

Thought For The Week

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Be Like a Child

Reclaiming Innocence in a Weary World

Jesus flips life's cruel ironies with a single, startling command: become like a child. In Matthew 18:1-4, the disciples—grown men jockeying for heavenly rank—asked, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus called a little child, set him in their midst, and declared: “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Psalm 131:1-2 paints the posture: “O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty, nor do I involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul. Like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me.”

Who among us has not, in the crush of a frantic week—bills stacking, deadlines choking, joints creaking—wished to rewind the clock? Children sprint toward adulthood, counting birthdays like milestones to freedom: driver's licenses, R-rated movies, the intoxicating illusion of control. Adults, meanwhile, would trade every promotion for one more barefoot summer. Childhood was a playground of wonder: couch-cushion forts, stick-sword epics, imaginary dragons slain before dinner. No mortgages haunted the night; no performance reviews graded the soul. Life felt boundless.

Flip the calendar. “Adulthood” is the millennial coinage, but every generation feels the squeeze. A viral TikTok captured a young woman sobbing after her first eight-hour shift, overwhelmed by exhaustion. Multiply that by twelve, sixteen, forty-hour weeks—then by decades. At the mill, a beloved colleague clocked sixty-one years, retiring only in death at eighty. Another, Steve King, still preaches at eighty. Wally neared sixty years. The preacher himself, after fourteen, already dreams of escape. Lord willing, not until one hundred, he jokes—government spending and inflation conspire against early rest. Raising children through tantrums and tuition, bonding bills, taxes breeding like rabbits, health scares, economic plunges, political chasms that split families—stresses do not merely add; they compound. Joy calcifies into survival. Jacob's weary confession to Pharaoh rings truer with every gray hair: “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days” (Genesis 47:9).

Yet the gospel detonates despair. Christ does not merely permit childlike faith—He demands it as the sole entry to His kingdom. Mark 10:13-15: Busy adults shooed children away from the Master; Jesus burned with indignation. “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.” In a culture that canonizes wisdom, strength, and self-reliance, Jesus lifts the lowliest—dependent, voiceless children—as the template for greatness.

The Losses: How Innocence Slips Away

We begin as blank slates, echoing Adam and Eve in Eden's dawn. Genesis 2:25: "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Paradise was their playground; God walked with them in the cool of the day. One bite of forbidden fruit shattered the idyll. Genesis 3:7: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Sin birthed shame, separation, spiritual death, and a curse that still groans through creation. The ripple did not pause: from Cain's murder to today's headlines—murder, robbery, rape, war. Satan's playbook is unchanged; he prowls "like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

For too many, the assault begins brutally early. RAINN reports one in nine girls and one in fifty-three boys under eighteen will suffer sexual abuse or assault by an adult—often by someone trusted. That is not tragedy; it is satanic soul-theft, robbing joy before the first school bell. Even absent such horrors, we self-sabotage. Romans 3:23 is blunt: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." One preacher quipped, "If Adam and Eve didn't bite, you would have." Temptation bombards via screens, classrooms, workplaces, and whispered dares from friends. Peer pressure is not adolescent; it stalks boardrooms and breakrooms. "Do not be misled," Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 15:33. "Bad company corrupts good character." The rebel rarely lifts the steady; the steady sinks. Birds of a feather, indeed.

The Choice: Narrow Gate or Broad Highway

Sin leaves every soul at a fork. Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." The broad way glitters—endless parties, applause, ease. Media sells the sizzle: sex, drugs, rock and roll. They omit the hangover, the overdose, the empty dawn, the eternal verdict. The narrow path looks drab: self-denial, sacrifice, countercultural obedience. "You can't do anything," the world sneers. "Even thinking wrong is sin." Yet creation itself testifies. Romans 1:20: "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen... so that people are without excuse." Galaxies, DNA, sunsets—no plea of ignorance will stand on judgment day. "I didn't know" fares no better in God's court than in traffic court.

Acts 17:30: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." The Old Testament allowed some to be judged by conscience; post-cross, the call is universal. Luke 14:26-33 lays the cost bare: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." Build wisely, fight strategically, surrender fully. Summer camp offered two hikes: an easy stroll or a grueling climb through thorns and streams. The preacher chose the hard one—legs screaming, lungs burning—but the summit views, shared laughter, and forged friendships eclipsed the pain. Life with Christ is that climb: mocked as foolish (1 Corinthians 1:18-25), yet the only path to soul-deep joy. Worldly thrills fade; nothing compares to following Jesus.

The Restoration: Five Scriptural Keys to Childlike Faith

How do we shed cynicism's crust and step back into wonder? Jesus models the way. Receive the kingdom like a child. Five keys unlock the door.

