

## **A Childlike Faith**

### **by Chris Famisaran**

How are you all? Let's pray.

Thank you for the opportunity to once again gathered together today. And as we look to the Scriptures as we begin a series, now on the importance of faith, and especially from the perspective as a child, help us Lord, does teach us an imprint on our minds and our hearts, which you want us to learn today. But not only that, practice it in Jesus name, amen.

Well, this month we're going to be exploring the concepts of faith. So this week, we're going to talk about what does it mean to live with faith as a child, next week, we're going to talk about, or Bill I should say, is going to talk about what does it mean sometimes when, maybe obstacles and just life throws you a curveball? Later on, we're going to talk about how a father can help teach lessons on faith. And finally, towards the end, we're going to talk a little bit about what it means to, I guess, be an adult, have faith as well. And the next step in life when you we grow, realizing that the journey is only just beginning to be honest.

So earlier, we read a passage that is contained in three of the Gospels, that and I'll just, I'll read Mark's version here, it says, people were bringing little children to Jesus, for him to place his hands on them, okay. But guess what, what are the disciples tried to do? They rebuke the parents. And it's here, it's in one of those rare instances where Jesus gets a little upset. Jesus doesn't get upset very often. But there's, there's been a few occasions and usually, it's generally warranted, I think of the time when he threw everybody out of a temple because as he put it, he they turned the temple into a den of thieves, trying to restore order and, and bring back like, what was the purpose of the temple is to get people to be able to come to God. And they were inhibiting that. And here, we find that the disciples are trying to inhibit parents from being able to bring their children that Jesus might bless the children. And so when Jesus saw this, he was indignant actually. He said to them, let the little children come to me and don't 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 children will not enter it. And he took the children in his arms, he placed them, placed his hands on them, and he blessed them.

So these passages here are the same story. And when you find continuity, when there's, especially when the Gospels all point, to the same story, but John, his gospel is a little different. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they're known as a synoptic gospels, they have the same similar stories, maybe they'll tell it from their perspective. But the point is, if all three of them bring up this story, it has importance, it's relevant. This is something that is Jesus strongly feels about. So what is it saying here? Children are important. And not only that, there's much that we can learn from children here,

You know, children, they have a sense of curiosity. They can be resilient, they can be creative. They're empathetic, at times, they can be assertive. Kids, they also can be humble, and they can be confident, all aspects that we ourselves as adults, sometimes I think, as we get older, maybe we get a little jaded. That creativity, that curiosity and sometimes even that resilience starts to slip away. But Jesus is eventually here. In Matthew, Jesus is calling us to live like kids. So let's go to let's go to Matthew 18, Matthew 18:1-5, we're not gonna show it on the screen because we want you to bring your own Bibles or maybe if you

have a tablet, or if you don't have a Bible, open your phone to Matthew 18, one through five. All right, we want you to get into the habit of being able to search the Scriptures. Okay, so, Matthew 18, one through five, we are there? Alright...

So at the time the disciples came to Jesus, and asked Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? You see, even though the disciples had been walking with Jesus for some time, we had this little issue of pride. There were 12 disciples and even amongst the 12 disciples, there were actually there was a little smaller inner ring of Peter, James and John. Now Jesus invested three years into these disciples, especially the 12 apostles.

And especially James, John and Peter, because as you continue to read the Bible as you go through the Gospels, and especially when it talks about in the book of Acts, they're really Peter especially, is one of the chief cornerstones to help build the foundation of the early church. But even though Jesus talks about, hey, have humility, pride is still slipping. In fact, even I think, you know, one of one of the disciple's Mom asked, she says, Hey, you know, can can my boys have a special seat? And Jesus draws them back. And he says, Look, this is the mindset that you should have. And so in verse two, he calls a little child, to him, and he places the child, among them, he's presenting this child in front of them. See, this is the example. And he said, Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of God. 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.

So Jesus calls a child and he says, Look, this is the example I want you to become like this child. Now, obviously, you know, take take into perspective, Jesus is saying, Hey, we should have the attributes of a child don't actually go back to acting like have a five year old. Can you imagine a world full of five year olds? I didn't want to say a Bill, but you said it... seems like seems like right now. We don't... I don't know. Could it get worse? Yeah, it could get worse. But it seems like, man, maturity. A lot of people acting like five year olds, I'm not gonna say who. But you don't have to look very far and how people sometimes react? And it's like, Can we just get an adult in the room sometimes? Okay. Now, I'm not saying everybody but some people. And so Jesus is saying, look, if you truly want to be great, become like a child.

