

Childlike Greatness

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Whatever one chooses to do in life, he or she wants to be great at it. Surely, we want to be the very best we can be in our profession, in our schoolwork, as a spouse, as a parent, in our hobbies, and in every other aspect of life.

But what is greatness? It depends on whom you ask.

- Henry Ward Beecher: “Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right use of strength.”
- Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.”
- Muhammad Ali famous said of himself, “I am the greatest.”

Then we turn to the pages of the Bible. In one of the most famous accounts in the life of Christ, the Lord was asked who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. Matthew records the scene: “And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, ‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’” (Matthew 18:2-4).

Why would Jesus choose a child? What is within a child that **I** need to have in **my** life? Briefly, let’s notice a few things that are in the heart of a child.

1. A child is **C**aring. A child will, seemingly, care for anything. It’s fun to watch a little girl walk around “taking care” of her doll, or a boy who “takes care” of a dog that isn’t even his. A child wants to nurture. In the same way, when I see someone who is physically or spiritually ill, do I care? Do I have a heart of compassion that is willing to nurture?

2. A child is **H**onest. Admittedly, there are times when a child says something that is untrue. He or she may not know the meaning of the words he is trying to use, or that child may not have all the facts. Remember, though, we are speaking of the

heart of a child. At heart, a child is honest. Many times, we parents get a running commentary on every aspect of our lives—including details that we'd rather not receive. What about me? Am I willing to be honest, even if it means bringing details to the surface that may not be so good?

3. A child is **I**nnocent. Remember, Jesus told those around Him to “turn” (or “repent”) and become like a child. What a feeling! If a child were born with sin, why would Jesus use him as an example? A little child is perfectly innocent, perfectly pure. Oh, to be that way again. Am I willing to let go of my “adult” mistakes and live for Christ? I, too, can be innocent.

4. A child is filled with **L**ove. My daughter likes to open her arms and say, “Daddy, I love you thiiiiis much!” (The same is true of me for her, of course.) But a child will love anyone without qualification. A child sees no skin color. A child doesn't see the wheelchair. A child doesn't see the white hair. A child doesn't see the size of the house. A child just sees a person. Friend, I need to be more like that!

5. A child is **D**evoted. It is tragic to read studies where young people who have been abused admit to being devoted to the adult—sometimes an adult parent—who abused him or her. Why? Because a child wants to be devoted to someone, in fact, a child needs to be devoted. (As an aside, we need to make sure we are giving that child something worthy of being devoted to!) But a child will hug, talk about, hold hands with, and enjoy being around anyone who shows devotion to him or her. What about me? God showed devotion to me first. Am I devoted to Him?

A little child was chosen by Jesus, but Christian parents want that same child to have these qualities for life—not just at the youngest of ages. What are some things we can do to help that child, and us as parents, keep these qualities?

First, we need to constantly remember that Jesus had these attributes. Parents, we need to make sure we avoid teaching our children to be “star”-like or “celeb”-like; rather, we need to teach them to be Christ-like. Jesus not only had all these attributes, He was perfect in them. Our children need to see that.

Next, our children need to see these attributes in us. We parents can get tired of hearing it, but it is ever true: our children learn from what they see us **do**, not just by what we tell them. If our children see these attributes in us on a consistent basis, they will gain them too.

Finally, we need to encourage our children to be around friends who have these attributes (and we need to have friends who have them, too). Young people, for some reason, will have a rebellious friend or two, but we need to encourage them to make “best friends” with those who are following Jesus and living for Him and like Him daily.

Jesus not only “loves the little children of the world,” He also teaches us to be like those little children. Am I?