

### To become like a little child

Some people believe that because Jesus said that one must believe like a child, that it is not necessary to be serious about studying the Bible.

Did Jesus say you must believe like a little child, or did He say you must become like a little child? *“Then some little children were brought to him so that he might lay his hands on them and pray. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus, however, said, “Let the little children come to me, and stop keeping them away, because the kingdom from heaven belongs to people like these” (Matt. 19:13-14).*

When one looks at the context of this piece of Scripture, we see that in order to settle an argument of who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus pointed to a child and said:

*“I tell you with certainty, **unless you change and become like little children**, you will never get into the kingdom from heaven. Therefore, whoever **humbles himself** as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom from heaven...” (Matt. 18:1-3, my emphasis).*

### What did Jesus mean by becoming like a little child?

In His answer Jesus emphasises three things: firstly, **adults can change**; secondly, that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven **they have to change** and thirdly, that **humiliation of self** plays an important role in this process.

It is against this background that one understands what Jesus said to Nicodemus in **John 3:3**:

*“I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again.”*

Is to be *“born again”* not another way of saying one must become like a little child? To which characteristic of a child would Jesus be referring to? Would He be thinking of a child’s patience, integrity, love or self-control? I don’t think so, because usually small children are selfish (“mine” is one of the first words they learn!), jealous, impatient, spiteful, demanding and lacking in self-control. These qualities are the opposite to the fruit of the Spirit which must develop over time in the life of a believer. **Is Jesus not referring to a child’s total dependency on the care and protection of his or her parents?** I think so, because in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared:

*“Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them” (GWT).*

*“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs” (NLT, Matt.5:3).*

Being born again implies a radical change of attitude in the life of the person who accepts Jesus as Saviour – an attitude that can be compared to that of a child who is totally

dependent on the care and protection of parents. Faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour is a necessary requirement for being saved.

Jesus did not say that you must **ignorantly believe like a child**; He said you must **become like a child**. Like already explained, Jesus' reference to being like a child must refer to a child's dependency on the care and protection of parents and not to an infant's ignorance and lack of knowledge. **In fact, concerning knowledge of Scripture, believers are admonished not to remain like children, but to grow to maturity:**

*"In fact, though by now you should be teachers, you still need someone to teach you the basic truths of God's word. You have become people who need milk instead of solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is still a baby..." (Heb. 5:12-13).*

Jesus warned:

*"Take heed what you hear. With that measure which you measure, it shall be measured to you. And to you who hear, more shall be given. For he who has, more shall be given to him; and he who has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has" (Mark. 4:24-25).*

The Amplified Bible states it more clearly:

*"Be careful what you are hearing. **The measure of thought and study you give to the truth you hear will be the measure of virtue and knowledge that comes back to you** – and more besides will be given to you who hear. For to him who has will more be given: and from him who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away by force" (Mark. 4:24-25, Amplified Bible, my emphasis).*

**Markus 4:24-25** has nothing to do with gaining more material possessions; it has to do with having a desire to know and understand more about the Truth of God's Word:

*"How blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because it is they who will be satisfied!" (Matt. 5:6).*

## Conclusion

There is a difference between being childish and being childlike. Being childish describes ridiculous, foolish behaviour, whilst being childlike describes the unpretentiousness of an innocent child.

*"...continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Messiah. Glory belongs to him both now and on that eternal day! Amen" (2 Pet. 3:18).*

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