

THE HEART OF A CHILD

Sylvester Onyemalechi

“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. Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’ When he has placed his hands on them, he went on from there.”

Jesus revealed in this passage his heart for little children. He showed that he loves children and wants them to come close to him. Most importantly, he revealed that the kingdom of God belongs to those who have a child’s heart.

“For the kingdom of heaven belongs to SUCH AS THESE.”

Such as these means people who are like these little children. Such as these means those with a child’s heart. There is something about a child that fascinates Jesus. It will be wise of us to find out what it is that Jesus saw in the heart of a child that moves him to make that statement. We must first agree that no one can please the Master without a child’s heart. We need it to gain acceptance and remain in close communion with the Father and Saviour. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those with a child’s heart.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHILD

1. Children are led – directed.

A child is submissive to his parents for direction. They trust easily believing they are loved and would not be hurt. They accept anything they are told without argument. They allow their mother to dress them, feed them, instruct them and guide them without putting up a fight or wanting to know why mummy wants me to wear or eat this, or do this or that. They simply follow the leading of their parents or guardian without question.

It is therefore, very important that man must come to Jesus without question and accept instruction from his mouth without wanting to know all the details about why the instruction is given. You must come to Jesus to be led by him. Submit to his direction and leading by His Spirit. You cannot follow the leading of the one you do not trust. Therefore you must trust the Master like a child will trust his parents. Believe that he does not want to harm you; therefore his instructions are in good fate and for your up building and welfare.

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’” (Jer. 29:11)

2. Children are dependent and dependable.

Children are dependent on their parents for help and daily needs. They trust their parents to take care of them. They believe they know what is good for them. They cannot help themselves with their daily chores. In the same way, anyone who comes to Christ must trust him enough to depend on him to help him. Our dependence is communicated

through prayers. This is the reason why when we put our trust in man, he allows them to disappoint us so we can trust Him.

“This is what the Lord says, ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.’” (Jer. 17:5-8)

God does not want us to trust in our riches and our own understanding.

“Whoever trusts in his riches will fall. But the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.” (Prov. 11:28)

“He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.” (Prov. 28:26)

Trust the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.” (Prov. 3:5-8)

Children are also dependable. They can be trusted to believe whatever they are told. They will do anything you ask them to do if it is within their power to do it. Children believe whatever is presented to them as truth. Make yourself dependable and trustworthy in every area of life. Can the Lord trust you with information and responsibility? Think about that.

3. Children don't worry.

Worry is a bad mental habit. It is a burden on the mind of man with negative health consequences. Children don't worry because they have no reason to worry. They know that mum and dad are always there to take care of their welfare. They don't have to work for their food, clothes or anything. All they need to do is ask or cry for it, and it will be provided. They have no reason whatsoever to worry. The same way you the believer have no reason to worry because Jesus is ever willing to help us with our needs. He is not only willing, but also well able to meet our needs. Put your trust in the Lord.

Don't allow what you know to hinder you from trusting the Lord. Children do not know much, so they are able to trust the Lord without worrying. But for the adults, our knowledge sometimes gets in the way. If you must trust the Lord without worrying, you must believe what God says rather than what you know about your situation, a particular person or persons. Worry hinders God from helping us because it is the opposite of faith. *“And without faith it is impossible to please God...” (Heb. 11:6)*

4. A child does not allow ugly moments to spoil his day.

A child's composition is such that when upset, he cries, when attended to, he quickly forgets what has happened and resumes his life. They have no time to keep record of wrongs. The past is always put behind them. Ugly moments are put behind them, and they don't allow them to spoil their day. The same way, the believer must always let go of the past and don't allow ugly moments spoil your day. Jesus desires that we come to him and relate with him as a child would. Keep no record of wrongs, and learn to put ugly moments behind you as they happen, especially after forgiveness has been sort by your offender.

5. Children possess a heartfelt capacity to love and be loved.

Love is a nature that we all possess but waiting to be nurtured to full maturity. A child's heart is innocent. The love in the heart of a child is pure and unpolluted. It is transparent and attractive. This explains why children love freely and can be loved. There is something about children that attracts people to them. The same way, God wants you and me to continue to make ourselves loving and lovable. There are some ways that one will behave and he will repel love from his life. You need to work on yourself to attract love and to love.

6. Children easily forgive.

Like we saw earlier, children don't keep record of wrongs so they don't allow ugly moments to spoil their day. This is a proof that they easily forgive. The adult believer therefore must make effort to forgive when offended. It is important that we forgive always. This will keep the channel of communication with God open. God hates unforgiveness. He Himself is a forgiver, and desires all his children to always forgive. To come to Jesus with a child's heart is to come to him ready to forgive as He Himself forgives. This is the reason why Jesus taught that the Father will only forgive those who forgive their offenders.

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matt 6:12-15 NIV)

7. Children easily accept their fault.

Children because of their nature are open to any knowledge that is presented to them. As a result they are open to correction. They easily accept their fault, because they are not mature and know nothing except that which is told them. The believer must be open to God as a child is open to information from those whom his life has been entrusted into their hand. Accept God's opinion about your life. Accept correction from him. Acknowledge your fault before God and before men. To cover and deny your fault is to make yourself unacceptable to God.

