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The Little Children and Jesus
Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17

The little children and Jesus DIG: Why would parents bring their little children to Jesus? Why might the apostles discourage this? What is Messiah's view of children and the Kingdom? What childlike qualities was Yeshua commending? How many do you possess? Which are missing?

REFLECT: How childlike are you in your relationship with YHVH? How often are we too busy with important things that we miss God's will right in front of us?

It was a very natural thing that Jewish **parents** should want **their children** to be blessed by a great and distinguished Rabbi. Just a few months earlier **Jesus** had **called a little child to Him, and placed the child among the Twelve. And He said: Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:2-3).** No doubt at countless other times **the talmidim** had witnessed similar expressions of **Messiah's** tenderness and gentleness and **His** great patience with those who came to **Him** for help. This incident probably occurred in Southern Perea just a short while before **His** triumphal entry into Tzion as the Passover Lamb.

Parents were **bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them.** The imperfect tense of the verb for **bringing** tells us that **the parents** were continually **bringing their children to the Chief Shepherd**. Because **Yeshua** did not rebuke the parents it was obvious that their motives were pure. The act of imparting a blessing is one of the most universal customs found in Judaism. The rabbis commanded the duty upon every Jew to give thanks continually to **God** for **His** blessings because **The earth is Adonai's, with all that is in it, the world and those who live there (Psalm 24:1 CJB).**

Not surprisingly an entire book of the Talmud is devoted to the concept of blessing the Name (Tractate Berakhot). Rabbi Meir (second century AD) concluded that it is the duty of every Jew to recite one hundred blessings

daily, not just for religious ceremonies like the Shabbat candles or Kiddush, but also for everyday happenings such as a wonder of nature, completing a successful trip, or hearing good news.

There were many blessings associated with **children**. The most famous is recited every Shabbat evening at the start of dinner. After the blessings of candles and wine and bread, the parents place their hands on their children for the proper blessing. For the boys, based on **Genesis 48:20**, it is to say, “May you be like Ephraim and Manasseh.” The daughters receive the blessing, “May you be like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.” It is not surprising, therefore, that some eager parents rushed their children before the loving Rabbi **Yeshua** so that **He** might place **His hands on them and pray for them.**1196

Yeshua was not naively sentimental about **children**. Having created **them**, **He** knew full well that **they** are born with a sin nature. Yes, **children** have a certain innocence, but **they** are not sinless. **He** knew that they did not have to be taught to do wrong, that their little hearts were naturally bent toward evil. He loved them unconditionally nonetheless. **But when the apostles saw this, they rebuked the parents** bringing **them (Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:13; Luke 18:15).** Surely **Messiah** had more pressing priorities than a bunch of **children**! Always **the Master teacher**, **He** saw another teachable moment for **the Twelve**.

When Jesus saw this, He was indignant (Mark 10:14a). The error of **the talmidim** was similar to **Peter’s** error **(Mark 8:32). Kefa** wanted to protect **Christ** from suffering and death; **the apostles** now wish to keep **Him** from present trouble and fatigue. They did not know exactly what was going to happen in Jerusalem, but they clearly knew that trouble lay ahead. **They** did not want **Him** to be bothered. **They** couldn’t conceive that **He** would want **the children** around **Him** at such a time.[1197]

He called the children to Him and said to the talmidim: Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Ironically, **the apostles** were so consumed with the "big issues" of **Messiah's Kingdom** that **they** ignored those who were closest to **the Kingdom** itself. **And** in a striking show of affection, **Messiah took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them and blessed them (Matthew 19:14-15a; Mark 10:14b-16a; Luke 18:16-17).** In these words **Jesus** was stating that a person must come to **Him** in humility in order to enter **the kingdom of Heaven**. **Children** come with expectation and excitement. **They** come realizing that **they** are not sufficient in themselves. **They** depend totally on others. If these same attitudes are not present in adults, they can never enter into **the Kingdom**.[1198]

In other words, **the Kingdom** is populated by only two kinds of subjects, those who die while **little children** and those who come in trusting and humble with the attitude of **little children**. Only those enter **God's Kingdom** who come to **Him** in the simplicity, openness, dependency, lack of pretension, and lack of hypocrisy of **little children**.[1199]

Then **He went on from there (Mt 19:15b; Mk 10:16b).** The only way we can fully understand the beauty of this passage is to remember that **Christ** was on **His** way to the cross – and **He** knew it. That cruel shadow could never have been far from **His** mind. But even in such a time as that, **He** still had time for **children**.

