

BEING A GROWN UP ISN'T ALWAYS FUN!

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There is no doubt that God has always had a special place in His heart for children; that is why James defined “pure religion” as those that visited “the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (Js. 1:27). One of the most beloved children’s songs of all time is *Jesus Love Me*, and it is understandable why. The first verse explains it all:

Yes Jesus loves me for the Bible tells me so
Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to him belong
They are weak but he is strong

When the disciples began to argue amongst themselves about the greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus rebuked and admonished them to become like little children (Jn. 18:1-6). Notice though, He said to become child like not childish, but sometimes that is hard isn’t it? Christianity doesn’t just need grown people, it needs mature people who are willing to heed Paul’s command, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Cor. 13:5). Faithful Christians will always be auditing their behavior making sure they are in the right relationship with God. Paul said, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). Again, that is not always easy, and it may be especially hard for some. Even though we are commanded to put away childish behavior, at the same time, we must retain some childlike traits.

Simple faith and trust is a necessity for the Christian. Children have a tendency to believe their parents and to trust them without question. “Several years ago a father and his son had the hair raising experience of being in a wagon hitched to a runaway team. It was a horrifying experience for the father who tried to manage the team lest his son be killed. But the child later commented, ‘I wasn’t afraid, because my daddy was with me.’ Trust in the father’s love and power had driven out all fear” (The Christians Everyday Problems; Leroy Brownlow; pg. 27, 28). Trust in the heavenly Father is foundational to our lives as Christians, and He will care for us (Mt. 6:33).

Sympathy is another trait that one must have for others in order to be pleasing to God. If it were not for the sympathetic love that He has for mankind, the hope of eternal life would have been lost. The fact that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8), is a testament to the sympathy that God has for His creation. It is so important to be able to feel and connect with those around us as they endure the ups and downs of this life. That is why Paul said, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15).

One of the most fascinating traits, that almost all children possess, is the readiness to forgive another. They may have disagreements and arguments about a variety of matters, but in short time they are again best friends. That is absolutely missing in our world today. Jesus said we must ask the Father to “**forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors**” (Mt. 6:12). When Peter asked Him how many times a person should be forgiven, he was told “**seventy times seven**” (Mt. 18:22). Heavenly forgiveness can only be gained if godly sorrow has worked in the heart of the offender (2 Cor. 7:10),

which leads one to repentance. These are some necessary traits that all Christians must possess, but there are some childish traits that must be overcome.

Gossiping is a childish trait that causes a plethora of harm. Children may refer to gossiping as “tattling,” but it has no place in the life of the mature Christian. When gossip is spread, it eats away at people and congregations like cancer. Paul warned against “gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not” (1 Tim. 5:13).

Envy and jealousy can wreak havoc. Jealousy will cause a child to behave improperly, but they can be trained to overcome this dangerous emotion. It is when adults, who never overcame, continue in it, that it becomes spiritually deadly. Solomon warned, “A sound heart *is* life to the body, But envy *is* rottenness to the bones” (Pro. 14:30); and it was envy that cost the Lord His physical life (Mt. 27:18).

Instability is one of the main causes of congregational death in the Lord’s church. When one cannot be counted upon to do their part, the church is harmed, and her work is crippled. Again, it isn’t always fun to be a grown up, but just because the job is difficult, doesn’t relive us of our responsibilities to finish it! Success demands steadfastness but the wishy-washy person will not succeed. Paul encouraged all of us to “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Finally, a sullen and pouty character is not conducive to the Christian life. Children are known to pout at times, when they feel they have been mistreated, but when a grown up feels that way, he must work to resolve the problem. The Lord said, **“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother”** (Mt. 18:15). Often, the offending party may not even be aware of the problem that exists, and godly fellowship is too important to take lightly.

Paul commanded, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). The word “quit” means “behave,” so Paul is saying that we are to behave as adults and not as children. It isn’t always fun to be a grown up, but it is necessary in order to gain life eternal!