

ARE WE TOO CHILDISH?

When the people were bringing infants and small children to Jesus, the disciples rebuked the people. *“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God”* (Luke 18:16). Jesus is telling us that Christians should have many of the characteristics of children. In many ways we should be: innocent, meek, trusting, forgiving, and loving. These are good traits found among children. However, children also have some bad traits which we should avoid. We should be like children in attitude, not in behavior! Let us examine 7 characteristics of children that we ought not to follow.

1. **Credulous or unsuspecting.** Children sometimes believe everything they hear! *“The simple <childish> believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going”* (Pro 14:15). You can tell them the most far-fetched story and they will think it is true, for instance, the tooth-fairy and Santa Claus. They are very easy to deceive. We should not be.

Christians need to “try” the spirits. They should not believe every teacher they hear. *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try <test> the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (1 Jn. 4:1).

Satan looks for simple-minded people, those who do not examine the evidence too closely. Christians are told by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”* We should be like the Bereans who *“searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* (Acts 17:11). When we test the prophets and find the truth, we are to hold on to it! A true child of God will not accept every fairy-tale they hear.

2. **Foolishness.** *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”* (Pro. 22:15). Children do and say things that are not wise. They are young and do not have any experience. For example, they will choose a shiny quarter over a \$100 bill. In this respect, we cannot be like children.

We must make wise choices, like Solomon choosing wisdom over riches and honor (1 Kin. 3:7-10). We must be able to see the value of a dull and worn-out \$100 bill over a bright and shiny quarter. Likewise, we must be like Moses and see the value of living godly and righteously now than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). Just because something looks good on the outside, does not mean it is good. Don’t judge a book by its cover like children, who choose big books with pictures and ignore classics.

3. **Love of Amusements.** Children just love to play games. When Zechariah

was describing the restoration of Jerusalem, he added, *“And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof”* (Zec. 8:5).

That is what makes most children happy – to play until it gets dark outside. There is nothing wrong with that, but we cannot spend our whole lives amusing ourselves.

We must be careful not to be like children in this area: not to get caught up in the different amusements that this world offers. There are many worldly games that we need to avoid, because usually we will end up playing with fire (no pun intended!). That is what happened to Demas, a fellow worker of Paul. He loved the amusements, the physical allurements, of this world more than he loved God (2 Tim. 4:10).

Today people judge a church by its entertainment and the amusements that it offers – basketball teams, softball leagues, band music, etc. These are the items that will appeal to children. Christians must be more mature than that. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth.

4. Petty Complaints. When Jesus was speaking to the crowd about John the Baptist, He commented:

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. (Mat. 11:16-17)

This is petty complaining. Children will quibble over everything. Example: If two children are riding in a car together, you will hear things like “He touched me!” or “She’s looking at me!” Unfortunately, some Christians act like this.

Christians should learn not to complain about everything. “The sermon is too long...I don’t like the way the money is spent...The weather is terrible...Let me tell you about my health...”, for example. Let’s face it, you can’t please everybody all the time. And everybody sure lets you know it! Children always let you know when they’re not happy. Christians should be content like Paul. *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (Php. 4:11).

We need to be satisfied with God’s blessings and not complain for more. *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Heb. 13:5).

5. Need of Tutors. In other words, children need someone else to tell them what to do – parents. Paul uses this characteristic to illustrate being under the

law until Christ came (Gal. 4:1-2). This is a natural trait for kids but eventually they must grow out of it.

Again, we must avoid being like children in this respect. We need to become mature and not depend on someone else for direction, like a pastor or a church headquarters. Many religions are guilty of this bad trait. But we in our congregations must be autonomous, which means self-governing. We can't be so childish that we let our government or a TV evangelist or some religious leader direct our spiritual lives. We need to have a plurality of qualified elders (Tit. 1:5) that will lead us according to God's word.

6. Fickleness or unsteadiness. Children are not very stable. They are always changing their minds on everything. One minute they want this, then they want some other toy.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (Eph. 4:14)

We need to avoid being tossed to and fro. How? By coming together and having unity and knowledge (Eph. 4:13). By speaking the Truth in love and growing up in Christ (Eph. 4:15).

When we are unified, we are sure-minded.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10)

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (Jas.1:8)

To change our double-mindedness, we need to draw near to God. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded " (Jas. 4:8).

7. Ignorance. Children are not able to comprehend the complex things, only simple stuff. They are ignorant of many things.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (Heb. 5:12)

As we grow we need to move on from the first principles to strong meat (Heb. 5:14). If we are stuck on the basic principles then we are like ignorant children,

and that is not pleasing to God.

One of the Christian graces that we are to add to our faith is knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5-7). When we add knowledge, that means we have moved on from the first principles. That means we have studied and matured in our knowledge of God's word. Remember how Hosea warned the priests that God's people were destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). So we should not be ignorant like children sometimes are.

Yes, Jesus spoke well of some of the characteristics of children but we also know there are some to be avoided. Sometimes we have to remember to grow up and be mature. *"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things"* (1 Cor. 13:11).

Have you put away these undesirable childish traits while holding on to the childish traits of innocence, meekness, trusting, forgiving, and loving?

Adapted from a sermon by RAY MCMANUS
(Deceased)

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: What does the Bible teach about Easter celebrations?

