

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MAY 13 - 17, 2019

UNCOMMON

love

SERMON SERIES

April 28 - May 26

MONDAY

1 Corinthians 13:11-12; John 8:3-11

In our continuing “uncommon love” series, 1 Corinthians 13:11-12 is this week’s featured Scripture. Verse 11 is well-known, though often quoted out of context and, thus, frequently misapplied. Let’s briefly recap the Corinthian situation.

“‘The carnalities,’ the things that were troubling the [Corinthian] church [included] ... the problem of divisions ... [and] of scandals in the church. ... They were allowing all these divisions over the philosophies of men to come into the church, and they had chosen certain religious leaders around whom they were gathering in little factions. ... The scandals that were occurring in this church ... were, of course, the effects of the divisions.” (Ray Stedman)

Rifts, jealousy and strife arose in Corinth over spiritual gifts, which Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. Some contended over which church leader was more worthy—Paul tackled this in 1 Corinthians 3. In today’s Scripture, Paul challenged the Corinthians with logic that I interpret essentially as: “You should’ve abandoned long ago such childish quarrels as ‘I’m better than you’ or ‘My dad can take your dad.’” Christian love seasoned with wisdom avoids such pettiness.

The Corinthian believers’ immaturity fostered increasing legalism within their ranks. “The weak, immature Christian always wants somebody to put him [and others] under law ... And Paul knows that

Christians must learn to deal with what he calls ‘the law of liberty.’ ... The mark of maturity is the ability to love, to love the unlovely, the selfish, the distasteful, the ungrateful, and to not let that change your attitude or your actions toward them but to keep on working fully for their best interests. As the ability to do that increases ... it will replace all our childish concern[s].” (Stedman)

Jesus personified Christian maturity—*agápē* synchronous with righteousness—in John 8’s “woman caught in adultery” incident. The Pharisees aimed to trap Jesus here: if condemning her, He’d appear unloving and harsh; however, condoning adultery would contradict the Law. The Lord deftly dispersed the woman’s chastened accusers and then, absent the two witnesses required for a lawful Jewish trial, dismissed the matter. Nevertheless, Jesus didn’t ignore her behavior, admonishing “*go, and ... sin no more*” (John 8:11)—demonstrating how to share truth lovingly, a lesson both for Corinth and us.

QUESTIONS

What were some of the symptoms of the Corinthians’ spiritual immaturity? How did Jesus demonstrate “sharing truth in love” with the incident of the woman caught in adultery?

PRAYERS FOR FOR HIS CHILDREN

Pray for this ministry founded on the principle that each child is created in God’s image. FHC provides care and love to vulnerable children in Ecuador until they can be reunited with families or be adopted. It provides a home for newborns to young adults who have experienced abandonment, abuse, or neglect.

TUESDAY

1 Corinthians 13:11; Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 10:16

Yesterday we considered the Corinthian church's spiritual immaturity, Paul nudging them to "[give] up childish ways." Did Paul shun children? He was single during his ministry and apparently childless. Jesus was particularly warm and welcoming toward children, clearly seen in Mark 10:13-16. Were Paul and Jesus at odds regarding children and the merits of "faith like a child's"?

Childlike faith was Jesus' emphasis, whereas Paul addressed the Corinthians' spiritual childishness. "Childlike faith is not childish faith. The first resonates with and embraces the neediness, dependency, and smallness of those who understand their place in the kingdom of God. The second simply refuses to grow up." (The Gospel Coalition) "[Childlike faith] describes all the beautiful things about children—truth, joy, innocence, curiosity, wonder, forgiveness. ... [Childishness] encapsulates all the worst things about children—petulance, immaturity, obnoxiousness, selfishness, and so on." (The Blazing Center)

Paul's aim for Corinth was what each of us should embrace: welcoming God's leading and being aware of our complete dependence upon Him while also progressing from "milk" and playground behavior to "solid food" and spiritual maturity. It's alarming how many long-time believers know the Bible so superficially, having let their biblical literacy plateau. Just as physical well-being involves a healthy lifestyle and balanced daily meals, Christian growth requires a biblical "diet" of more than just half-hour Sunday sermons.

