

Suffer the Little Children

By Kent Heaton

The Lord had just finished a tense discourse with the Pharisees who were trying to trap Him in His teaching about divorce when little children were brought to Him “that He might put His hands on them and pray” (Matt. 19:13). His disciples sought to refuse the disruption rebuking the parents for troubling the Lord with children. However it was the Lord who rebuked the disciples because He longed to be with the children. “And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:16).

Jesus, the Son of God, took time for children. He understood the value and worth of the little minds that needed to see His Father as much as the hardened hearts of the Jewish leaders. He not only took time for them but He laid His hands on them and prayed with them. Paint the picture: there is the Creator of the world holding children in His lap, caressing their hair, speaking words of comfort and joy to their little ears, smiling and thanking His Father for the joy of young hearts.

David the psalmist knew the power of children. “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen-- even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth” (Psalms 8).

Children have a pure heart. They are not corrupted with the prejudices of life that change the hearts from a simple trust in God to the dark wisdom of man. The little ones are amazed at the stars and the sun and the moon. Their eyes see butterflies, bugs, leaves and ripples on the water. Forgiveness is not hard for them and it matters not who the other child is and what color skin they have. Children love children because they have a child’s heart.

Earlier Jesus had taught that to be part of the kingdom of God a heart of a child was needed. “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me” (Matthew 18:3-5). It is sad when children grow up and lose the humility that characterized their first years. Adults teach the values to children that destroy that innocence when children should remind adults the nature of being a humble person.

Every aspect of the life of a Christian is measured by the heart of a child. Forgiveness only comes from a heart that is humbled by the forgiveness granted by the Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:14-15). Esteeming others better than one self (Phil. 2:1-11) is developed from the mind of a child. So often the fusses within families and churches stem from those who fail to act like children in the proper setting of kindness and love. Children do not have wrinkles on their brow because they do not worry but trust the Father. They do not have to understand everything to believe in the Father; it means more to them to be able to hold His hand in dark storms and feel secure.

The Lord took time for children. It would seem a bother to the disciples to interrupt the schedule of such an important man like Jesus. And Jesus lived an exhausted life. But one has to imagine how treasured and precious those fleeting moments of holding children were to the Lord to refresh His spirit and bring a smile to His wearied face. Can we do any less?

It goes without saying that fathers need to realize the time with their children is fleeting and there is no time like the present. Your work and your hobbies are not as important as the time you spend with your children – holding them and praying with them. There will come a time they will no longer sit in your lap but they will always be able to pray with you. They need to hear your voice in prayer and learn how to talk to the Heavenly Father as you talk to Him.

One of the great needs in the church today is for the shepherds or elders who tend the flock to also realize the need to tending the children. The example of Jesus would suggest that time should be spent for the shepherds visiting with the children and praying with them. Often elders are so busy with the adults they neglect the children and young people. What impact did it have on the children who sat in Jesus lap and heard Him pray? How wonderful to teach our children the important role elders have in shepherding the flock of God and for them to see and experience firsthand the prayers of the elders.

Children are not the church of the future but rather the church of today! They have so much to teach us in their humility and their love. We should never dismiss them from gatherings of adults but rather encourage them to sit quietly at the feet of their parents listening and learning about God from the hearts of the adults. There is a time to go and play and enjoy the company of other children but do not neglect the golden opportunities to teach them respect and honor for the grownups. Suffer the little children!

Gratitude and Health

It often takes science quite a while to catch up to the wisdom of God revealed in His word thousands of years ago. The “New Science of Gratitude” states: “give thanks to God to boost your health. Taking a moment, just before sleep, in the privacy of your bedroom, to pray or meditate and count your blessings can boost your mental health and your immune system. In his book Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier, Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., points out that people who consciously pause to give thanks, to the universe, to God, to their families, to one another, are less likely to experience anxiety, depression, headaches, muscle pain and other manifestations of stress. The last thing you think about at night is important, he says. Make it count.”

A Moments Wisdom

--For the first half of your life, people tell you what you should do; for the second half, they tell you what you should have done.

--As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do.

--Age mellows some people; others it makes rotten.

--The spiritual eyesight improves as the physical eyesight declines.

--Life is half spent before we know what it is.

--Few people know how to be old.

--Find an aim in life before you run out of ammunition.