

Everything I Need to Know About Faith, I learned from Children

* “When I Grow Up” Video *

Matthew 19:13-15 says “One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. But Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.’ And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.”

When Kermit asked me to preach on Mother’s Day, I started to think about what would be a good subject to talk about. Okay, really I freaked out first, but then I thought about it. To me, Mother’s Day is a wonderful reminder of why I love being a mom. In fact, it took having children of my own to make me realize how badly I needed to be a child of God’s. After my son Mason was born, I found that I needed to live out my faith instead of just telling people I was a Christian.

I am so very blessed to have my job as Children’s Ministry Director here. I certainly am not an expert on the subject of kids. I’m the first to admit that I make a ton of mistakes when it comes to my own. But I do really love kids, and am finding more and more that they have just as much or more to teach us as we do to teach them. Today, I want to share some of the **attributes of faith we can learn from little children**

First, kids accept, trust and believe.

In Mark 9, there is a story of a father who asks Jesus to heal his son. The son has had an evil spirit inside him since he was little. The father begs Jesus, saying, “Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.” Jesus replies, “What do you mean, if I can? Anything is possible if a person believes.”

Little children believe they can do anything. They never doubt that their dreams can come true. If you ask my 9-year-old son Mason what he wants to be when he grows up, there is no waver in his voice when he tells you that he's going to play football for the Chicago Bears. In fact, he'll even tell you all the teams he'll play for before he gets there.

Kids never doubt that stories in the Bible are true. They don't try to logic their way through them, saying that the Red Sea parted because the winds were just right, or it was a drought year, or whatever. They just believe it's true because God said so. There's not one ounce of doubt or question with kids.

I have grown up to be a big skeptic. My response to a lot of things is, "prove it!" Maybe it's time we return to basing what we believe on what we know instead of on what we don't.

When the Bible says "For nothing is impossible with God" there is not further explanation needed. There isn't room for adult skepticism and criticism; it's an absolute truth. Accept it; trust it; believe it.

Kids are curious.

To me, Nicodemus is one of the most child-like people in the Bible. He would come to Jesus night after night to have his questions answered. One of the first things Nicodemus says, however is "We all know that God has sent you. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." He accepted and trusted Jesus. Jesus replied with, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said exactly what a child would say. "What do you mean? How can an old man go back into his mother's tummy and be born again?" Okay, he didn't say tummy, but you get the picture. Kids visualize things literally. They want to know how it happened. This in no way means that they don't trust, accept and believe. They just want to know more.

What if we, as adults, were as curious as kids when it came to Jesus. If a kid wants to know more about bugs, he drags his mom to the Library to check out books, he digs in the ground for them, he searches the internet, he watches them, touches them, maybe even tastes them. What if our enthusiasm for Jesus led us to search him out like a child does?

Another thing is that kids are forgiving

Matthew 6:14-15 “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

I have witnessed a lot of drama since my son Chase started Kindergarten last fall. It all revolves around birthday parties. One day, Noah and Dawson are invited to his birthday party because they're his best friends. The next day, Michael's not coming because he wouldn't let Chase play with him. The next day, Michael said that Chase gets to come to his birthday party now so Michael is coming to Chase's. Never mind that none of the afore mentioned children actually has a party planned or even a birthday in the next few months, for that matter.

My point is this: Children forgive. Most little ones don't hold grudges longer than the drive home from school. Or if they do, all it takes is a simple, “Hey, you want to play?” to re-establish friendship.

Why, then, is it so hard for adults to forgive each other? Even if we know the other person is hurting, sometimes being right is more important than asking for forgiveness.

As parents, we require our children to apologize. My father-in-law used to make his kids say sorry then hug it out. There is nothing worse than hugging someone you've just been forced to apologize to. Trust me, we've done this to our own boys. Very soon, however, something amazing happens out of that hug. The anger melts away and before you know it, the boys are laughing and wrestling and all is really forgiven.

Why can't it be that easy for us adults? Why can't we just say the words and trust that the emotions will follow? If we can't learn how to forgive from our children, we really should learn from our Heavenly Father. Jesus is the best example of forgiveness - He died so our sins could be forgiven. We are forgiven!

Kids pray about everything

I love listening to the prayers of children. In fact, I invite you to stop in one of our Sunday School classrooms sometime and read some of the things on our prayer boards. Last year, on our 2nd grade board, one child prayed for 100 pieces of cheese. Now, I'm sure that this was just a silly attempt to make the other kids laugh, but that child knows that we have a loving God to whom we can pray about anything.

In Philippians 4:6, it says "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything." This is one of my favorite verses. I love it for its simplicity. You see, I'm a worrier. I have to be constantly reminded that God is in control. I will wake up at night worrying about all the stuff going on or coming up.

But the more I get to know God, the more I've realized that the surest way to get back to sleep when your mind is moving a million miles an hour is not to get up and watch TV, but instead to pray. Pray about everything. Tell God every little thing that is bothering you.

During bedtime prayers with my children, we have prayed for friends who are hurting, people going through hard times, and sick family members. But, we have also prayed for baseball games, for the rain to stop, for a snow day to come, for hair to grow, for birthday gifts. God wants to hear it all. In fact, he already knows it.

As parents, we need to take the time to listen to what our kids have to say. We need to pray with them about all the little things happening in their lives. We need to make the time. Our loving Father always does. Pray about everything.

Kids find rest in their parent's arms

One of my favorite things about being a mom is when my kids want to cuddle. There is nothing better than sitting with a little one curled up in your lap. Sometimes, kids just need to feel you close by, and need to snuggle in close.

Even as a child, I remember loving the feeling of taking a rest with my mom as she gently rubbed my back. I loved rocking with my dad. There was no other time when I felt so at ease or relaxed.

We all run into times when we want to just curl up in someone's arms and feel totally at rest. With all the junk that surrounds us in this world, all the noise and worries and on-going fears around us, it's hard to feel at peace. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Kids desire to grow up

It is pretty universal that all kids can't wait to grow up. They can't wait to start school; they can't wait to go to middle school; they can't wait until they can drive; they can't wait to move out on their own. Kids want to grow up!

As much as we parents may hate that kids grow up, they need to. What if we applied this to our faith? We may be content to remain young, but God desires us to grow, to mature. And as children of God, we should desire this too.

Kids need loving parents

In Isaiah 41:13, we get a wonderful picture of our loving Father calming his child. The verse says, “For I hold you by your right hand – I, the Lord your God. And I say to you, ‘Don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.’” Just as a child, I need my loving father to take my hand and guide me along the path of life.

This is one area especially where we as adults not only need to be like children in trusting God to guide us, but we especially need to be like the Father, guiding the children.

Kids need parents who recognize that kids are trusting, easily influenced, and impressionable.

Kids need parents who make sure that what their children are trusting is truth, that who is influencing their children is God, that what is being impressed upon their children is love from a Father who is always there.

I challenge you now grow closer to God and return to a child-like faith. Accept and trust. Be curious. Forgive. Pray. Find rest in the arms of your loving Father.

And make sure that we don’t allow our children to grow up to be jaded, losing their innocence, filling their minds with garbage, loving themselves more than they love God and losing what we all really need – **a child-like faith.**

* “Faith Like a Child” video *