory and praise. And unless we are willing to humbly sacrifice our lives for others we will not receive honor and recognition in the future. While holding that child in His lap Jesus reminds us that we need to become like little children in our own lives by humbly serving others instead of trying to figure out who is going to sit next to Jesus in the kingdom. If we are focused on greatness, as the disciples were, then we will not become the kind of servant that Jesus wants us to be. We must understand that humble childlike service is what makes us great. And if we have a servant’s heart, we will be great in God’s eyes, both in this life and the future life. Believers today are addressed as “little children” which would indicate how God cares for His own and how His people need to humbly serve others even as a little child would serve others.

1 John 3:17-18

“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

In our attic we have what we call “keep sake” boxes that are filled with papers, report cards and special Mother’s and Father’s Day gifts that the children have given to us over the years. We just did not have the heart to throw many of these things away. And I suppose that all of us have these “keep sake” boxes in our homes. But why don’t we throw them away? **It’s because they represent a child’s heart!** They help us to recall what a little child’s heart is like as they have sought to please mom and dad over the years by their selfless

gifts of love and service. You see, these things remind us what it's like to be a child. They remind us of childlike service and love toward others. And this is what Jesus wants us to express toward others in this life - childlike humility, love and service.

It's the child's desire to please his parents. And we should possess this same childlike humility today as the Father's own little children. We should live to please our own heavenly Father by learning to humbly serve others even as Jesus did while He was upon the earth. When we serve others and live for them we are really serving Jesus and pleasing the Father.

John 13:5 records:

"After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded."

John 13:15 concludes:

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

This act of washing the saint's feet was an example (not ordinance) of humble childlike service without any pretence of glory or praise. Have you washed someone's feet lately? Have you served them in some sacrificial and helpful way? My friend, we need to get our eyes off ourselves and on to others. We need to become like a child by humbling ourselves enough to take a towel and serve other people. This is the kind of humble service that we should do in light of the kingdom glory. We should be concerned about childlike humble service and leave the promotion and honor in the kingdom to the Lord. And we must remember that when we serve others in this way we are really serving Jesus!

Matthew 18:5 once again says:

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

The next time your smiling child brings to you a Mother's Day or Father's Day drawing with scribbled crayon all over it, you need to remember what Jesus said about becoming like a humble and

serving child. As that child lives to unselfishly serve and please those above him, so we should live to unselfishly serve others and in so doing please our Father. After all, when we serve others we are really serving Jesus! Have you drawn a picture for someone lately? Have you done something for them that you can give to them that will encourage their hearts and help them in life? Have you served them unselfishly in some childlike way?

3. We become like little children when we praise God in worship.

Not long ago I was at a nearby park playing a softball tournament. In between the games there was a man handing out Gospel tracts to the players and all those people who were watching the games. I could see the tracts were not accepted with eagerness on the part of the adults. But there in the midst of the ball players, there was a four or five-year-old child, a little girl, who took the tract with much eagerness. Her mother said that it was talking about Jesus. And immediately in the middle of the entire ball team and surrounding adults the child started singing at the top of her voice:

“Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so,
Little ones to him belong,
They are weak but He is strong.
Yes Jesus loves me,
Yes Jesus loves me,
Yes Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.”

Everyone just stood there and listened as that little child sung her heart out to Jesus. The majority of people present were no doubt unsaved. But from the lips of this child they heard the story about how Jesus loved them. After this incident, I was reminded about a forgotten text in the Bible.

Matthew 21:15-16

“And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have

ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”

I thought to myself, “This is exactly what happened at my softball tournament. From the mouth of a babe or little child God’s name was praised!” How beautiful this is to contemplate today. How moving and marvelous it is to see little children praising the Lord in the midst of vile sinners and a wicked society.

The background of this text of Scripture is important to understand. Jesus had just cleaned out the temple.

Matthew 21:12 says:

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.”

