

"You're Acting Like a Child!" - Part 1

Typically when we hear the phrase, "You're acting like a child," we think of someone who is being immature. There are times, however, when the phrase could actually be considered complimentary. The key in determining if the phrase is a rebuke or a compliment is being able to distinguish between childISHness and childLIKEness.

To be childlike is to be humble. Jesus' disciples who walked with Him while He was in the flesh argued from time to time over who was going to be in the leading positions in His kingdom. As they continued to view His kingdom in a purely physical sense, their political aspirations for power led them to ask Him for the highest ranks among His followers. One instance of this is in Matthew 18:1-4. "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Being humble means recognizing that we are here to serve rather than to be served (Matthew 20:20-28). There is no room for self-centeredness in a Christian (Matthew 5:3). Humility leads to greater service, deeper love and a more powerful impact for the cause of Christ.

To be childlike is to be trusting. Luke 18:15-17 says, "And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Just as small children do not question the guidance of their parents, so Christians are to have this same type of unwavering trust in God and His will. Will He faithfully care for us as He has promised or will He not (Matthew 6:25-34, et al.)? Will He save those who faithfully obey Him or will He not (Revelation 3:10)? Do we trust His promises?

To be childlike is to be harmless. Paul exhorts, "in malice be ye children." (I Corinthians 14:20). The word translated "malice" means, "ill-will, desire to injure." Paul's words in Romans 12:17-20 very clearly define this childlike trait. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, thou shalt give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Our actions should be motivated by a desire to lead others to God rather than to harm their souls.

Perhaps this final point can't be labeled as something that is "childlike" but it is nonetheless something that characterizes children, especially babies. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Peter 2:2). Just as the hungry baby cries for his meal, we should diligently seek the spiritual feast that is available in God's Word (Matthew 5:6). Just as the baby will not cease his crying until he is filled, so must we persist in our study of the Bible.

"You're acting like a child." If you're humble, trusting, harmless and diligently studying God's Word, then you should take that a compliment. That same phrase can have negative connotations though. We'll consider those in part two.

Mike Gifford
Gifford7777@yahoo.com