

Part 26: Suffer Little Children

Respond in some way to God's love for you. Share some sense or evidence of God's love for you with the group.

Children of God

Jesus and his disciples were deeply in touch with those amongst whom they lived and worked. Children played an important part in Jewish life and yet they too suffered from the pressures of importance and privilege. They were at the bottom of the social scale. When Jesus was healing and teaching, his disciples, in trying to control the crowds, took it on themselves to chase off the children who were playing around them in curiosity. The parents who brought their children for a blessing were also made unwelcome. 'The master is too busy to bother with children,' the disciples thought.

On one such occasion, Jesus reproved them, saying, 'encourage the children to come to me and do not stop them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to people like these'. These were probably children who were running and playing in the street and were attracted by the crowds around Jesus.

It is easy to idealise the way of a child and think how they should be, but trying to change a child to suit a parent's needs means losing the very essence of the child. Let us rather look at the child and see what we have lost through pressure from adults on our own childhood.

Let the child teach us about trust and hope, about simplicity and wonder, about truth and transparent love. Children are free and unafraid to be just who they are until 'grown-up' games affect them.

Let the child that we carry in us teach us how to receive and enter our father's Kingdom here in simplicity and trust. 'I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' (Mark 10:15)

Reflect for 15 minutes on the following questions and then share your perceptions with the group.

1. How am I like a child?
2. How am I not like a child and needing to be big?
3. What pressure or feeling or fear has caused me to lose or reject the child that is in me?
4. How can I reclaim that essential child that I carry within me and that I need for entry into the kingdom of my Father?

It may be helpful to list some traits of childhood from various points of view:

- idealised traits of a child: good, obedient, quiet etc.
- realistic traits of a child: noisy, trusting, fearful, simple, grubby, curious, imaginative etc.
- aspects of yourself as a child. Which of these would be acceptable to God?

For this week, make it a project to be more aware of children. Look at them afresh and see what they are teaching you about relationship with the Father. Talk to God about this.

Note: For next week's meeting, choose a facilitator and arrange for someone to bring a good supply of drawing paper (large sheets), crayons and/or felt pens. You also need one member to bring three quite different pieces of classical music.



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