

Juvenile Dimension

Our Call to Act Like a Kid

February 23, 2025



Today we're examining what makes kids so **great in the eyes of God**. Cuz, somehow, in some sense, Jesus says being a kid is *our key* to living in *His kingdom*:

Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will *never* enter the kingdom of heaven. – Matthew 18:3-4 NIV

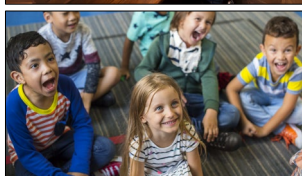
But because *that's* such a *broad statement*, it begs the *bigger question* – what *kind of kid* are we supposed to be? And *more importantly*: **What kind of kid are you?**



Cuz kids have *a lot of different qualities*, and emulating every element *isn't* necessarily a good thing. **Sometimes, being a kid can push us away from God's kingdom with the same force it can pull us closer.**



For *example*, during first service last Sunday, Bruce told an embarrassing story of soiling his white pants to *illustrate* how *humility* can transform *our biggest messes* into *God's most moving messages*. And it was a *memorable moment* to make the *meaning* of a *teaching stick* in our brains – *but*, then, when *worship* began and *Joann* was singing a *powerful* rendition of the song *It Is Well*, she encouraged everyone to *surrender* by saying, **"C'mon church release it!"** and I leaned over to Bruce and said something like, **"Maybe people with white pants shouldn't release it!"** and Bruce said, **"Oh, I thought she said, 'C'mon church, really sing!'"** And I thought to myself, **"Oh Noah... you gotta stop being so immature."** Cuz truthfully, my childishness was actually *getting in the way* of my *worship* – and *that's clearly not* the kind of *kid quality* God is looking for. *But, for the record*, Bruce *laughed* and made *more* jokes during *second service* – so, I don't know what to tell you, *your pastors got problems!* And *they're* the kind that *Paul* talks about when he says:



[C'mon guys,] When I was a *child*, I *talked* like a child, I *thought* like a child, I *reasoned* like a child. **[But,]** When I became a *man*, I put the ways of childhood behind me. – 1 Corinthians 13:11 NIV

Which just *confirms* the *situation* we *suspected*: **there's a right and wrong way to be a child.**

[And Paul clears it up in his next chapter:] Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children.

[Now,] In regard to evil be infants, but *in your thinking* be adults. – 1 Corinthians 14:20 NIV

Cuz *basically*, **we're supposed to live our lives in the innocence of immaturity while we give our minds the time they need to mature.** And that means giving someone else *control* while we *wait*.

[The way Paul guides us to] Follow God's example, therefore, **[and live your life]** *as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us* – Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV

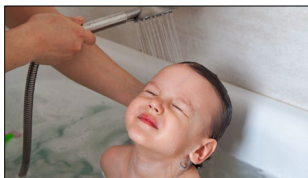


We gotta give *God* the wheel while *we're* down here cuz **giving an immature mind control of a fully formed human is a recipe for disaster!** And if you *can't* see that – just think back to your *teenage* years and try to defend the *immature* decisions you made *against* your *parents'* will. Still think that haircut was worth it? How about that *belly button* ring?

[Well that's why Peter warns:] As *obedient children*, do not conform to the *evil desires* you had when you lived in [immature] ignorance. – 1 Peter 1:14 NIV

Cuz the truth is, **evil is only appealing to the immature!** Everyone else who's *actually grown* has been *repeatedly shown* that *immature actions* are always *bad ideas*. Which is why *we're* called to be *obedient* children – cuz *they* conform to the *wiser* desires of a more *mature* parent who's got a *better grip* on what's *good* for you. And *that's* the kind of *childhood* that *God* wants *us* to have with *Him* as our *Father*. But it's been an ongoing *struggle* for *God's* kids to submit to *His* will since the *start* – and *Jesus* sums up how it affects *His* heart:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often I have *longed* to gather your children together, as a *hen* gathers *her chicks* under *her wings*, and *you were not willing*. – Matthew 23:37 NIV



All any *good* parent *wants* is to take care of their *kids* until *they* can take care of *themselves*. But all *immature kids* want is to take *control* even if it kills them. Which it nearly *does* every time we insist on a taste of **premature independence**.



For instance, I moved out when I was 17 cuz I was *certain* I no longer *needed* the care of *my parents* – and after a *year and a half*, I found myself living in Bellingham with my *three* best friends and on the *brink* of a complete *mental breakdown*. I had a *decent job*, I played in a *cool band*, and I pretty much *did whatever evil* I desired on a *daily basis*. **But what I didn't know was how unfulfilling self-indulgence could be.** And as I lost interest in every aspect of the life I had built – *I called* my mom. Because the dependency I had fought to escape suddenly looked really appealing! Because **in childhood, after you make a mess, you can call a parent to make it better.** And just like old times, *she did*. She brought a batch of my favorite *corn chowder*, *listened* to what was going *wrong*, *hugged* me, *helped* me make a plan, and *encouraged* me to take action. And of course, she *dared* me to open my *Bible*. Which *I did*. And thus *began* my long road to a *better* life by **using adult reasoning to return to youthful dependence!**



However, at the same time four of my *other friends* had *also* moved to Bellingham in a *different house*. And due to a *similar state* of *premature independence*, nobody knew how to *manage* the *chores*. And because nobody was *awake* in time for *garbage day*, they just piled the bags on the *back porch*... until the rats moved in. And although the *infestation* was obvious, they just pushed it *further* into a *corner* to try and *ignore it away*. And instead of *admitting* their *mess* and *calling for help*, their *landlord* called *them* and ultimately *evicted* them *that month*.