In 1915 Pastor William Barton started to publish a series articles. Using the archaic

language of an ancient storyteller, he wrote his parables under the pen name of Safed the Sage. And for the next fifteen years he shared the wisdom of Safed and his enduring spouse Keturah. It was a genre he enjoyed. By the early 1920s, Safed was said to have a following of at least three million. Turning an ordinary event into an illustration of a spiritual truth was always a keynote of Barton's ministry.

There is a land that is called Switzerland, and Keturah and I traveled there a long time ago. And in one of the cities there was a Great Pit with Bears in it. And the Tourists buy Carrots and feed them to the Bears. And around the place are Booths where they sell Picture Post Cards that people can buy and send to their friends, showing them that you are in a country where there are Bears, just as they are in their own country where they receive the Picture Post Card. And by the Pit there are shops of Woodcarvers, who sell Wooden Bears. And I purchased one of these, being half as tall as I am, and holding in his Paws a Wooden Ring for holding Canes or Umbrellas. And the Bear is in my Study, and holds Canes that I have carried in Many Lands.

And all **Children** love the Bear, for he is Friendly, and his Glass Eyes are Friendly, and his Glass Eyes are Kindly, and no little boy or girl could be afraid of him. And the Head and Back of the Bear are Smooth with the patting stroke of Little Children.

Now the daughter of the daughter of Keturah has a Little Sister, and she is Two Years old. And she is about the Brightest Little Bit of Color that shines up this old world. And almost every day, when the daughter of the daughter of Keturah and my Little Grandson are in school, then does the daughter of Keturah come over to see Keturah, and they climb the stair to where I work.

And I hear the Little Feet climbing the Stair, and a Little Voice saying, I want to see Grandpa. Is Grandpa in?

And all the way as she comes up the Stair, her Single-track mind is full of the idea of Seeing Grandpa. But the minute she enters the room, she takes one look at the Grandpa, and runs across the room and Hugs the Bear, whom she calls the Bow-wow.

And Grandpa is not in the running until she has hugged the Bow-wow.

Now, if I were a silly old Grandpa, I might feel hurt at this. But I am neither old nor silly, and I do not intend to be either. And I Say Nothing until she is done with the

Bow-wow. Then does she run to me, and climb into my Lap, and put her Chubby Little Arms around my neck, and say, I love you Grandpa.

And I have considered these things, and considered My own conduct.

For I have climbed slowly and with faltering feet up the Stairs of reverence and devotion, saying as I climbed on Stepping Stones of my Dead Self to Higher Things, I would see God. I would know more of my Heavenly Father. And in this I have been sincere.

But then, as has happened more than once or twice, I have seen some Trivial, yet Pleasant Thing, and I have run to it, and later have been sorry that I was so Fickle.

Now the Bible does not say that Little Children are to enter into the Kingdom like Grown Folk, which would be a Sad Misfortune, but that Grown Folk are to enter as Little Children. And this is an encouragement to me.

Thus, I pray, saying, **O God**, who knows our Frame and Remembers that we are Dust, You are more Wise and Just than to judge me Wholly by the way I turn to the left or the right in pursuit of this or that Trivial Thing in Life. Know My Heart even as I know the heart of this Chubby, Snuggly Little Lump of Caprice and Affection. Judge me, **O** my **God**, as I judge this Little Child, and love me as I love her, and even a Little More. And have Mercy of the shortcomings of Your Fickle Children, for **Lord**, we love You more than these other things.[1200]

How should we pray for our **children**? Here are thirty-one different ways.

1. **Salvation: Lord**, let salvation spring up within my **children**, that they may obtain the salvation that is in **Jesus Christ**, with eternal glory **(Isaiah 45:8; Second Timothy 2:10)**.

2. **Growth in grace:** I pray that my **children** may grow in the grace and knowledge of our **Lord and Deliverer**, **Yeshua the Messiah (Second Peter 3:18 CJB)**.

3. **Love:** Grant, **Merciful God**, that my **children** may learn to live a life of love, through **the Spirit** who dwells in **them (Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:2)**.