And children, there's a there's a lot that we can learn from children. So you know what, actually, when we look through the Bible, there's a number of kids who were great examples. For instance, the prophet Samuel very early on, his whole life was dedicated to the Ministry of the Lord. And God spoke to him very early in life. And he was a super faithful, faithful prophet. I think of Timothy, I don't know how old Timothy was, but he was a very young man and, and Paul intentionally reached out, mentored him and helped him grow. And he was a very, very faithful disciple. One of the other great examples of children, especially administering, you know, sometimes it's the unlikeliest sources that can be a blessing. How about the kid who brought the five loaves and two fishes? Can you imagine being a child means surrounded by a bunch of people? And the disciples and Jesus are asking you, Hey, can we, you know, use this? And then, of course, God blesses the food. All of a sudden 1000s of people are being fed. And he was simply present and able. There's a lesson there. We also think of Philips daughters, four daughters, and in Acts and how they prophesied for the Lord, Jesus himself as a 12 year old when he got separated from Mary and Joseph, and Mary and Joseph looked all over for him. And finally they found him in the temple with the teachers. And it's interesting how it said he was listening and asking questions. Of course, Mom, you know, Mom and Dad said, hey, why did you do this to us? Why did you

give us such a panic, scaring? he simply said I was going about my Father's business. Finally, the last example that I also think of is Josiah becoming King at the year, at eight years old. Can you imagine being in charge of a kingdom at eight years old? No, thank you. I just want to play. When I was eight, I'm trying to think what I was doing. I was making mud cakes and throwing them out my friends and my siblings. That's what I was doing at 8. To have the whole responsibility at eight of a kingdom. Obviously, he had other people to help him. But it says here in scriptures that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Now, his lineage, his father, his grandfather, and those that followed him, it says did not do right in the eyes of the Lord. Josiah it was different. He stood out, he wanted to do the right thing, and he was faithful to God.

But what is it that we can learn from children? So Jesus, he places his child, this is the example. You know, children... They are honest, and they ask questions. Growing up, when I was a young kid, I had a favorite expression that many of you are probably familiar with, because of your own children. My own grandmother would get upset when I would say this this word. Why? Why? Why? and even if you try to explain it, they'll continue. Now sometimes maybe I also asked that because I was trying to be cheeky. But children are naturally inquisitive, they want to learn because they're growing, they're forming. And, you know, they only have, they only know so much. And as they continue to grow, their minds are becoming more filled with knowledge. And they simply just want to know and understand. And your children as well, you'll find that they'll say things that most adults won't say, because we're trying to be polite, or we don't want to hurt thing hurt somebody. And yet, children, they haven't learned that filter quite yet, sometimes. But it's also refreshing because it's great to be able to hear honesty, amen. So, somewhere along the way, sometimes maybe we try to be polite, or we don't want to hurt people's feelings. Or maybe we do, depending on maybe, perhaps, who you follow on social media, or just in general. But I think you're in a better place when you're able to ask questions, and to be honest. And sometimes even when we're honest, especially about the questions and maybe sometimes in our faith, we have questions like I don't understand this God. Somewhere along the way, there was this thought that well, maybe, you know, it's not good to ask questions we should just blindly believe. And yes, we should believe. But faith also seeks understanding faith, *Fides quaerens intellectum*, and I think is what is. So a philosopher said many years ago, faith requires that we ask questions. In fact, even in this week, Bill and I were having a conversation, and he said something very profound. I told him, I was gonna steal this, you know, Your faith isn't real, until you've chosen it. And that's an intentional response. It requires thinking and accepting that this is what I choose to believe. And in our journey with God and our journey with Christ, there going to be times where it may be challenging, and we're going to ask God, why? why is this happening to me? And when we pray, we want answers or we want healing and God will answer our prayers. There are three responses, yes, perhaps it'll be immediate, or no. Or the one that seems to be consistent a lot of times is, wait. We don't like waiting. We want our happy meal. And you know, we want our we want our happy meal, we want our, our, our dessert right away, bump, bump, bump, bump, bump. Sometimes God's timing is not always in line with what we want. And there are times where, even when it's difficult, this is an opportunity for you to grow. And to learn and trust. And after all is said and done. Perhaps it's an opportunity to see that no, I can take lessons and I can apply these lessons and now be much stronger in faith. So ask questions, be honest.

And in our journey as well. Children trust and depend on their parents from the moment they are born. Their parents have to clothe them, they have to feed them. They provide security for them. Shelter until they leave the house. And we're totally dependent, especially from a young age. How often do we

totally depend everything on God as we get older? Now we're told to depend on self to trust your gut and instinct. And yeah, there's some merit to that truth. But there's truth to that. But yet ultimately, our full confidence should be that of God. Where is God leading and guiding us?

