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How to Have Childlike Faith as an Adult

Lia Martin

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. – Mark 10:15

Children are one of God's greatest miracles. And what an honor that he calls us all, even fully-grown adults, his children (1 John 3:1). In Colossians, we read that as children of God, we have a new self, that is constantly being renewed. Our newness never gets old.

We may advance in years, but we are still the apple of his eye. He knows every hair on our heads, and he rejoices over us in song (Zephaniah 3:17). Faith in a love this deep requires a childlike imagination, because it is certain of what it cannot see. Try doing that with a cynically narrow view of your current circumstances.

To have faith, we must think, wonder, and believe—like a child. Childlike faith is an innocent, humble faith that believes and trusts. Let's explore how to exercise childlike faith as adults.

What Is the Meaning of Childlike Faith?

Any adult can dress up, but children make it an adventure. They put on a new self and believe they are transformed. Calling forth our creativity, Colossians 3:12 also invites us to "clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." These are things the world can sometimes "adult" out of us. And they're qualities that suggest humility, not haughtiness. A childlike faith is kind,

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humble, and gentle. It does not look down on others.

In fact, God opposes haughtiness and warns us to not let our pride be our downfall (Proverbs 18:12). He exposes the Pharisees who deem themselves better than others. He has also given us the best example of childlike faith in the Son of God. Jesus demonstrates the humility that comes before honor. He trusts his father with his life.

And to highlight what childlike faith looks like, Jesus compares himself to a child, saying, "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5)

As author Dave Jenkins explains, Jesus doesn't have an upper-echelon in-crowd or "adults only" policy. He describes in Matthew 18 that unless we repent of vying for "all-star" status and instead take the lowly position of God's children, we can't even enter the kingdom—much less be considered the greatest.

So how do we cultivate faith like a child?

How Do You Have Childlike Faith as an Adult?

Putting off our "adulting" selves and admitting we're needy children isn't an easy task. But with practice, we see it's a kinder, gentler, more rewarding way to live. Here are three ways to stir your childlike faith:

1. Ask God to search your heart.

God didn't create you to hide. Just as he went seeking after Adam and Even in their sinful state in the Garden, God pursues. He is all-knowing and has given us his truths to write on our hearts. But sometimes we start writing other things there. Jealousy, hatred, bitterness, anger, vengeance, or any other signature effects of the enemy's prowling.

If you're wanting to experience your identity as God's child, give him your whole heart. And ask him to reveal to you any way in it that is offensive (Psalm 139:23-24).

2. Seek wonder.

Adults can be so harried. We get caught in the habit of valuing our work so much that we forget to allow any margin for our minds to wander. In the adult world of reports, statistics, analytics, and performance markers, we can lose sight of the miraculous that's occurring without our intervention at all. To cultivate a childlike faith, it's helpful to expand your view. Go for a hike deep in the wild. Walk along the shore in a storm. Get a ground-level view of the world within the clover. Go find something way bigger than you, and let it overwhelm your soul with awe.

3. Express love.

Children are naturally huggers. In fact, they're innate masters of the running-leap-and-hug. They don't hold back their affection and they don't try to figure it out ahead of time. They just say it, shout it, give it. And when they do, it's a gift to a world in need.

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But because of their tendency to give their love away, they have adult parents to protect this vulnerable expression. We, too, have a Father protecting us when we choose to express love anyway. Even when someone has made us mad. Especially when we see someone who needs to hear it, or needs a hand to hold.

If we're to develop a childlike faith, we don't think ourselves too busy or important to show love.

5 Ways to Maintain Faith Like a Child in Adult Issues

Even as we're asking, seeking, and expressing...life can still get in the way. We get sidetracked when responsibilities mount and can easily forget that God is in control. If we work at maintaining a flexible, more carefree, childlike faith in his plan, we can fortify our resilience when adult issues arise. Here's how:

1. Ask for his help in all things.

One of the most endearing traits of children is how they're not ashamed that they're needy. They just ask. And even though our requests get bigger as we grow, we sometimes feel we're supposed to handle them all without needing God.

Don't overburden yourself in this way. Call on your Father who gives good gifts to his children (Luke 11:13). He cares about every little thing in your life. So, don't go it alone. Keep asking for him to hold, and guide, your hand.

2. Remember your salvation is received, not earned.

Ephesians 2:8-9 is so freeing. It states, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

How wonderful that God has given a gift we can't even build, make, or earn. It's a gift from the giver to you, his beloved child.

3. Don't compare yourself to others.

Over time, adults can cultivate competitiveness instead of childlike faith, as witnessed among the disciples who wanted to know how was the greatest. Instead of worrying how you measure up to others, meditate on how your Father in heaven sees you.

You are his unique child, knit together in the womb with care, made like no other, on purpose. So, throw off your self-criticism and appreciate what He sees in you.

4. Remember that all have sinned and fall short.

Children tend to be quicker to forgive than adults. We've grown a harder shell and it's tough for apologies to penetrate. But because we're taught in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," we can see our own bruises reflected in others.

When we're hurt by others, we can understand they're hurting, too. Like the preschooler on the

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playground, when our friend says "I'm sorry," a childlike faith allows us to say "I forgive you" and get back to joy.

5. See God as your loving Father and let him tend to your inner child.

Some of us are afraid to live with a childlike faith as adults because the father or parent we had as a child hurt us deeply. We may not understand that children are loved, protected, and treasured.

But if you're willing to cultivate a childlike faith, you can bring that hurting child you once were, into the healing heart of Jesus. You can ask him to see you then and love you now in the ways you may have missed.

God speaks to us through his own Son, that we are his children, even as adults. Jesus was willing to humble himself so that you could see God's plan to raise us up from despair. And he encourages us today to become, daily, like little children. Trusting in this way, we can be sure we will enter into the kingdom of God.

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