Jesus characterized the interplay between spiritual maturity and childlike faith as being “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). “As we take the Gospel to a hostile world, we must be wise (avoiding the snares set for us), and we must be innocent (serving the Lord blamelessly). Jesus was not suggesting that we stoop to deception but that we should model some of the serpent’s famous shrewdness in a positive way. Wisdom does not equal dishonesty, and innocence does not equal gullibility. ... Be gentle without being pushovers, and ... sacrificial without being taken advantage of.” (GotQuestions.org)

I struggle with the gentleness and joyfulness aspects of all of this. I need the Holy Spirit to help me be more surrendered, my Bible study be less mechanical, my prayers be more fervent. Ask God to show where you need to grow.

QUESTIONS

What are the differences between being childlike and childish?
What did Jesus mean when instructing His followers to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves”?

PRAYERS FOR FOR HIS CHILDREN

Pray that each child who is cared for at For His Children (FHC) would experience God’s love, healing from past hurt and trauma, and the hope found in Jesus.

WEDNESDAY

1 Corinthians 13:11, 14:20; Psalm 68:4-6

“Giving up childish ways” is a convicting challenge. As Christian “recovering humans,” the fruits of childishness—selfishness, ingratitude, envy, gossip, one-upmanship, meanness—come very easily for many of us. Regrettably, all too often they do for me.

I believe that this is one of the reasons God created marriage and gives children to many couples—so that we can experience and discipline such sinful traits in our children, recognize them in ourselves, see our need to mature, and better appreciate what God lovingly endures in us, His children. We’re all “naturally” [fallenly] inclined toward selfishness.

Increasing selflessness is a key to effective parenting. Fathers can slide by perhaps for a while, remaining generally selfish; however, being a good father increasingly necessitates “denying yourself” (Luke 9:23). “There is so much woman in many a girl and too much boy in many a man” (Mokokoma Mokhonoana)—I understand this well, particularly after my self-absorbed, enduring “inner jackass” surfaces! Motherhood, however, demands foregoing selfishness as children arrive. Good mothers routinely eat last, often waive the luxury of staying in bed when ill, regularly pick up after others, etc.—as those of you who are mothers know.

Nevertheless, such dynamics are not unique to parents. “Giving up childish ways” is a key to healthy marriages. I believe it’s one reason why God created marriage and also hates divorce: upon divorcing, married couples “opt out” of one of the means God fashioned to help us live more sacrificially and grow accordingly. As well, maturing spiritually enables you to be a better friend, family member, neighbor, fellow believer, etc. God puts us together in community, I believe, as a means of helping us “work out our salvation” (Philippians 2:12)—as we discover how to get along better, grasp how to appreciate and love others more, learn to apologize and seek forgiveness as well as forgive, etc.

All of this is the stuff of the “boot-camp” we know as life on this earth. Fortunately, God doesn’t abandon His children here. In Christ, He saves us despite our sinfulness and accompanies us amidst our trials. He’s a good, good Father!

QUESTIONS

What are some of the “fruits” of childishness? How does God use family dynamics to help us grow? What are some of the primary ways God reveals Himself to us?

PRAYERS FOR FOR HIS CHILDREN

Pray for the biological families of children who are in the process of reunification. Pray that they will experience healing and growth and be able to provide a safe, healthy family environment for their children. Pray for loving adoptive families for children who are not able to be reunited with their biological family.

THURSDAY

1 Corinthians 13:12; Jeremiah 9:23-24; John 14:7-11

Several years ago when I was speaking with a Jehovah's Witnesses couple, the wife asked, "In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to God. If Jesus is God, how could that work? How can God pray to God?" In a rare, fleeting moment of insight, I offered, "If we could understand everything about God, then it wouldn't be God we were considering, but something less, something manmade."

