

LIVING AS A CHILD of GOD

Picture in your mind a young, pre-school child – one that has been given a loving, nurturing and stimulating environment.

What would that child be like?

Playful, creative, uninhibited, energetic, enthusiastic, messy, curious, asking questions, asking for what they need amongst other things, willing to learn, trusting, loving, free to be themselves, expressing emotions, unafraid to try things, physical, living in the moment, no worries, not dwelling on the past.....

Perhaps we were like this child once? Perhaps, we have been hurt or told to “grow up”, not to cry etc and have learned to adapt to fit in with our family or school ways of being.

But you know what? Jesus calls us to come to him like a little child.

Matthew 18: 1-5 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’*

² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³ And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

So what does Jesus mean that we must change and become

- 1) like a little child in order to
- 2) enter the kingdom of heaven?

1) Become like a little child

Well, he also said that each of us must be “born again” John 3:3-8 Jesus replied (to Nicodemus),

‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’

⁴ ‘How can someone be born when they are old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!’

⁵ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.”⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’

So what this means is that when we connect our spirit with the spirit of God and invite Jesus to live inside us spiritually, we are reborn spiritually, changed from the inside out to begin another life journey connecting with the spiritual dimension as part of our everyday lives. It’s as if our spirit gets a re-awakening of the potential that God placed within us at birth.

We are born as a human being, made of flesh, and in tune with the needs of our flesh for food, comfort, warmth etc – but over time we develop desires and wants that go

beyond our basic needs – often these are things that are unhealthy or selfish or hurtful to others. We receive hurts that shut down our childish fun, freedom and creativity. We worry about what other people might think.

But when we are reborn spiritually, we really do get another chance to start our lives over by coming to God like a little child, bringing him all our hurts, all the things that keep us locked into things and people that are not good for us, by expressing our feelings before Him, forgiving those who have wronged us, forgiving ourselves for the things we have done wrong and accepting the free and loving forgiveness that is ours the moment we say sorry to God, because Jesus died on a cross to take the punishment that is rightfully ours.

Our spiritual rebirth is the beginning of a process that helps clean up the effects of living in the flesh, healing our mind, our body, our emotions and our will. It can take time because God deals with only what He knows we can cope with, so we are spiritual babies that need nurturing, teaching and love to become more and more mature.

Living as a child of God we need to:

- **Treat God like a loving father and not as some distant bureaucrat or dictator.**
- **Have a childlike attitude to our faith**

Matthew 7

⁷‘Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹‘Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

So let’s reflect on how we would relate to the most perfect, loving father with childlike faith and apply that to our relationship with God:

- we are not afraid to ask and we keep on asking, trusting God to answer in His way, in His timing, trusting in His kindness, His desire to give good gifts to His children, believing that He knows what is best for us even when we get an answer we do not expect!
- Having childlike faith means we trust Him without question with every detail of our lives
- Being childlike in our faith we are not afraid to have a go, be creative and get messy – allowing the power of God to work through us for the good and ultimate salvation of someone else , even if it makes us look silly in the eyes of the world (remember Noah!), daring to speak out those words that we sense God might be saying
- Children love to spend time cuddled up with their parents – remember it is intimacy with us that the Lord is looking for

2) Enter the kingdom of heaven

Matthew 19:13-15

¹³ Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

¹⁴ Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' ¹⁵ When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

I wonder how many of us think about entering the kingdom of heaven and what that actually means?

Possibly we think in terms of the future hope we have of eternal life when our bodies die and our spirit goes on to live in the spiritual dimension forever.

But Jesus made it clear that the kingdom of heaven (that he mentions 31 times in the gospel of Matthew) has both a present as well as a future reality.

More than once he says "repent for the kingdom of heaven **has come near.**" Note the past tense.

He also, spends a lot of time teaching in parables to demonstrate what the kingdom of heaven IS like – not what it WILL be like.

In John 3:3 Jesus says no-one can SEE the kingdom of God unless they are born again. So this means that if we are born again, we must have the capacity to SEE into the spiritual dimension of the heavenly realms.

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus says to Peter 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' This makes it clear that there is a direct relationship between what we can see in heaven and releasing it on to the earth

Matthew 11

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.'

Summary

- **Imagine what the world would be like if all born-again Christians live out their lives with childlike faith**
- **Imagine what our relationship with God would be like if we come to the godhead like a little child with trust and confidence, secure in the knowledge that we are dearly loved and accepted**
- **Imagine how the world could be changed through us when we all become more childlike – after all His plan to save the world is through each of us carrying on the work that Jesus started and taught us how to by the power of the Holy Spirit!**

Meditation on Matthew 14:22-33

If it's you, Lord
If it **is** you
Then tell me to come
Tell me to get out of the boat
My safe place
Even though the wind is against me

If this **is** your will
If you **are** calling me
Then I will step out of my comfort zone
Even walk on water and overcome my fear
Do what seems humanly impossible

If this **is** you showing me the way
Then I will come towards you
Keep my eyes centred on your loving gaze

When problems blow my way
Even though my heart sinks
I know I will not go under
For all I have to do is cry "Lord, save me!"
And you will be there in an instant
To reach out your hand
To lift me up and draw me close

Even if I make mistakes
You will be there to guide me back to the right place
Back into your boat where all becomes calm
Where there is worship and loving connection to God
Where there is peace

So when you call me, Lord
I will come

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