

TITLE: HOW TO BE A CHILD

TEXT: MATTHEW 18:1-6; 1 Cor 14:20; etc.

INTRO: My 14-month-old niece has shown me what a joy little children can be. She's an absolute blast to be around. But she also suffers from a disease that attacks almost all little children—selfishness (“Mine” Syndrome)! But this is part of being a child. Different characteristics about children are discussed in the New Testament. In some verses we're told to become like children, while in others we're told *not* to. What then are the characteristics of a child that we should & should not apply?

I. WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF GOD:

- A. Biblically speaking, all people are called children. As God's creation, we're all descendants of Adam and therefore all children of God (physically). But what about spiritually? Here are some biblical distinctions.
 1. Jesus called the Israelites children of God
 - a. **Matt 15:26**—“*It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.*”
 - b. **Matt 23:37**—“*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together....*”
 2. Jesus addressed his disciples as “children” (**Mark 10:24; John 21:5**).
 3. God's people are called children of light. **Lk 16:8**—in contrast to “children of this world.” **1 Thess 5:5**—Re: 2nd coming.
 4. Children of God (**Rom 8:16-17**—“*we are the children of God: and if children then heirs....*”)
 5. Children of the resurrection (**Luke 20:36**—“*they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*”)
 6. Children of promise (**Gal 4:28**—“*we... as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*” — cf. w/children of flesh/bonds)
 7. But some, children of the Devil (**John 8:44**—“*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*”)
 8. And children of disobedience (**Col 3:6**—“*the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.*”)
- B. The question is, what kind of children are we? **1 John 3:10**—“*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*”

II. NEGATIVE TRAITS TO AVOID:

- A. Immature – **Matt 11:16**—Jesus compared His generation to immature children (“*We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented*”). Christians should not be characterized as such.
- B. Needy – **Heb 5:12-14** – You ought to be teachers, but need someone to teach you. You're on milk and not solid food. This describes a small infant. Christians are to “*desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (**1 Pet 2:2**). We shouldn't remain spiritually needy like a child. Because this neediness causes Christians to be susceptible to false teaching. False teachers will not survive in a biblically knowledgeable and sound congregation! They'll move on to a weaker one.
- C. Naïve, impressionable, susceptible to false teaching
 1. **Matt 23:15**—“*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte... ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*” This person is called a *child* of the ones who taught him falsely.
 2. **2 Tim 2:22**—“*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace....*”
 3. **Eph 4:14**—“*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*”
- D. Childish – **1 Cor 13:11**—“*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, understood, thought...but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*” How many things did you do as a child that embarrass you now?! Fortunately, we grew up and grew out of those things. But have we grown up spiritually?
- E. Disobedient; In need of punishment; ***Eph 2:2-3**—“*...we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh...and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*” Children of disobedience / wrath! This is what awaits this type of child!

III. POSITIVE TRAITS TO ADOPT:

- A. Not malicious – **1 Cor 14:20**—“*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice (badness, evil) be ye children....*” Children aren't vindictive, haven't yet developed hatred like many adults have.
- B. Pure; not yet defiled – E.g., racism – when we “grow up,” some believe their race is superior to every other race. Some want everyone to be “colorblind,” yet while celebrating diversity! But young children don't recognize racial differences like that.
- C. Sincere – **Mat 21:15**—“*And when the chief priests and scribes saw...the children crying in the temple, & saying, Hosanna to the Son of David....*” They were unbiased; they'd seen Jesus for who He was and were worshipping Him.
- D. Eager to learn – They're like sponges, soaking up all the new information. **1 Pet 2:2**—“*as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.*” A new Christian, like a child, should be eager to learn, studying and asking questions, learning new things every day.
- E. Humble – A child has not yet become so prideful and arrogant that he won't humble himself and accept that he is under the authority of parents, teachers, and adults in general.
***Matt 18:1-6** – Who's the greatest? Jesus took a child, and said, “Whosoever shall humble himself (to abase, bring low) as this little child shall be greatest in the kingdom.” **19:14**—“*of such (of this type of person) is the kingdom of heaven.*”
- F. Obedient; not rebellious – Certainly children do not *always* obey, but they don't completely rebel yet.
 1. **1 Pet 1:14**—“*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance*”
 2. **Eph 5:1**—“*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.*” – children follow, not blindly, but based on the parents knowledge of life and their love for their children.

CONCLUSION: As children of God, we also follow Him based on the evidence of His existence, His ultimate knowledge of life, and His perfect love for us. And as we've seen, he has expectations of His children.