As Jesus entered the temple area, His indignation was directed toward those who had changed the character of the temple from a place of prayer into a place of corrupt commercialism. Many were making their living from the temple and the sacrifices purchased there. They insisted that in the temple the people could not use money that had been circulating in society, but had to change their money into temple money first, for a fee, and then use the temple money to purchase animals for sacrifice, at inflated prices. Of course, this was a scam that was intended to make profit and the moneychangers had money coming out of their ears. This caused a righteous anger to swell up in the Lord and He overturned their tables and benches in the outer court of the Gentiles while quoting parts of two Old Testament verses, Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. This action demonstrated His messianic authority. He was the King and could do as He pleased. If He wants to wreck the temple then He will wreck it!

I believe that if Jesus would return to planet earth today He would immediately go to many of these TV ministries, with all of their “seed-faith” gimmicks and clean out His house once again. He would enter these religious rackets, which are raking in all kinds of money, and Jesus would once again throw over the money tables. He would be quick to say that they are making God’s house into a den of thieves

because of the money scams that are being run in the name of Jesus Christ. Men are building their personal empires and bank accounts as they devour the houses of widows (Matt. 23:14). And God says that they will not get away with it forever. Payday is coming! Remember that God does not always settle His accounts in this life.

Jesus further demonstrated His authority as the Messiah by healing the blind and the lame who came to Him at the temple. Only Matthew recorded this fact. Matthew 21:14 says: "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them."

Normally such individuals were excluded from the temple, but Jesus brought many changes in the temple area. His presence sparked much interest and multitudes of people went into the temple area wanting to be healed. And the Bible records that while Jesus healed those who came to Him in the temple, little children ascribed praise to Him, shouting the messianic claims that He was the long awaited Savior of Israel.

Matthew 21:15

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased."

The children were praising the Lord but the religious hucksters, who did not want to accept Jesus as their Messiah, were not happy with what the children were saying. They were greatly disturbed and wanted them to stop the praises to the Lord. But Jesus then said something that should interest all of us today. **Jesus told the people to listen to the children!** He told them to listen to what they were saying.

Matthew 21:16 records:

"And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

Sometimes we would be better off if we would listen to little children as they praise the Lord. This is because their praise is genuine, sincere and without hypocrisy. Jesus wants us to listen to children.

He wants us to learn something from what they are saying. He wants us to see in them a sincere heart of praise that is directed toward Him. Children teach us the lesson of sincere praise to the Savior even as this little girl did as she praised the Lord in the middle of a bunch of tough and rugged ball players during my softball game.

The religious leaders of Israel were disturbed at the wonder and joy that the children displayed as they witnessed Jesus cleansing the temple and healing those who were blind and crippled. The children saw and accepted the wonderful things that Jesus did as the true Messiah and God! But the religious crowd was not filled with wonder. The text says that the children were “crying” (vs. 15) which was a word used to describe how a raven would make a loud cry as it flies by in the air above. In other words the children were speaking with a loud voice and praising Jesus. They were telling everybody that Jesus was “Hosanna” which literally means “Oh save us.” It was clearly a messianic title. The children identified Jesus as the Messiah and Savior by this saying of praise. They also verified and understood that he was the “Son of David” because as the messiah He had a royal lineage that stemmed back to David. This linked Jesus to the throne of David as the coming messianic king. The children could clearly see that He was the sent one from God by what He did. They saw the wonderful things that Christ did and verified who He was.

Think of this for a moment. Place yourself in this setting of the temple. The young children were filled with wonder and simply believed that God could do the impossible. They were astonished and filled with the wonder of who Jesus was and what He could do. Therefore, they just kept crying out, as the birds of the sky, “Jesus is Savior, Jesus is Savior, Jesus is Savior, Jesus is the Savior, Jesus is Savior, Jesus is the Savior!” I think you get the picture. The crowds were listening to the children as they sang praises to Jesus Christ.