And trust. You know, trust is also built by spending time with one another. Children take comfort in being around their parents. They grow, it's important to spend time to commune with one another. I remember I was eight years old, and it was my first time learning how to surf I was at Doheny Beach. And the waves are probably best, maybe this high. But when you're eight years old, you're really small. And I remember my dad borrowed my uncle's really, really big board, I think it was like nine and a half feet tall. It was made for big waves, it was super thin, but really, really tall. I remember paddling out there. And now that I look back, it was kind of a little too shallow for my liking. He said, Hey, I'm gonna push you into the wave and you're gonna stand up. But when you are surfing, when you stand up, don't dive headfirst into the water, because you could, you know, obviously injure your head, jump feet first. And I remember, as the waves were coming in, you know, they look so much bigger than they actually were. But I remember my dad, placing his hand on the board, and then also his hand on my back, and we would either jump over the go over the wave, or depending if it had already broken, he would push the board under And together, we would go under the wave, the wave would pass over, called duck diving. And even though I was facing this obstacle of being in deeper water, I wasn't a super strong swimmer. My dad, I trusted my dad. And it was something that I wanted to do, because he had been surfing since he was a kid. And I just, I wanted to be like my dad. I remember him turning around, and this wave was coming, it was a wall of water. And he said get ready, start to paddle start to paddle start to paddle. And he pushed the board, the board caught the wave, and I stood up. And I remember feeling so alive. So excited that this is something that I wanted to do my whole life. But it was even more special when I realized that it was my dad who helped pave the way, went with me. And we faced the same obstacles together. And after that, I realized I didn't have to be afraid of the water popping over because I knew that my dad would look out for me, he wouldn't let me get hurt. Or you have to answer to mom. So but I trusted my dad. And that requires spending time together and learning and growing and obviously being comfortable. So take comfort. Children take comfort to the parents, how often do we place our comfort and trust in God?

Now, parents are also not always perfect. Sometimes, you know, parent is just trying to as you get older, you realize your parents are just trying to do the best that they can. There's no real manual out there to raise your kids Am I right parents? You learn from others. You learn from your own parents. And sometimes it's like, take it day by day. All right. I'm not a parent, but I can only see and observe and as I've gotten older and realize, you know, expectations that we sometimes have as children on our parents are maybe a little unrealistic because we have to take it with a sense of grace and that they're learning along the way, as well. Sometimes. And so be graceful, be understanding.

Now who has the most influence in shaping the child's faith? Me? Hardly. Because if we're being honest, we're here this hour right? Mom and Dad has biggest influence in shaping a child's faith. So it's important. We'll talk a little bit more about this later on in a couple of weeks. But it's important that moms and dads be intentional about incorporating and influencing their child in their faith. So spend time, but especially spend time with God together.

Chuck Swindoll said, each day of our lives, we make deposits in the memory banks of our children. And this doesn't just apply to parents. But it could be, you know, a grandparent, it could be an uncle, it could be a family friend, it could be a fellow church member. I was grateful and blessed with the fact that not just my own parents, but we met other people in our church, it was, you know, it was Sabbath school teachers or was just random people, perhaps that who cared and loved children, and wanted to be a part of their lives. That today, I'm so indebted and grateful, because they invested time in our lives. And I was able to learn. And the same thing is here too. Be an example for these children. And although you may not say it, they're learning and watching from everything that you do. So make deposits, good deposits, in the memory of the children

Now to have a childlike faith also requires that we be teachable, and humble, to listen. So you know, continue to ask good and honest questions. But also, especially just as Jesus did when he was in the temple with the teachers, he listened. And don't just be listening with Hey, well, I'm going to fire back or question, think about the perspective or that person is coming from and learn, ultimately be humble. Now, Matthew 18, a continues. oh, yeah, 10 through 14, Matthew 18, six through nine talks a little bit about, hey, you need to be a good example, to set forth amongst these children. But then in Matthew 18:10-14, let's go there, Matthew 18:10 to 14. It says, See that you do not despise one of these little ones, For I tell you that they're angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven. What do you think if a man owns 100 sheep, and one of them wanders away? Will he not leave the 99 on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off, and if he finds it, truly, I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep, than the 99 that did not wander off. In the same way, your Father in Heaven is not willing that any one of these little ones should perish.

