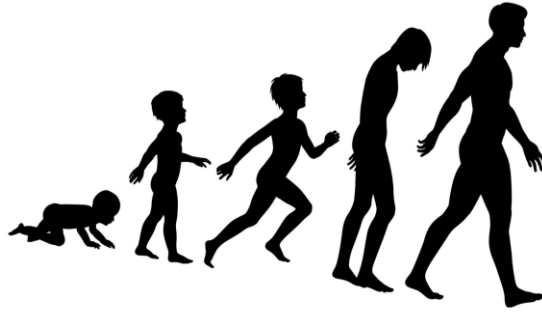


# CHILDREN OR MEN?



Jesus tells us unless we turn and become like children we will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. But notice in what connection He says this. Jesus says this to the disciples and to us,

- Because we are forever worried about our own greatness,
- Because we compare ourselves with one another,
- Because our hearts become anxious over the fact that others aren't showing us proper respect.

A little child doesn't worry about its greatness, is not ashamed to be dependent on its parents, does not live behind a mask, is satisfied to be what it is.

A little child is open and teachable. In this sense, and only in this sense, we are to be children all our days. Children of the heavenly father.... open, teachable, dependent upon him.

But in every other respect we are to grow up. We are to grow up into Christ, to be like Jesus.

... Not Jesus in the manger.

But Jesus the man,

Jesus the Son who did the father's will.

Jesus who accomplished the work he was sent here to do.

The tragedy is, that in areas that Jesus commands us to be children, we try to be men... Big shots, heavies. And in areas that Jesus calls us to function as mature men and women of God.... we insist on remaining babies.

-We want to be big shots when it comes to our relationship with God; and *there we should be as children.*

-We want to be big shots in the sight of other men; and *there we should be as children.*

But when it comes to the warfare we have been put out here to live through... we insist on remaining infantile.

We want to go through our whole lives...

Excusing our...

Our willfulness,  
Our stupidity,  
Our pettiness,  
Our unreliable ways....

By saying, "but Lord, you know me. I've never been able to grow up."

But that's exactly what we're called to do...

**We are called to grow up!**



***Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.***

*1 Corinthians 14:20*

***Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.***

*Ephesians 4:13-15*

***A Person Who is Grown Up in Christ is...***

**1. No Longer Gullible**



A person who has grown up into Christ is no longer gullible, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine.

When a man is a spiritual baby it's understandable if he is at times misled and talked into believing and doing ridiculous things. God's angels have a way of watching over spiritual babes. And there will come a time when any man who has caused a spiritual babe to stumble will pay an awful price.

But I see people who've been following Jesus long enough to know better... Still letting themselves get sucked into every new gust of wind that comes along. Either they're running around solving

problems they have neither the power or the wisdom to cope with, or they're forever delving into some new doctrine, or pursuing some new mystical experience, or finding some new "New Testament Church" that claims to be the only one.

What's really happening is that they're letting themselves get corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

-They're getting away from Jesus himself into experiences, doctrinal positions, exotic ministries.

-They're drifting farther and farther from the cross, and the blood, and the living word which Jesus still speaks to their hearts.... if they'd only listen.

The message of the Spirit to such people is,

*"Make up your mind. Do you want to grow up into Christ and be a man or woman of God, or do you want to spend the rest of your life as a gullible babe tossed around by the winds of the hour?"*

## **2. No Longer Living in A Fantasy/Imaginary World**

A person who has grown up into Christ has emerged from the world of fantasy into the real.



A child's imaginary world is wonderful.

-It can picture beauty in the midst of squalor.

-It can see enemies lurking behind every tree.

-It can hear music that isn't there.

But when the child grows up and becomes a man,

-He no longer allows his imagination to turn his life into a dream or into a nightmare.

-He no longer retreats into the world of fantasy to escape his problems.

And as we passed from spiritual infancy into manhood and womanhood, the same thing must happen.

Shortly after we were reborn, many of us entertained fantastic ideas about ourselves and what we could do. We thought of ourselves as budding healers, prophets, gifted problem solvers, heavy teachers, evangelists that were going to set the world on fire.

Our imagination was at work in us the way it's at work and any child. Perhaps alone in our room, kneeling in prayer, we picture ourselves casting out demons all over the place, raising the dead by the dozen, and with the intuition of children, we managed to evade putting these fantastic ideas about ourselves to the test, kept the pretend game going and many of us are still at it. But the time comes when we have to drop the fantasy and face reality, and admit that we are living in a world where nothing is that simple.