1. **Trust Like a Child** Toddlers leap from stairs, arms outstretched, certain Mom or Dad will catch them. They do not hoard tomorrow's lunch money. Psalm 131 pictures the weaned child—past the frantic nursing stage, now content simply in Mother's presence, no demands, no overthinking. Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Surrender the spreadsheet of worries to the Father who never defaults.
2. **Humble Yourself** First-century children ranked near zero—seen, not heard, powerless. Jesus flipped the org chart: "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest" (Matthew 18:4). Disciples bickered over thrones; we chase likes, titles, spiritual résumés. Stop. Run knock-kneed to Abba, arms up. James 4:10: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."
3. **Stay Teachable** Young minds are wet clay. Proverbs 22:6: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." Dictators know this—Hitler Youth, communist indoctrination, even modern classrooms veering from basics into ideology. Age hardens us; habits calcify, biases ossify. We must unlearn lies—evolution marketed as fact, countless others—and relearn truth. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Psalm 119:11: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Dive daily; let the Word chisel.
4. **Obey with Joy** Children obey (mostly) because they trust parental wisdom. Adults bristle, stubborn in ruts. Yet obedience is love's proof. John 14:15: "If you love me, keep my commands." Claiming devotion while ignoring Scripture is self-deception. Isaiah 1:19-20: "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." History nods—Israel flourished under David's obedience, crumbled under rebellion. America wavers as it drifts from God. 1 Peter 1:14-16: "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do." God's rules are not chains; they are guardrails to flourishing.
5. **Embrace Wonder and Forgiveness** Children sculpt mashed-potato volcanoes, turn mud into masterpieces. Recall **A Christmas Story**—Ralphie's brother gleefully mangling dinner while parents fume. Jesus invites awe: gaze at stars not in dread but worship. Psalm 8:3-4: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars... what is mankind that you are mindful of them?" Sunrise gradients, floral fractals, a baby's laugh—creation shouts Creator. In forgiveness, kids bicker at recess, hug by lunch. Matthew 18:21-22: not seven times, but seventy-seven. Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Drop grudges; reclaim grace's playground.

The Glorious Inheritance: Children, Heirs, Forever

Christian life is not self-made empire—YouTube mansions, Lamborghinis, follower counts mean zero to God. The world's ladder climbs the wrong wall. 1 John 3:1-2: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him." Hebrews 2:11-12: Jesus "is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." Romans 8:16-17: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ." Titus 3:7: justified by grace, "we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death,

but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We deserve hell’s paycheck; God hands heaven’s inheritance—free.

Why clutch ashes when the Father offers galaxies? Become His child today: repent, believe the gospel, confess Christ, be baptized, arise forgiven (Acts 22:16). Receive the Holy Spirit, seal of sonship. If cynicism has stolen your joy, if wonder feels fossilized, come forward. The water is warm, prayers ready, Abba’s arms open wide. Trade adult exhaustion for childlike exaltation. The kingdom belongs to such as these.

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Be Like a Child

In a world burdened by adult responsibilities, Jesus invites us to reclaim childlike faith as the key to His kingdom. Drawing from Matthew 18:1-4, where disciples asked who is greatest in heaven, Jesus placed a child among them, declaring: "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest." Psalm 131:1-2 complements this: "O Lord, my heart is not proud... Like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me."

Adults long for childhood's carefree joy—unbridled energy, imagination, no mortgages or regrets. Kids chase maturity; adults crave youth's simplicity. "Adulting" overwhelms with jobs, bills, health scares, and endless worries. Life's stresses multiply, echoing Jacob's lament in Genesis 47:9: "Few and evil have been the days." Yet, Christ commands reclaiming childlike spirit. Mark 10:13-15: "Let the little children come to Me... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Anyone who will not receive the kingdom like a little child will never enter it."

We lose innocence through sin's ripple effects, starting with Adam and Eve's fall (Genesis 3:7), leading to shame and separation. Satan devours early via abuse (1 in 9 girls, 1 in 53 boys sexually abused), peer pressure, and worldly conformity (1 Corinthians 15:33). All sin (Romans 3:23); creation reveals God (Romans 1:20), demanding repentance (Acts 17:30).

Choose the narrow path (Matthew 7:13-14)—self-denial over broad pleasures. Count the cost (Luke 14:26-33); the cross seems foolish to those who are perishing but brings true joy to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

Reclaim via five keys:

1. **Trust:** Like a weaned child, rest in God (Psalm 131; Proverbs 3:5-6).
2. **Humility:** Depend fully; greatest are humble (Matthew 18:4; James 4:10).
3. **Teachable:** Moldable hearts; unlearn lies, hide Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:11).
4. **Obedience:** From love (John 14:15); brings blessing (Isaiah 1:19-20; 1 Peter 1:14-16).
5. **Wonder and Forgiveness:** Marvel at creation (Psalm 8:3-4); forgive quickly (Matthew 18:21-22; Ephesians 4:32).

As God's children (1 John 3:1-2; Hebrews 2:11-12), we inherit glory and eternal life (Romans 8:16-17; Titus 3:7; Romans 6:23). Repent, believe, be baptized (Acts 22:16). The Father awaits with open arms.

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