You know, children may sometimes have a sense of curiosity, and maybe wander off maybe you're at the store, and they found something that's way more interesting, like the candy aisle, and they just want to look at all the candy while you're going about doing your shopping of getting the milk and the eggs and a pasta, whatever. Or sometimes, maybe children also have a little bit of a rebellious streak. Maybe they're trying to hide from their parents, or take a step further, even run away from their parents. Sometimes we don't maybe like something that our mom and dad said, maybe sometimes we might want to try to punish them too. When I was, I think I was 10 or 11 years old. We were living in a house where my bedroom my brother and I shared a bedroom, over a three car garage. It was the best room ever, because it also had like vaulted ceilings like this. And we would literally play baseball in our room. It was that big. Of course, you know, when you're 10 years old, anything, of course is bigger. But I remember this one night where my parents had to go somewhere. I don't remember what it was if it was a business meeting or what and I don't remember the exact circumstances. Now I'm also this is a story that my mom shared with me. I'm still trying to remember it because it was a long, long time ago. I got upset with them. I think it was because I wanted to go with them or whatever. So they left and they came back now in the midst of them coming back. I went out the room that I my brother and I stayed in had a little, had a sliding door with a little bit of a balcony that you could look out that overlook the backyard. And in that little balcony was a one of those tri-folding chairs that you know when you go to the beach or camping. It has two legs, you pop it open, and then you unfold the top. And you can lie down or you can prop it up and you can you can sit in it. And I sat in that chair, I had a blanket with me, I wrapped myself up and I was upset and grumbling about my parents. Now when my parents got home, of course, they come in and they checked in on us. And they could not find me. And they looked all over the house. And they looked for I don't know how long but in my mom's case, it was way too long. And

she was panicking. She was literally probably about to call the police. And then finally, they remember there was one spot that they had not looked. And when they opened the door, they saw me. They brought me in. Apparently I confess that I was mad at them for leaving. And for going off. And I don't remember exactly why I did that because it was so long ago. But it's the importance of well, I knew Okay, no, I was upset about something. And you know, but my parents, they spent quite a bit of time searching for me. Because why? They loved me. They wanted to make sure that I was okay. And much like God in this story. The shepherd loves all of his sheep, and went back for the lost sheep. We don't know exactly how this sheep got lost. Maybe it was curious, maybe it was being rebellious. Whatever it may be, it was gone from the main flock. And the shepherd made sure that the other sheep were were safe, and then took off and went to find that sheep. And when he brought the sheep back as in Luke's account, the shepherd rejoiced.

As children, we sometimes, you know, may find ourselves lost. But our parents come back and find us and, and like the shepherd, the shepherd went to find the sheep. In fact, there's a there's a story told of a sheep named Shrek, the Merino sheep that had evaded capture and collection in New Zealand and he was gone for six years. Can you imagine a sheep being gone for six years? All of a sudden when they when they found him, he didn't really look like a sheep. He was just a ball of wool, thank you. And it was like he literally Yeah, was a ball of wool. And when they finally brought him back, the owner, let the broadcasters and everybody come in and take pictures. And yeah, it was amazing. He was gone. And then the professional shearer comes in, and literally takes six years worth of wool off of him. And by the time the sheep had, you know, gotten there, it was caked it was matted. It was firm. Imagine all of that excess wool, finally off of your shoulders and all of your body and you can finally move. Sometimes, maybe we're angry and we decide, you know what, forget you, I'm gone. Or maybe we just we carry guilt, and the burden of that weighs us down. The beauty of that even if we run, God does not abandon us and we'll keep seeking. But it's our decision to where we have to trust and choose faith and choose God. As Shrek was lifted the burden of all of that wool, he finally could breathe, he could run and he could lie down. He actually made a little blanket, foot tall of wool as his blanket. And he found freedom from all of that wool on top of him. Much like the sheep, we can lay our burdens. We can lay our grief, we can lay our baggage, whatever it is to God and God can take that baggage away. And you can find grace and you can find freedom. God loves us. God doesn't abandon us. Jesus was sent in this world that we might be saved.

So as children may you ask questions. Be honest, be teachable. Be humble. May you place your trust in the God who loves you and died for you. May you take comfort. May you have faith as a child and trust as a baby does on their parents in everything about your life, your marriage, your children, your job, or needing a job. Throughout this pandemic, we've had to trust hasn't always been easy. There have been times where we want to perhaps maybe just say, forget that, or it's caused conflict. There's uncertainty. When we look at it from our perspective, but in God, there is certainty. So may you trust as a child and grow and bask in God's love.

Father in heaven, Lord. What's not always easy in this, in this time and age, especially when our faith is being challenged, so literally, figuratively, But Lord, may we trust you as a child trusts their parents, and may we also understand that Lord, You are full of grace and full of love. So be with us. In our belief, and even when we sometimes doubt, remind us of who you are, and Lord until that day when you return, may you help us to be faithful stewards of you, ambassadors in this community, and that others may

know that Downey church is a place where they can come and they can find peace, hope, joy, and life. In Jesus name, amen.

Grace and peace everyone. Take care.