ANSWER: The celebration of Easter, for those who observe it as a religious holiday, is more than just one Sunday in April. In fact, we find that it involves much more. The Easter tradition is an entire period of religious observance which involves several days. The formal period encompasses a forty day period which is divided into four days of observance. These days are as follows: Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and then finally Easter Sunday. Our approach in this article is to look at these attendant days and then to search the Bible to determine if we as Christians should engage in this tradition.

The celebration of Easter begins forty days before the day commonly called Easter Sunday. This period has been assigned the name Lent. This word is from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten* which means spring. These days supposedly symbolize the forty days of fasting which Christ underwent while in the wilderness following his baptism. Those who observe Lent observe this period with fasting, prayer, self denial, and church attendance. Now for those who are interested in following the New Testament pattern, the question becomes, "Where does the Bible tell us that we are to recognize this period and celebrate it as a part of the Christian religion?" Where in the scriptures do we read of any command or do we find any example of Christians marking these days as a period of formal religious observance? We are told in the scriptures

that all we do in word or in deed is to be done by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:16-17). If one searches the New Testament, they will find that the holy scriptures do not enjoin the observance of this period known as Lent.

The Easter tradition also tells us that the Lent period begins with the observance of Ash Wednesday. This day began about the 8th Century. It involves the use of the prior year's palm leaves which are burnt and mixed with holy water and the resulting mixture placed in the form of a cross on the head of the observer by a priest. (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01775b.htm>). Again the question becomes, "From whence comes the instructions, from God or man?"

The next day of significance is the day referred to as Palm Sunday. This day begins the period called the Holy Week. This is supposedly the Sunday before the death of Christ. It is to commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem where the people spread palm branches before his path. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that Christians are to observe such a day.

Next in the tradition we find the day known as Good Friday, the supposed day that Jesus was crucified. On this day the priest dresses in black and performs certain rituals (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06643a.htm>).

Finally the entire holiday period reaches its peak with the Sunday known as Easter. This is the day we are told, that Jesus arose from the dead. Many groups have special observances such as sunrise services as well as communion.

Regardless of the popularity of this holiday period, there exists no Biblical evidence where such was practiced by the apostles or the churches of the first century. In fact, the Bible is silent as to the practice which has become so common. Jesus in Matthew 15:9 tells us, "*But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*" We need to be sure that all we do is done by the authority of Jesus.

Some at this point might inquire, "What about Acts 12:4, doesn't it mention Easter?"

"And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

It should be pointed out that this verse is a far cry from authorizing the observance of the Easter period. All this passage states is that after Herod the King killed James that he apprehended Peter and had the intentions of delivering him to the people after Easter. Nowhere does it mention Lent, Ash Wednesday or Palm Sunday or the observance of Easter Sunday. It should be

noted that the word in the original language (Greek) is *pascha* which appears 29 times in the New Testament, 28 of which is translated as "Passover".

As Christians, we must remember that we must have authority for all we say and do in matters of religion (Mat. 7:21-28, Col. 3:17, 2 John 9). The New Testament does not command the observance of Easter as a religious period. This then places the Easter tradition not as a will of God but rather a tradition of man. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for seeking to worship according to the commandments of men. *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Mat. 15:8-9).

We as Christians are to remember the death of Christ each week on the first day (Acts 20:7). We assemble at that time to partake of the Lord's supper and in our minds remember the great price that was paid for our sins. This price was the death of our Lord, who bore our transgressions as he suffered and died on the cruel cross of Calvary (1 Cor. 11:23-29). Let us all strive to the best of our ability to obey this divine ordinance and worship God in the manner in which he has prescribed.

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Adapted from "Easter: A Christian's Perspective" in *Searching the Scriptures* - March 1990

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
April 2-6	Liberty Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 2-6	Owen's Road Prattville, AL	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
April 5-8	Junction City Junction City, KY	Aaron Keeton (Morgan County, KY)
April 13-15	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL	Chris Richardson (Eastview, KY)
April 16-20	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

April 19-22	Goochtown Eubank, KY	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
April 20-22	Pleasant Ridge Woodbury, TN	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)
April 23-28	Willow Oaks Russell Springs, KY	Various Speakers
April 27-29	Verona Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Moses in Deuteronomy, what two miracles took place during the forty years of wandering?
2. In II Samuel, why did Joab enlist the help of a “wise woman” of Tekoa to pose as a mourner before King David?
3. What did Solomon decide was the “whole duty of man” as a summation of Ecclesiastes?
4. Why did Herod the tetrarch have John the Baptist put to death?
5. In Acts when a group of about forty Jews formed a conspiracy to kill Paul, who caught wind of it and saved Paul?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month’s questions?

1. In First Samuel, when Samuel was getting old, what did the people ask him to do? APPOINT A KING FOR THE NATION (1 Sam. 8:5)
2. What was in the ark when it was placed in the temple according to Second Chronicles? THE TWO TABLES PLACED THERE BY MOSES (2 Chron. 5:10)
3. According to the book of Amos, after Amos pleaded with God, God relented from serving what two potential disasters upon Israel? A LOCUST ATTACK AND A CONFLICT OF FIRE (Amos 7:1-6)

4. At the wedding in Cana, what request did Jesus' mother give to the servants regarding Him? "WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU, DO IT" (John 2:5)

5. In 2 Corinthians Paul says that he was given a thorn in the flesh. What was it? THE BIBLE DOES NOT SAY (2 Cor. 12:7-10)