Paul addresses our limited capacity to comprehend the infinite and eternal in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "*Seeing in the mirror dimly ... Now I know in part ...*" The LORD delights in our desire to know Him (Jeremiah 9:24), even though His nature is so beyond us and our deepest insights immeasurably undershoot God's majesty. But Paul's text offers us one of the great promises of heaven. When we are in our glorified bodies, in the presence of our God and Savior, we will "*know fully, even as [we] have been fully known*" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

How can we best know God presently, given our earthly limitations? Jesus Christ is the fullness of God (Colossians 1:19). The disciples, despite accompanying Him for three years, didn't grasp Jesus' deity until after the resurrection (John 14:7-11, 20:27-28). But they were disadvantaged vs. us: we have the Gospels and other New Testament books, which they didn't. The Bible's central theme is God's redemptive plan for humankind in Christ. Therefore, we need to grasp the full counsel of God, both Old and New Testament.

The Holy Spirit, indwelling the redeemed in Christ (2 Timothy 1:14), instructs us regarding God and His ways (John 14:26). The Spirit displayed His related power through the disciples' experiences—those who had timidly fled Jesus' crucifixion were later emboldened to die as willing martyrs. And we learn more of God through His magnificent works in the world, in the universe, and in the lives of Christ followers.

Perhaps you've heard the motto, "No God. No peace. Know God. Know peace." As we've considered, there are varied ways to know God better. Jesus promised, "*My peace I give to you*" (John 14:27)—pray for deeper insights and see how God reveals Himself further to you.

QUESTIONS

What challenges and opportunities present themselves in trying to know God better? Why is it important to spend meaningful study time in the Old Testament and not just in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament?

PRAYERS FOR FOR HIS CHILDREN

Pray that staff members would grow in their relationship with Jesus and that they would be filled with joy and peace. Pray that their lives would reflect God's love to the FHC children.

FRIDAY

John 20:27-31; Hebrews 11:1; James 2:19

Not knowing particular things—where we’re going, when something’s due, who’s doing what—can make me crazy sometimes. It’s natural for us to want to understand. However, as addressed yesterday, our capacity to comprehend the eternal and heavenly is imperfect. Yesterday also featured an exciting promise regarding when we’re in God’s eternal presence: “... *then [we] shall know fully, even as [we] have been fully known*” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

“Wait a minute!” your skeptical friend complains. “That’s too late—I want to know now what happens after I die! And the Bible provides a murky roadmap, at best—I can’t get by only on this faith that it talks about!” You respond, “But why not? We exercise faith every day, throughout the day—when we sit in a chair, eat something, start a car, and certainly when boarding an airplane.” Then you add, “Faith not only expresses itself in the everyday; it’s also the currency of heaven.”

Your friend argues, “But I believe there’s a God! After all, I’m an American and we went to church when I was a kid. Isn’t that enough?” You reply, “[Our] faith contains two aspects: intellectual assent and trust. Intellectual assent is believing something to be true. Trust is actually relying on the fact that the something is true.”

(GotQuestions.org) Then you add, “You’re not saved by head knowledge, but by believing on Jesus Christ. Satan knows orthodox Christian doctrine, grasping a lot about God—but that can’t save him.”

“There it is!” your friend responds. “You ‘born-again’ are so arrogant, as if yours is the only way to heaven. I know some very committed, faithful Jews. Our Muslim neighbors are extremely nice and express incredible faith in Islam. God won’t honor their faithfulness?!” You reply, “It’s not the intensity of your faith that can save you, but the object of your faith.”

So many have faith in having faith. One insists that $2+2=5$; another is adamant that the answer is 6. One is closer to right, but both are wrong. Whom do you know like the friend quoted above? How can you show them the Object of your faith, the Savior Jesus Christ?

QUESTIONS

What does “faith is the currency of heaven” mean? What’s the difference between “knowing about God” and “knowing God”? What does “It’s not the intensity of your faith that can save you, but the object of your faith” mean?

PRAYERS FOR FOR HIS CHILDREN

Pray that God would provide the funding to meet our 2019 budget so that we can continue providing exceptional care to each FHC child and we would not have to turn any children away.

Sources

- Ray Stedman's quotes are from www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians
- The Gospel Coalition's quote can be found at www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/childlike-faith-is-not-childish/
- The Blazing Center's quote is from www.theblazingcenter.com/2016/07/5-characteristics-of-childlike-faith
- The GotQuestions.org quotes are from www.gotquestions.org
- Mokokoma Makhonoana's quote can be found at www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/childishness

