

Being Like a Little Child

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of humility and child-like faith in Christian leadership and community life.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:2, Isaiah 11:6, Matthew 12:18, Matthew 18:4, Matthew 23:12, Mark 9:35, Luke 18:17, Philippians 2:3, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Childlike Faith", "Humility In Leadership"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of humility and childlike faith in the church, drawing parallels to the peaceful reign of Jesus on earth. He emphasizes that true leaders in the church are those who are humble and guileless like little children, not seeking recognition or status. By following Jesus' example of humility and simplicity, leaders can create an atmosphere of peace and unity within the church, reflecting the kingdom of God. Poonen highlights the need for self-examination among leaders when discord arises, urging them to embody the characteristics of a little child to lead effectively.

Transcript

In Isaiah 11:6, we are told that during the 1000-year reign of Jesus on earth, when He returns, everything will be peaceful. There will be no wild animals, and life on earth will be simply wonderful. But we have a foretaste of that life in the church already - because the kingdom of God has already come in the church. "Wolves" are already lying down with "lambs", "leopards" and "goats" are at peace, and "cattle" are safe amidst the "lions" - in the fellowship of the church. In the world, people with such diverse personalities as these, cannot get along with each other. But in the church, they die to their Self-life, and live in glorious peace with each other. And in this kingdom, Isaiah says that "a little child will be the leader" (Isa.11:6). Thus we see who is really fit to lead a church - the one who is most like a little child. The real leader in a church is the one who is guileless and humble like a little child. It is easy to fellowship with such a brother. People develop confidence in such a brother - who is himself, who is not trying to impress others with his personality or his gifts, and who is not trying to imitate some other more mature brother. In many Christian groups, leadership is given to those who are smart, talented and humorous, and who are good musicians and organizers. But in the new-covenant church, God appoints those who are like little children - for they are the greatest ones in His kingdom. If the "wolves" in a church are tearing up the "lambs", then the kingdom of God has not yet come to that church. And that must be because the leader is not like a child!! So it is the leaders who should judge themselves when things go wrong in a church.

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 18:4 to humble themselves like little children, for a child is the greatest in the kingdom of God. Now we know that the greatest person in God's kingdom is Jesus Himself. So that must mean that Jesus humbled himself at all times like a little child. There we have an example for all Christian leaders to follow. We read on one occasion that Jesus healed multitudes of sick people, but told the people not to tell anyone about it. He didn't want any publicity for Himself. That was in order to fulfil a Scripture that said that He "would not make his voice heard in the streets" (He would not advertise Himself) (Matt.12:15-20). That Scripture begins with these words "Behold my Child..." (Matt.12:18 - margin). God is saying there, "Look carefully at My Child - the One who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven - He heals the sick and then disappears as though He has done nothing." In the church, the one with this spirit is the real leader.

A little child realises that he is a nobody, and that he knows almost nothing. And it is the realization that we are nobodys and that we know almost nothing of spiritual matters, that will keep us as little children always. It is only such a person whom God can attest as His representative in the church. Jesus gave us only two examples to learn humility from: Himself and little children. In the gospels, we can see how Jesus lived, and learn humility from His example. Around us, we can see little babies, and learn humility from them. What are the thoughts that go through a little baby's mind when it is lying in its cradle? Does he think how smart he is or how much others appreciate him etc., No. He has no such thoughts at all. He has no self consciousness whatsoever. He is just himself - natural, with no pretence or artificiality. That is our example. Are we bothered with thoughts about what others think about us or our ministry? Then we are not like little children. We must battle these high thoughts until we are converted and become like little children. Only then will we be fully qualified to lead God's people. Then we will be happy with any small corner on this earth that God places us in, to do His work. And we won't have any ambition to become great in the eyes of men. We will be happy to fulfil the task that God has entrusted us with in Christ's Body. And we won't be jealous of anyone else's ministry either.

Praise God that we can experience as well as proclaim such a wonderful gospel - that we can unlearn all our corrupt "grown-up ways" and become like little children once again.

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