

Teaching for 11-14-07

Like a Little Child

Jesus said, *"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3-4).

According to these words of Jesus, becoming like little children is a critical truth about the kingdom of heaven. If we are serious about seeking the kingdom of heaven, then we must be serious about the place of child-like faith. But as adults, we naturally avoid the truth of the child's perspective because we do not want to seem naïve or gullible. Rather, we issue cautions about being too simplistic. But if Jesus said it, then what did He mean by "becoming like little children"?

Oswald Chambers, a Scottish pastor who lived from 1874-1917, wrote: *The child-heart is open to any and all avenues; an angel would no more surprise it than a man. In dreams, in visions, in visible and invisible ways, God can talk and reveal Himself to a child; but this profound yet simple way is lost forever immediately when we lose the open, childlike nature.*

True Child-likeness

Child-likeness does not mean childishness. *Childishness* has to do with immature behavior; *child-likeness* has to do with an open heart and sincere faith. Our Western analytical mindset tells us that we need to avoid being open to "any and all avenues," as Chambers states it. Yet, throughout Scripture God was looking for those who would simply believe Him and be open to the voice or the touch of God—even in unusual ways. Jesus connects this child-likeness with the humble heart that knows and trusts God.

Child-likeness has to do with our trust in the character of God. Do we believe that God is a God of love and faithfulness? Are we able to take God's Word at face value and believe it because we know He is Truth? Most of us have witnessed that simple innocence of a young child who, with wide-eyed trust, receives what is new and different. Yet we are cautious about abandoning ourselves to child-like trust because we have become jaded by disappointment in the circumstances of life experience.

How do we *become as little children* without being deceived, hurt, or duped? How do we stay wise to the schemes of the enemy and this fallen world, yet still be open to the unique ways that God might work in our lives? How do we maintain child-likeness in a world that causes us to be suspicious and skeptical?

Intentionally Becoming Child-like Again

One of the first intentional steps is to look into our lives to identify those areas where we have lost that *open, childlike nature*. If we have become calloused and cynical, we need to examine ways we may have transferred those attitudes to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. We must give the Holy Spirit permission to reveal those areas, and then have a heart that is ready and anxious to confess whatever He reveals.

Second, we must learn—or re-learn—to be open to an ever-creative, ever-imaginative God. This starts with believing that whatever God does in our lives flows out of His immense and passionate love for us. Therefore, we can be open to what He will say to us or bring into our lives because we trust with childlike faith that He is indeed loving and good.

Being open is not being naïve. Being open is based upon the truth and the character of God as revealed in the Scriptures. Child-like openness measures all things by the truth of the Word of God. Being open to God is not the same as being open and accepting to whatever comes along. For example, we must guard against the ploys of sinful man, the world, or Satan. If we remain humble in our hearts and seek the Lord, He will guard us by His Spirit—and will also keep us from reverting to a “know-it-all, been there, done that” attitude.

The Wonder of God

Finally, being child-like means that we have a sense of wonder about God, His world, and His ways. This is an opportunity to re-learn how we view and experience the wonder of the majesty and the greatness of God. As adults, we easily lose our sense of wonder in the midst of frenetic schedules and overwhelming life issues. To regain wonder is to take a moment to soak in the beauty of a sunset. To wonder is to linger a few extra moments to ponder a wonderful Truth about God from His Word. To wonder is to see others as our Heavenly Father sees them—and then admire what we see!

There is a part of each of us as children of the Living God that needs to discover anew what it means to become as a little child. Take some time to allow the Lord to show you where you have lost that child-likeness, and instead have become jaded and hardened. Ask Him to teach you what it means to have a heart that is open to His ways that may seem different than is normally comfortable for you. Ask the Lord to rekindle in you a sense of wonder for the Lord, His creation, and His ways.

Lord, teach us what it means to come to You as little children. Soften those hard places in our hearts, and give us a new and fresh openness and wonder that will allow You to do new and wonderful things in our lives—and in the lives of others through us. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.