

“Let the Little Children Come to Me...”

By the time you read this, Vacation Bible School 2017 will be over. We just completed day one and it seemed to me that everyone involved enjoyed it tremendously. There is no doubt in my mind that the next two days will be no different. It is wonderful for an “older” man like myself to see the enthusiasm and joy that a child can show to all who are around him or her. They are great examples to all of us.

Jesus loved children. It is obvious by His interaction with them and his statements about them. In **Matthew 18**, there’s an episode in His life that shows just that. This is what the apostle Matthew records:

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.’” (Matthew 18:1-6)

Children are, by nature, trusting people. They depend upon others to tell them the truth, and they act on that truth. Their innocence and lack of brashness or ego should serve as an example for those of us who are “children” of God. People, Jesus said, need to let go of their so-called knowledge and trust the One who would tell them the truth. It was John and James, Sons of Thunder, who wanted positions of authority when Jesus came into His kingdom. And not to let the other apostles off the hook (because they were just as bad), it was obvious of their jealousy of James and John that they, too, wanted to be in positions of authority as well.

Children know their place. Children know only what they are taught. They don’t necessarily aspire to superiority. They soak up what their told like a sponge and believe every word they are told. We, as children of God, are to be the same. Listen to God’s word, believe it’s truth, and do what you’re told. Play nice.

It seemed as if the apostles still didn’t understand. In **Luke 18**, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and the tax collector. The rich man was pompous and self-righteous. The tax collector was penitent and knew he needed forgiveness and guidance. Immediately after this parable, this is what Luke says:

“People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’” (Luke 18:15-17)

Don't bother Jesus, they said. He had more important things to do than bless babies. He's criticizing rich people, and we want to hear more of that. Jesus, it is said, "**rebuked**" them. To rebuke means to strongly disagree with. They were wrong. He felt children were very important. They were an excellent example of how all of us as children of God should be: innocent, loving, trusting, and dependent.

Vacation Bible School, as well as Sunday School classes, are an important part in educating our children so that when they are older, they will continue in the faith. I am blessed to be a part of all of it. I pray that all of us can be more child-like in our walk with God.

---Johnny Stephens