**Like Little Children**

*Matthew 18:1-5*

**Introduction**

1. Our perspectives and ideas are not generally the same as God’s (**cf. Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 3:19**).
2. This is especially true concerning our perspective of greatness – **Matthew 18:1** – something of which the disciples disputed.
3. Jesus showed them His perspective of greatness in the kingdom using a child – **Matthew 18:2-5**
   1. In their independence and self-provision, adults lose some admirable qualities they had as children.
   2. **(v. 3)** – Jesus shows that the very entrance into the kingdom would require turning back to these qualities – namely humility.
      1. **Matthew 19:13-15** – of such is the kingdom of heaven.
   3. **(vv. 4-5)** – Furthermore, the greatness in the kingdom would not be what the disciples had in mind, but would include “whoever,” (so not one who is greatest), and would be a state of humility.
4. We should learn from this perspective of our Lord and become more like a little child.
5. Humility
6. The primary consideration in Jesus’ answer to the disciples.
   1. Dispute **(v. 1)** – who is the greatest?
   2. **(v. 3)** – Humility is key.
   3. Jesus Himself showed greatness in humility – **John 13:12-17** (in washing the disciples feet); **Philippians 2:8** (the ultimate service which the feet washing typified)
7. We Must Humble Ourselves
   1. Before God – **James 4:10** – humble before Him and He’ll lift you up.
      1. Comes from a recognition of sin – **Matthew 5:3** (poor in spirit – spiritually bankrupt)
      2. Shown in text – **James 4:7-10**
      3. Whole idea of salvation requires humility – if you are in need of saving, you have failed (sin), and must not be able to save yourself – what’s more humbling?
   2. Before Each Other – the humility before God which is required for everyone should naturally translate into humility before each other.
      1. Humility is key in our relationships as brethren – **Colossians 3:12-13** – bearing with another, and forgiving another are impossible if pride is present, and humility is lost. (Requires the understanding that Christ forgave you.)
      2. **Ephesians 4:1-3** – part of what we’re called to. (NOTE CONTEXT: Jewish pride before Gentiles – **cf. Ephesians 3:6**)
8. Purity
9. Another consideration in Jesus’ answer to the disciples.
   1. **Matthew 18:1** – dispute of greatness.
      1. Pride is inherent in this dispute.
      2. INHERENT IN ALL SIN IS PRIDE.
      3. Call to be as children (namely in humility) would also be a call to purity.
   2. **(v. 5)** – children are in fellowship with God.
   3. **(vv. 6-7)** – children are innocent, hence the admonition against causing them to sin. (Spiritual children, but the thought requires consistency in application to literal children considered before.)
   4. **Matthew 19:14** – of such is the kingdom – those in the kingdom are those who are made pure, or cleansed of sin.
10. We Must Purify Ourselves
    1. **1 John 3:2-3** – called to purity as God’s children.
    2. **Romans 16:19** – we must be simple concerning evil.
       1. Simple – *akeraios*, lit., “unmixed, with absence of foreign mixture” (from *a*, negative, and *kerannumi*, “to mix”), “pure,” (VINE)
       2. **Matthew 5:8** – only the pure in heart will see God. (For He is pure/holy.)
       3. **1 Peter 1:15-16** – called to holiness as God is holy.
11. Love
12. A quality of children is unconditional love. One of the many things that makes them vulnerable (EX: with strangers). A quality we must work to possess.
13. We Must Show Love
    1. A debt we owe – **Romans 13:8-10** – ultimately indebted to fulfill the law, thus indebted to love.
    2. World – **Matthew 5:43-48** – even to the degree of loving enemies.
       1. **(v. 48)** – perfect as God. (Complete – not only loving those that are easy to love. God loves everyone.)
    3. Brethren – **1 Peter 1:22** – born “unto” love of the brethren.
       1. A call to love, and the danger of the opposite – **Galatians 5:14-15** (especially Jewish and Gentile differences)
          1. “The readiest way to destroy the spirituality of a church, and to annihilate the influence of religion, is to excite a spirit of contention.” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible)
       2. Rather – **Colossians 3:14-15** – put on love, be at peace, act as the “one body” that you are.
14. Eagerness for Growth and Approval
15. Children are constantly growing in everyday activities and seek such growth. Part of this is their longing from approval from others, namely parents.
16. We Must Long for Growth and Approval of God
    1. **1 Peter 2:1-3** – a call to growth by the word as children.
    2. **Hebrews 6:1** – an exhortation to move on from elementary principles.
    3. Paul longed for the approval of God – **Galatians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 4:2-5**
    4. Such approval takes effort (diligence) – **2 Timothy 2:4, 15** – not distracted with other things, but focused on pleasing God, and doing so by diligence in the word.
17. Dependency and Trust
18. Children are fully dependent on their guardians and have no choice but to trust them. Trust, in usual circumstances, comes easy for children.
19. We Must Fully Depend on God and Trust in Him
    1. We depend on God:
       1. For spiritual life and guidance:
          1. **Romans 3:21-26** – our salvation is dependent on God’s plan and grace and comes through our faith (trust) in that plan to remove our sins via Jesus’ blood.
          2. We further depend on God’s guidance in this new life – **Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12; Psalm 119:105**
       2. For physical necessity – **James 1:17**
    2. We trust in God:
       1. To keep us spiritually upright:
          1. **1 John 1:9; 2:1-2; Jude 24** – He can present us faultless through His provision of forgiveness.
          2. **2 Timothy 1:12** – He is able to keep us to the end.
       2. To provide for our needs – **Matthew 6:31-34** – such trust expels worry.
20. Contentment
21. Children often impress us with their ability to be happy and content with things we deem simple, and insignificant. (EX: Child just as happy with the box the toy came in than with the toy itself.)
22. We are Called to Contentment
    1. The danger – **Matthew 6:24** – discontentment leads to split vision, wherein God is ultimately neglected.
       1. **Hebrews 13:5-6** – discontentment will lead to sin, but we must trust in Christ.
    2. The expectation – **Philippians 4:10-13** – through Christ we can be content in all situations.
       1. **1 Timothy 6:6-8** – we can be content with the bare necessities.

Conclusion

1. Children are given by God as standard of measurement for our character as His spiritual children.
2. We can learn much from children.
3. Let us humble ourselves, and become like little children.