Nothing is simple but our relationship with Jesus Christ. And we have to accept the fact that God didn't send us to go charging around doing dramatic things... at least not yet. God sent us to work in his vineyard in simple down to earth ways.

### 3. No Longer Governed by Moods

A person who has grown up into Jesus Christ is no longer governed by moods. How pitiful to see believers who have been walking with Jesus for some time...



- Still indulging in tantrums, spending days on end in a pout, nursing grudges,
- Still jumping up and down in their favorite mud puddle of self pity,
- Still seeing how miserable they could make the people who have to live with them.

Babies waddling from one infantile mood to another, when we should have grown up long ago. People who have fantastic insight and marvelous gifts are destroying their own effectiveness by insisting on dragging their childhood emotional behavior right along with them. God puts up with it for a while. Then he says "either grow up into my son or baby yourself to hell."

### 4. No Longer Distracted from Keeping Commitments

A person who has grown up into Christ keeps commitments.

Whenever scripture talks about self-control, That's what it means. Self-control is not merely restraining yourself from murder, rape, gluttony, and booze....

- It's making yourself do what you're committed to do.
- It's controlling yourself right to where you're supposed to be.

Self and flesh do not control you, rather you, in the power of the living Christ *control self* and *make it obey*.

Believers who are forever late, missing work because they have a headache, breaking appointments they make with others because something else came up...or because they don't have peace about it, are still babies.

How could God possibly entrust them with responsibility?

Some of us seem to be baffled by the fact that we never last in any one place very long. We wonder why, within a couple of years, our effectiveness seems to be gone. Nobody takes what we say seriously anymore.

Ask yourself before the Lord,

- Are you keeping your commitments?
- Are you where you say you're going to be when you say you'll be there?
- Do you return what you borrow?
- When you do a job, is it done right, or does someone have to come behind you and straighten it out?

Or, does it take you three days to do a day's work because you're forever getting sidetracked into "spiritual talk" or "spiritual meditation" when you should be working?

## 5. No Longer Quitting when the Going Gets Hard



A person who has grown up into Christ no longer quits when the going gets hard. "Lord, I want to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire?"

But as soon as the fires start coming, little trials, little hurts, little disappointments, minor danger... they're gone!

***For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.***

*2 Peter 1:5-7*

Nobody expects an infant to be steadfast. But without steadfastness no man is a man or woman is a woman. To be a man or woman of God you have to face the fact that things will get rough. Jesus never promised that they'd be smooth.

And don't be looking around worrying about whether the Lord is going to lead your brother through a fire as hot as yours or wondering whether Peter, James and John didn't have it easier back there in those technicolor Bible days.

Keep your eye on the road God gave you to walk and on the Savior who walks ahead of you, suffering flames a million times hotter than yours, and keep going.

- In season and out of season.
- When people smile, and when they turn their backs.
- Even when they start throwing rocks and bottles.
- Even when brothers and sisters start dropping away.....

**....keep going!**

***Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age***

*Matthew 28:20*

***Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.***

*Joshua 1:9*

***So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.***

*Ephesians 4:14-15*

Many of us have been clinging to our spiritual infancy instead of the Cross of Jesus Christ. We've been trying to hang on to the security, and warmth, and leisure, and excuses that are permissible only to spiritual infants.

But my friends God will not allow our spiritual infancy to extend forever. The father is telling many of us that we now have to make up our minds. Either settle for a new babysitter... whose name is Satan....

**....or grow up into Jesus Christ and go on with him where he leads....**



**.... Take your choice!**

*Prayer: Yes Lord, help us to grow up into you, to make the choice to stop being children. Forgive us for making excuses for our childish behavior. May we stop being gullible and being led by and obsessed by things that actually lead us away from you. May we give up our fantasies, our delusions of grandeur, and be willing to serve you in simple, humble ways. May we stop being ruled by our moods, carried away by anger, jealousy, fear, and self pity. May we handle our emotions with grace and maturity. May we keep our commitments, act responsibly, control ourselves in every way. May we not pout, not give up and quit when things don't go our way. May we be steadfast and keep going.... knowing you are with us. Help us Lord, help us be the adults you call us to be, to accomplish all that you call us to, and to be grown up enough to follow where you lead. Amen.*

*Maranatha Mirror*

*Message: Richard E. Bieber Exact date unknown, but most likely 1972.*

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THE LAMB  
WHO WAS SLAIN  
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN