

LEARNING FROM CHILDREN

With this week being the time when three of our local churches are having their vacation Bible Schools, I believe it to be appropriate to reflect upon what our young people can teach us. That may seem a little backward when we think of how foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child (Prov. 22:16), and we as parents have an obligation to raise them in the admonition of the Lord. But truly, children can teach adults some of the most basic and most hard-hitting lessons of life. Because of their purity of heart, in many cases they can view things differently and show us the way to more righteous living.

Prejudice is something that is learned. Certain people have hateful feelings toward other people just because their skin is a different color or there is a slight variation in some body features. There is no justification morally or spiritually for prejudice. It is a sin. And somewhere, somehow we as adults have learned to practice it. But a child hasn't. In a college married housing complex one will find quite an assortment, of people from various parts of the world that have come to a university to learn. All of the children from various backgrounds have no trouble at all playing games with one another. It only after they have grown up (?) that racial tension begins to build. More adults stop and watch their children play with others, to help break down the walls of prejudice.

Another thing of which adults are plagued with is fear. This again is something which is learned. Fear of falling, being burned, the dark, and of being alone are traits all of us have to a degree which were probably not present when we were young. Granted, some fears are good and should be a part of life; such as a healthy fear of parental displeasure warranted by certain types of behavior or a fear of God by which out of that fear we serve Him. But other kinds of phobias can keep us from being the type of Christian that Christ demands. By watching children, who know little fear, do things without reservation because they know it to be right (no matter what the cost) is a foundation for good self-confidence which can grow into an adult positive mental attitude. Children usually believe that the whole world revolves around them, and so without silly fears to "weigh them down" they can enjoy doing things that please them and please others.

The big factor that children have over adults in many cases, which I believe is essential to a healthy mental and spiritual life, is that, they are easily led and shaped by the forces around them. Children are not "set in their ways." They should be taught at an early age what things to stay away from, and carry this throughout their life. Not every force that works on an individual is good. But many are, and we as mature (?) parents and members of society need to have the capability of looking at things from all angles with an open mind. Too many times we put on the blinders (like a horse does) so we can't be affected by any outside stimuli other than what is right, in front of us. How many go through life, and never investigate deeper channels of thought, new religious ideas, different social customs, new fashions, new hobbies, and diverse cultural teachings because of our own stubbornness and tradition? On the most part, since children are not bound by stubbornness and tradition, this frees them so that they can become all they can be.

Children are to be taught, trained, and disciplined in their early years. But step back and realize they can teach us plenty about life as well, Remember our Savior, Jesus Christ said, "Truly I say to you unless you are converted and become like little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."