4. **Honesty and Integrity:** May integrity and honesty be **their** virtue and **their** protection **(Psalm 25:21)**.

5. **Self-Control: Father**, help my **children** not to be like many others around **them**, but let **them** be alert and self-controlled in all **they** do **(First Thessalonians 5:6)**.

6. **Love for God's Word:** May my **children** grow to find **Your** Word **more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb (Psalm 19:10)**.

7. **Justice: ADONAI**, help my **children** to love justice as **You** do and act justly in all **they** do **(Psalm 11:7; Micah 6:8)**.

8. **Mercy:** May my **children** always be merciful, **El Shaddai**, **God Almighty**, just as **their Father** is merciful **(Luke 6:36)**.

9. **Respect (for self, for others and for authority): Father**, grant that my **children** may show proper respect to everyone, as **Your** Word commands **(First Peter 2:17)**.

10. **Biblical self-esteem:** Help my **children** develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are **God's** workmanship, created in **Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10)**.

11. **Faithfulness:** Let love and faithfulness never leave my **children**, but bind these twin virtues around **their** necks and write **them** on the tablet of **their** hearts **(Proverbs 3:3)**.

12. **Courage:** May my **children** always be strong and courageous in **their** character and in **their** actions **(Deuteronomy 31:6)**.

13. **Purity: Create in them a pure heart, O God**, and let that purity of **heart** be shown in **their** actions **(Psalm 51:10)**.

14. **Kindness: ADONAI-rophe, the One** who heals life's wounds and sweetens its bitter experiences, may my **children** always try to be kind to each other, indeed, to everyone **(First Thessalonians 5:15)**.

15. **Generosity:** Grant that my **children** may be generous and willing to share, and to lay up treasure for **themselves** as a firm foundation for the coming age **(First Timothy 6:18-19)**.

16. **Peace-loving: ADONAI-shalom**, **the God of peace**, let my **children** make every effort to do what leads to **peace (Romans 14:19)**.

17. **Joy:** May my **children** be filled with the joy given by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh (First Thessalonians 1:6)**.

18. **Perseverance: ADONAI**, teach my **children** perseverance in all **they** do, and help **them** especially to run with perseverance the race marked out for **them (Hebrews 12:1)**.

19. **Humility: God,** please cultivate in my **children** the ability to show true humility toward everyone **(Titus 3:2)**.

20. **Compassion: ADONAI-rohi, ADONAI my Shepherd,** please clothe my **children** with the virtue of compassion **(Colossians 3:12)**.

21. **Responsibility:** Grant that my **children** may learn responsibility, for **each one** should carry **their** own load **(Galatians 6:5)**.

22. **Contentment: Father**, teach my **children** the secret of being content in any and every situation, through **Him** who gives **them** strength **(Philippians 4:12-13)**.

23. **Faith:** I pray that faith will find root and grow in my **children's** heart's, that by faith **they** may gain what has been promised to **them (Luke 17:5-6; Hebrews 11:1-40)**.

24. **A servant's heart: God**, please help my **children** develop a servant's heart, that **they** may serve wholeheartedly, as if **they** were serving **the Lord, not people (Ephesians 6:7)**.

25. **Hope:** May **the God of hope** grant that my **children** may overflow with **hope** and **hopefulness** by the power of **the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13)**.

26. **Willingness and ability to work:** Teach my **children**, **Lord**, to value work and to perform **their** tasks wholeheartedly, working for **You, not for human masters (Colossians 3:23)**.

27. **Passion for God: Lord**, please instill in my **children** a soul that clings to **You (Psalm 63:8)**, one that **Your** right hand supports.

28. **Self-discipline: Father**, I pray that my **children** may acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right, just and fair **(Proverbs 1:3)**.

29. **Prayerfulness:** Grant, **Lord**, that my **children's** lives may be marked by prayerfulness, that **they** may learn to pray in **the Spirit** on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests **(Ephesians 6:18)**.

30. **Gratitude:** Help my **children** to live lives that are always overflowing with thankfulness and always giving thanks to **God the Father** for everything in the name of our **Lord Yeshua the Messiah (Ephesians 5:20 CJV; Colossians 2:7)**.

31. **A heart for missions: El Elyon, Most High God**, please help my **children** to develop a desire to see your glory declared among the nations, your marvelous deeds among all peoples **(Psalm 96:3)**.[1201]