But the sophisticated crowd of religious scholars did not share this same wonder and praise that the children possessed. Instead of wonder they were filled with doubt and confusion. The religious theologians wanted everybody to hush up so they could question who Jesus was and why He healed in the temple. They wondered if Jesus had heard what these cackling children were saying about Him. They were angered at the children’s praises and what they said about

Jesus. I'm sure they were saying, "Would someone take these kids out to the nursery so that they might stop saying these things." But what was the response of Jesus to the children?

Matthew 21:16

"And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

The question the religious unbelievers asked Jesus implies that they wanted Jesus to stop the loud praises of the children. But He refused to do so on the basis of Scripture (Psalm 8:2) by reminding them how little children see the wonder of God and want to praise God for who He is and what He does. **Jesus was using the little children to explain how children believe on Him and are always ready to praise the true God whereas others who lack a believing heart fail to praise Him and see the wonder of His person.** What a lesson this is for our modern day lives. Like these religious leaders, we can become blindsighted to the wonder and working of God and fail to praise the Lord with sincerity and openness. We can lose sight of the wonder of who God is and the wonder of His mighty works in creation, redemption and our own physical lives. And as a result we can lose our spontaneous praise to the Lord.

Too many times we get so bogged down in life that we cannot see the mighty hand of God working and praise Him for what He is doing and has done. *These children had a spontaneous reaction of praise that erupted when they saw Jesus.* Sometimes we think that we must wait until Sunday morning to praise Jesus. But we must understand that God is looking for spontaneous childlike praise from our lives everyday. He is looking for praise that is pure and sincere and praise that comes from seeing God work. **Childlike praise involves praise that is spontaneous, praise that is free from hypocrisy and praise that responds to the wonder and greatness of God.**

Dear Christian friend, have you lost your childlike praise? Have you lost that spontaneous praise that should fill your heart as you drive the car, mow the yard and do your job at work or in the home? Have you lost the child that is to be in you? Have you lost the wonder of it all? Daddies at work need to praise the Lord. Mothers in the home

need to praise the Lord. The child of praise should grow deep within our spirit. And we must remember that if we have not learned to truly praise and worship the Lord it doesn't really matter how well we do anything else.

Psalm 9:2

"I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High."

George Herbert wrote:

"Thou hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more--a grateful heart.
Not thankful when it pleases me,
As if Thy blessings had spare days,
But such a heart, whose pulse may be Thy praise."

Jesus is asking us to become like children once again! We must possess greater faith in Him and humbly serve others in life in any way that we can. Furthermore, we must learn to spontaneously praise the Lord for His great works and for who He is and what He means in our lives.

Jesus said we are to "become as little children" (Matt. 18:3).

We should:

Have faith as a child.

Listen to God as a child.

Follow God as a child.

Humble ourselves before God as a child.

Trust God as a child.

Love God as a child.

Spend time with God as a child.

Praise God as a child.

There is so much more to life! This is why Jesus wants us to possess a child's heart once again and learn to grow in our faith toward God, our service toward others and enhance our praise and worship to the Lord. Jesus wants us to experience the best in life. But we must become like a child in order to really live!

I think that this is a message that needs to break through our sophisticated hearts today so that we can look at children, hold them in our arms and remember what Jesus said concerning our own need to become like little children once again in our faith, service and praise. May we see the ice cream on their little faces and the simplicity of their hearts and change our idiotic way of living by becoming like little children once again – trusting, serving and praising.

One daddy said this:

Last night my little boy confessed to me some childish wrong. And kneeling at my knee, he prayed with tears: "Dear God, make me a man, like Daddy, wise and strong. I know you can." Then while the child slept, I knelt beside his bed, confessed my sins, and prayed with low bowed head. "Oh God, make me a child again. Make me like my child here, who sleeps in purity, guileless, trusting Thee with faith sincere."

Let us not forget:

"The great man is the man who does not lose his child's heart."