But the way *each* of our households *handled* our *premature independence* sums up the *same two strategies* available to all of us today: **1.) We can call for help, confess our mess, and get clean.** Or **2.) We can counterfeit control, conceal our mess, and let it fester.**



And as much as we'd all like to believe that us *adults* choose the *wiser* of the two, it's often *kids* who pick the *right* path. Cuz **kids know a more mature lifeline is always waiting whenever they're willing to admit they're overwhelmed.** And that *comfort* with surrender frees them to aim *beyond* their reach *without* worrying about their ego.



Whereas adults are often the ones who have a hard time *accepting* that they're *not qualified* to be *in control* cuz **we've developed a pride in ourselves that tells us to hide our mistakes!** And we see the need for *help* as *admitting defeat* when it's just *accepting the truth*. But like *John* says:



If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:8-9 NIV



Because ultimately, **we're called to be obedient and open, not in denial and independent!** We're supposed to be the kind of *kid* who *hears Dad out* but *calls Him for help* whenever we make a *mess*. We're supposed to be both *maturing our mind* and *surrendering control simultaneously*.

And as *nice* as that *sounds* – does anybody *else* feel like *that'd drive you crazy?! We're supposed to grow increasingly conscious and capable – but somehow, show restraint at all times?! It'd be like working every weekend to restore a car that only your dad gets to drive while you ride shotgun! You're just itching to get in the driver's seat to see what you can do!*

Well *that's* the *tension* every *Christian* lives in! **Our immature life keeps one foot in the world while our maturing mind is stepping one foot into our heavenly home!** It's what some people call “*now and not yet*” theology; **we can accept our exciting identity and inheritance now** – but **we can't completely experience and enjoy everything quite yet.**

And because of our intense *desire* for what we got *coming*, **it's hard to have the patience to reverse course and become like a child when we're more mature than ever before.** So *what do we do?* How do we *motivate* our *maturing mind* to *hold* our *human hosts back*? Well, if an *adult* aims to become a *kid*, *logically*, the *path* would pass through *adolescence* first; so *maybe*, we **should become like a teenager before we become a child.**

And I know how *nuts* that sounds since we've *all* been trying to *forget* our most awkward stage, *but*, two weeks ago, I invited myself to the *youth retreat* in Leavenworth and *once again*, I watched *God* do some *major things* in the *lives* of these *minors!* And I *realized*, it seems like there's *always* something *big* going on in our *teens* because – in case you *don't know* anyone *under* the age of 20 – **the youth don't really know how to “dial it down”!** And *maybe* that's a *good thing*. Cuz *this* is what *they LIKE* to do with *their weekends*: [VIDEO]

Isn't that *something*?! Every year I'm *amazed* at how *excited* our teens are to *surrender* – and *this year*, I think I understood *why*. Y'see, **teens are neither kids nor adults**. And that makes *teens* the only humans with *one foot* in *each world*. Which is probably *why* they're so *weird*! On the one hand they have the *power* to *change the world*, but on the other, they lack the *discipline* to change their *underwear*. They can have the *strength* of an *adult*, but the *smell* of a *baby's diaper*. But as *unique* as they *may be*, Paul tells *Timothy* youth is *not* a quality to be *ignored*, but *flaunted*:

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are *young*, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. – 1 Timothy 4:12 NIV



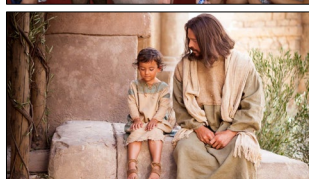
Cuz the truth is, **when teens decide to do something, everyone pays attention**. That's why they decide our *style, slang, trends, and technology*; they represent both the *present* and *future* worlds we *all* have to live in. All *because* **they live in the narrow transition between childhood and adulthood**. So they *walk* the line between the *safety* of *dependence* and the *danger* of *independence*. And *therefore*, they set an *example* that the *young* and *old* both *need* to *note*.



However – *most* teens move on and become the standard *delusional adults* because **teens believe they have to take control once their parents are off the clock**. So *they too*, make *messes* as they *struggle* to live in their *premature independence*. But *that's* where *Jesus* comes in!



Jesus **was born as the Son of God to explicitly advertise that childhood was still an option!** And He spent His time *telling us all* that we had a *heavenly Father* who'd *pick up* right where our *earthly parents* left *off*!



[So,] To those who believed in His name [as the Son of God], He gave the right to [also] become children of God – John 1:12 NIV

And **did you ever notice He chose teenage disciples but fought with adult Pharisees?** Well, *which group* do you think would be most *willing* to *receive* Him – the *adults* who were *set* in their ways after *settling* for *counterfeit control* and a *festering mess* – or the *teens* who *still knew* the *comfort* of *calling for help* after *making a mess*?

Jesus offers the safety, security, support, and strength of a parent to everyone who asks – but *teens* are more *eager* than *adults* to *get it* because they *haven't learned* to *live without it* like the rest of the *adult world*. And *that's* what I saw in every teen at *retreat* – the *joy* of realizing *they* could *return* to being a *kid* if they just put *their lives* in the hands of our *heavenly Parent*!

And so can we! **We just have to remember the appeal childhood had before we felt forced into adulthood.** We have to put ourselves back *between* the two worlds the way a *teen* lives in *that tension* – and from *there*, make the *easy choice* to *let God help* while we *regain the confidence* of a *kid* who knows *their Dad* is in *control*. So, **what kind of kid are you?** Well, if you're a child of *God*, you *still* make *immature messes* but you *also* make calls for *more mature help*. Because *that* desire for *God* is *child-like* but *not childish*. And *that* kind of *kid* – is *easy* to *guide back to Dad*.

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.