8. Children are lowly in heart, and see others better than themselves.

Humility is one of the criteria for approaching God. God humbles (brings down) the proud, but exalts the humble. Proud people don't go far with God. Humility grants us

access into the presence of God. Children are lowly in heart, and do not see others as less important as them. Do not see yourself more than you are.

“Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” (Rom. 12:16)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Phil. 2:3)

9. They know their source and are proud of it.

Children know who their father and mother are. And they are proud to call them dad and mum. The believer must be proud of his Saviour and Master. You must know that you receive your life from Him, and remain loyal to him forever.

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.” (Matt.10:32)

You must keep your mind on the fact that Jesus Christ is your source. Your job, business, parents or guardian is not your source. An understanding of this will help you to remain focused and loyal to Jesus Christ. That is why you must come to Him as a child. Know your source as a child does.

10. They are proud of their identity.

Children never have inferiority complex until it is inculcated in them as they grow up through the things they hear, see and experience. Until a child is meant to believe that his colour is a problem, he does not see it so, or consider it. They are always proud of their identity. They are innocent of the things the adults have come to believe. In the same way, the one that is to come to Christ for a relationship must accept who he is in Him. You must be proud of who you are in Him. You must be proud of your physical identity that is what makes you unique. Your colour, tribe, language or country is not a mistake at all. Be proud of it. You are complete in Him if you are in Christ. Your colour, background, language or tribe doesn't matter. You are a son of God. Know who you are. Get excited about who you are, and make the most of your life.

11. Children get excited about the promises made by those they trust.

Each time a promise is made to a child by either a parent, guardian or a relation, you need to see the excitement on their faces as they respond excitedly to the promise in anticipation that the promise will be kept. Children do not believe that those they trust will lie to them. Unfortunately, it is not always long before they are introduced to lying as they see promises after promises broken by this same people that they trusted. It is in the same vein that Jesus expects all those that must relate with him to trust Him that he will not disappoint them. Jesus is a keeper of promises. In him there is no lie or falsehood. His yes is yes. He himself taught us to stand by our words.

I want you to know that the master can be trusted. You must come to Him trusting that he will save you as he promised. You must trust Him to preserve you as he promised. He

will heal you always, and keep you in perfect shape. He will prosper you, fight all your battles, meet your needs and take care of you. When you call him, he will answer. He is worthy of your trust. I testify that Jesus is trustworthy. He has not failed me yet. And I am convinced that he will never fail. Trust your life into his care, and he will take care of you.

The Christian life is a life of trust, so the moment that you give your life to him, you have just promised to continue to trust him all your life. Trust him, he is worthy of it.

12. Children are grateful and thankful.

A child is always thankful and grateful when a gift is given. As long as they love the gift given, they will immediately show their gratitude with smiles and joy. In the same way, Jesus desires that all those who come to him should show gratitude and appreciation to him for all he will be doing for them.

If you do not know how to say thank you, you will soon experience scarcity. Thanksgiving is acknowledgement that God is the provider, and that in itself prepares the way for God to show you more kindness and help. Tithing is thanksgiving. Giving to the work of God is appreciation of His mercies in your life. If you are grateful, you will be full and never empty. If you are grateful you will make effort not to miss praise and worship services in your church. Keep praising Him.

“He who sacrifices thank offerings honours me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.” (Psalm 50)

13. A child’s mind is easily renewed.

Because children believe easily what they are taught it is easy to correct errors that they have believed. Children are teachable, this makes easy for their minds to be renewed. You must make yourself teachable. The problem with adults is they always want to stick to the things they have believed. But if you must walk with Christ, you must open up your heart to him and allow his word to wash your mind and instruct you about life and all that he wants you to believe. The word of God is truth, and only truth should be accepted and believed.

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

14. Children are inquisitive.

Children always want to know what they do not know. As a result they are always searching, experimenting to find out things for themselves, in the process they may scatter the whole house, and even destroy things. God wants his children to study his word to know what they do not know about who they are in him, and all they need to know about life. When there is a problem, he wants us to approach it with a child’s inquisitive mind, searching to know why things are the way they are and what can be

done to remedy the situation. He does not want us to panic or grumble but to diligently search out why what happened, happened and solutions.

15. Children are sincere and their motives are without hidden agenda.

This is what God expects of all his children – a sincere heart, walking and working with a pure motive. All motives will be judged on the last day. Wrong motive is deception, and must be eliminated. The sincere innocent heart of the child radiates and attracts friendship. Your sincere heart speaks without you knowing it. Be sincere and pure in heart.

“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.” (1 Cor.4:5)

CONCLUSION

From all we have seen in this study, it is necessary that you and I re-evaluate the way we have related with the Lord Jesus Christ. If it is not with a child’s heart, then change. It is only a child’s heart that will satisfy him.

If you have not accepted him as Saviour and Lord, you better do so now. But you must come to him with a child’s heart. If you want to receive him, you can pray this prayer:

Dear Jesus Christ, I accept you into my life as my Saviour and Lord. I repent of all my sins and I turn to you to serve and worship you all the days of my life. Thank you for forgiving and accepting me.

If you have done this, write me and let me know of your decision, and I will send you more materials to help you. God bless you and keep you in his love.