

Matthew 18:1-4 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:13-15 13 Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought 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.

What is it about children that causes them to be such "walking sermons?" I once read that Pope John XXIII had asked Nikita Krushchev's wife to tell him the names of her children. When she asked him why, he responded, "Because a mother says her children's names like no other person in the world.

Children. Little. Powerless. Inquisitive. What is it about them that is so special? I believe we could write thousands of books to answer this question. But today I'm thinking of a few traits in particular.

1. Little children don't mind being needy.
2. Little children believe easily.
3. Little children trust easily.
4. Little children receive easily.

I have never heard a wee one say, "I can hardly wait to grow up so I don't need anyone to help me or take care of me!" Nor have I seen a little one in the presence of one who loved them having any problem trusting that person. Trust flows so easily from a child. And finally, little children are so quick to receive gifts from parents, friends and caretakers. If a child has to be given something "for their own good" which they might otherwise not enjoy, a good parent will find a way to add it to some form or other of "a spoonful of sugar" to help the medicine go down!

For those of you with children who have grown up from childhood, do you not sometimes miss those days when your little one was so happy? When your very presence caused him or her to light up with joy? People almost universally love to hold and love a little child.

These characteristics were, I believe, some of the key reasons that Jesus used little children to try to teach big ones (like you and me!) He also used His disciples and the folks with whom he was in contact during His ministry on earth to teach not only them, but us as well.

What can we learn here? First, greatness in heaven is measured exactly opposite of the way we measure it on earth. Whom do we consider great on earth? The rich, the beautiful, the popular, the powerful, the rulers. And upon whom does God lay the title of greatest in His economy? Listen once again

Matthew 18:2-4 2 He (Jesus) called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, **whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

Hmmm! Is this possible? These were **his disciples talking to Him!** These were not those we like to remember as arrogant in His day, for example the Pharisees. No, these were His own!. Why would he says this to them? **Because they were constantly arguing about who was going to be Vice-President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Elder in the Church, Pastor, Sunday School Teacher, top kid in the class, etc.etc.etc.**

They were members of the TRUE FAITH, the TRUE CHURCH! They thought nothing of putting down others whose traditions were different than theirs. Theirs was the correct political party! Theirs were the only traditions that counted! Their kids went to the best schools! Hmmm indeed!

And Jesus made an altogether incredible assertion in this passage when He said,

Unless you change you will never enter the kingdom of heaven!

If these thoughts were contained in a workbook, I would suggest an exercise for us to do right now. I would suggest you get out pencil and paper, and first write this Scripture down – all four verses. Then ask Father to speak to your heart about your attitudes. You know, other folks's attitudes really don't matter, because you are only called to let your own be redeemed. I might suggest you make a list of values, of mind-sets you have that might seem such as would not be manifested in little children. And when you have your list written, would you once again, come before Father and talk to Him about them? Ask Him to replace them in your life with child-like attitudes.

I am so greatly encouraged that when the “big shots” among Jesus’ followers tried to shoo away the children from coming to Him, Jesus Himself stepped in to stop them. He gathered those little ones around Himself.

Somehow He knew they needed prayer, even though they **were** little ones, even though they were comfortable with being dependent, easy to trust and easy to receive. He knew they were growing up and would increasingly be subjected to the temptation to become arrogantly independent, slow to trust and very reluctant to receive. So He prayed for them.

I think I need to spend some time with the Lord over this myself. Lord, I’m getting older in the flesh. I’m at the door of the “golden years,” and the only thing golden is one tooth!. But Lord, I think I’m contaminated by carnal ways. And I don’t want to be.

Right now, Lord, I receive your challenge to me to turn, to change, to embrace the simplicity of children. I say “Yes, Lord!” I say “Yes!”

Lord, I’m going to make this change first with You, who above all others, deserve my dependence, my trust, my happily receptive heart. And Lord, I’m going to let you love others through me with these same virtues. Father, I come to you right now, as a little child. I love you, Papa. I receive Your love.



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Pensacola, Florida