

CHILDLIKE OR CHILDISH

I recently attended the funeral of Robert Turner in Burnet, Texas. He was a preacher whose first sermon was delivered in 1934; his last in 2000. He died on October 12, 2007. I did not know him personally, but have read some of his work over the years. Some stated that he was one of the most influential preachers of our time. However, the point of this article is not to memorialize him, but to bring out a point that was made about him: that he was childlike without being childish.

Jesus stated in Matthew 18:3, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* There are many characteristics of children that are to be desired. They are humble and without sinful ambition (Matthew 18:4). They are forgiving and sympathetic (Matthew 6:14-15). Children are generally trusting and recognize their dependence on someone stronger than they (Matthew 6:24-34). Along with that trust goes love and devotion (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Children are also teachable (1 Pe 2:1-3) and will accept discipline (Hebrews 12:3-11). Does this describe you?

On the other hand, children have some less than desirable traits. They can be spoiled and unwilling to be satisfied (Luke 7:31-32) and very selfish (Philippians 2:3-4). Children can also be unproductive (Ephesians 4:11-12) and refuse to acknowledge responsibilities (Romans 14:2). Most children are not mature in their understanding (Hebrews 5:12-14) and so are easily swayed (Ephesians 4:14). Do any of these traits resemble you?

Certainly there are others traits as well, but you get the point, I think. God requires a certain character from his faithful servants. God is looking for a particular kind of heart. It is the heart of a child. No matter how old you may be, you can cultivate the heart of a child. Note again what Jesus said, *"...unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* Are you going to miss out on heaven because you insist on being childish instead of childlike?

MJW