

How Childlike Should Faith Be?

One of the best-loved images of Jesus is of Him surrounded by small children, maybe one even sitting on His lap. “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these’” (Mark 10:14). Although Jesus actually said this with a tone of indignation, we imagine Jesus speaking these words in a kind and loving tone. Jesus spoke these words in rebuke to those who were trying to keep the children away.

But Jesus wasn’t through. He turned the focus on the adults. “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (v. 15).

To the believer, these words are a comfort. You don’t need a deep understanding of theology; you just need to come to Jesus like a child comes to a parent.

But to the cynic, these words prove their point. *That’s the problem with Christianity. You’re expected to check your brain at the door. Don’t think; just believe like a child believes in Santa Claus.*

I couldn’t disagree more.

Unfortunately, there are some people who believe in the gospel because it’s all they ever heard. They never really thought it through, and when someone comes along who questions their beliefs, they falter. They don’t know why they believe anything—it’s just what they’ve been told; consequently, if a cynic presses hard enough, faith disappears. Faith was superficial. It was a *childish* faith devoid of reason.

To the cynic, I say: faith and reason are not incompatible. I have a deep faith because I have reasoned it out and I can come to no other conclusion: the truth presented in the Bible is exactly that: truth. It is true for all people at all times and in all places.

To the believer, I say: know what you believe and know why you believe it. You can’t use this as an excuse: *I believe it because the Bible says so.* The cynic will immediately ask: And how do you know that Bible is reliable?

Space does not allow me to address all the issues at play here, but there are reliable, well-reasoned answers to the questions non-believers grapple with. Is the Bible reliable? Does God exist? Is Jesus the Son of God? Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

This is the discipline of apologetics—reasoned arguments that point to and defend the truth. I think it is a subject every

believer should read, study, and discuss with other believers. Why? Because the culture is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity. We can—and should—stand boldly on our faith with confidence when we know what we believe and why we believe it.

So where does childlike faith come in?

Childlike faith is neither checking your brain at the door nor believing blindly just because it’s what you hope or want to believe. Childlike faith is trust.

With childlike faith comes the image of a child running into the arms of a parent. And why does the child do that? He knows his parent; he has an innate trust based on past experiences with that parent. Perhaps from the moment of birth, this parent showed love and care. Sadly, some children are timid around a parent because the parent is an absentee parent or harsh or abusive. Children respond, not blindly, but based on what they see and experience from that parent.

Childlike faith is trust. What we know of God, what we’ve experience from Him leads us to trust Him. We are willing to place our faith in Him. I am willing to trust God for the things I don’t understand because I’ve learned to trust Him with the things I do understand.

If a small child asks a parent, “How did I get there?” the parent might say, “God gave you to us because Mom and Dad love each other.” That’s a good enough answer for a three-year-old! Parents will put off the birds-and-bees talk as long as possible, chiefly because a young child is simply too young to comprehend the complexity of pregnancy, and birth.

When Job was going through his intense trials, he understandably had questions. Pain and suffering bring out that universal question, “Why?” When God finally responded to Job, He never directly answered his questions. Instead, God quizzed him.

“Where were you when I established the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?” (Job 38:4-5).

God’s point? *“Job, there are a lot of things you don’t understand. You can’t comprehend how I work, so trust Me.”*

That’s where childlike faith comes in. I know enough about God and I have experienced enough from His hand, that I can trust Him with what I don’t understand. Like a child, I can joyfully jump into His arms, trusting His wisdom and power.

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