

THE BIG IDEA: Being like a child starts with seeing like a child.

### The Take-Off

This year, we're doing a holiday series called "Like a Child" that is based off the words that Jesus spoke to his disciples in Matthew 18:4 when he told them that unless they became like children, they wouldn't enter the kingdom.

I can think of no better season than Christmas to talk about being like a child because all of us remember the "magic" of Christmas as children that somehow seems to wane a bit as we grow older.

Christmas is a time for children, and it's a time for the young at heart, and so we're taking 5 weeks to examine what our lives would look like if we could be like a child.

Not childish, but child-like. There's a difference, and hopefully that will be obvious throughout the series.

Last week, Eugene got us started by talking about how we can love like a child. In short, children love unconditionally, don't they? No matter what, they keep coming back for more. That's what makes children so precious and so vulnerable all at once.

This week, I want to look at the Bible and ask, "How can we live like a child?"

It's critical that we have an answer for this, because of the seriousness of Jesus' words. Listen to them again in Matthew 18:2-3:

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Now, when Jesus says things like "you'll NEVER enter the kingdom," it makes me want to be sure that I'm listening to what he's saying, and he's saying we've got to become like a child, and that starts with taking a fresh look at a child's perspective on life.

Our Big Idea this morning is simply this: being like a child starts with seeing like a child.

This morning, I want to walk us through some of the lenses that children naturally look through.

I believe that when we adopt these lenses, we'll find ourselves living more and more like a child.

So, 5 lenses that a child sees life through (and we should, too):

#### 1. Children live honestly

- a. I think "unfiltered" may be a better word, because they usually just say what they're thinking
- b. I'm not sure that children try to be honest - they just say the truth - the painful, often hilarious, truth
- c. I love this true encounter between a dad and his son:

*One evening after dinner, my five-year-old son, Brian, noticed that his mother had gone out. In answer to his questions, I told him, 'Mom is at a Tupperware party.'*

*This explanation satisfied him for only a moment. Puzzled, he asked, 'What's a Tupperware party, Dad?'*

*I've always given my son honest answers, so I figured a simple explanation would be the best approach. 'Well, Brian,' I said, 'at a Tupperware party, a group of ladies sit around and sell plastic bowls to each other.'*

*Brian nodded, indicating that he understood. Then he burst into laughter. 'Come on, Dad,' he said. 'What is it really?'*

- d. I brought a few images of child-like honesty, too. I think you'll enjoy these. [Pics from Pinterest]
- e. I don't think God wants us to be brutal about it, but I do think that if our Father is a God of truth, then his kids will be about truth, too
- f. Proverbs 16:13 - the king is pleased with honesty
- g. Ephesians 4:15 - we speak truth in love in order to benefit the body
- h. If we could watch your life for one week, would we say that you live honestly like a child?

#### 2. Children live in the moment

- a. I read about a young couple with a 2 year-old who were going on a date and the child cried as they left - hard! The parents naturally felt bad leaving, and as they pulled out down the driveway, they realized they'd forgotten something. As the husband tiptoed back to the house, he heard laughter in the backyard. Peeking around he saw his 2 year old having the time of her life and he realized kids live in the moment.
- b. What a great lens to see life through, right?

- c. If we live like a child, we'll master the ability to make the most of the moments we're in instead of regretting or fearing the moments that are over or yet to come.
- d. Two verses come to mind: Philippians 3:13-14 and Ephesians 5:16
- e. Like children, we've got to learn how to let go so that we can go on.
- f. The great thing about the command to redeem the time is that we can redeem all the times: redeem our past mistakes, redeem our present choices and redeem our future plans.
- g. When we do that, we find ourselves freed up enough to be all in on the moment we're currently in!
- h. Do you live in the moment like a child? Are you redeeming - making the most of - the moments you have?

### 3. Children live simply

- a. I love the simplicity of children. They tend to be uncluttered, uncomplicated and free.
- b. That changes as we age, and I'm not sure that's a good thing.
- c. Here are 2 examples - most kids will solve these before adults will:
  - What's more powerful than God... [slide]
  - School bus riddle [slide]
- d. Sometimes we're guilty of thinking that cynicism is a mark of maturity, but God wants us to have mature thinking without manure thinking (Phil. 4:8)
- e. When we live simply like children, we'll find ourselves discerning more easily what matters most - we'll be able to cut through the distractions and focus on the necessary
- f. Hebrews 12:1-2 ... if you watch kids play, you'll see how quickly they shed coats, jackets, gloves if they are making it harder to do what they're doing
- g. Are you living with the lens of simplicity? Or have you grown cynical and complicated?

### 4. Children live with wonder

- a. Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."
- b. I love this about children
  - when a string becomes the one weapon that can fight off the dark side in an epic battle for the universe!
  - when time gets lost in the fascination of nature
- c. Guess what? God loves it when his kids get lost in wonder, too!
- d. Listen to how David responds to creation in Psalm 8, the awe and wonder he felt as he wrote!
- e. Imagination and wonder isn't just for kids - live like a child and dream!
- f. Wonder, imagine, believe!
- g. Ephesians 3:20 ... God wants his children to imagine SO THAT HE CAN EXCEED IT!!!
- h. Forget pessimism, let's throw restraint out the window and let the bigness of who our Father is blow the lid off of what we believe is possible!!
- i. I think of the words that I grew up singing as a child:
 

*This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears  
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;  
His hand the wonders wrought.  
This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,  
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.  
This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair;  
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass;  
He speaks to me everywhere.  
This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world: the battle is not done:  
Jesus Who died shall be satisfied,  
And earth and Heav'n be one.*
- j. Do you live and wonder like a child? Do you still dream of future possibilities or do you despair in past regrets?

### 5. Children live boldly

- a. Children will approach their parents anytime, anywhere, for anything!
- b. They know who they are and that confidence gives them the courage to bypass protocol - they just want dad!

- c. This is basically what was happening to Jesus in Mark 10 - he gets swarmed by children who want to be near him and the disciples try to push the kids away
- d. Jesus' reaction? "Unless you receive the kingdom LIKE A CHILD, you won't enter it."
- e. How do kids receive the kingdom? Boldly, with the audacity to know that acceptance by Jesus has more to do with him than with them.
- f. It hasn't changed. Listen to the words of scripture:
  - Ephesians 3:12 - through Jesus we can approach our Father with confidence
  - Hebrews 4:16 - approach with boldness
- g. Are you living boldly before your Father who loves you regardless of what you've done?
- h. Like a child, are you confident enough in God's acceptance of you in Christ that you will approach him with boldness and audacity no matter what you have done, just because you need your Father?

### The Landing

No doubt, there's a lot to think about here, and before we close, let me share a bomb that God dropped on me as I prepared this week for this message.

It's back in our main passage - Matthew 18:1-4 - and it brings all of this back to the Gospel.

So many times we respond to a message like this by thinking "I'll just work harder at being honest, or simple, or bold, or whatever" and then we try but it doesn't work.

But Jesus knew we couldn't just flip a switch and live like a child. Instead, we have to become like a child.

He said it like this: "unless you change and become like little children."

That order is HUGE - change means to turn - and until we stop looking to ourselves for the ability and start trusting him for the ability, we'll never become like a child.

This is a spiritual thing, not a "Dr. Phil" thing.

So, as we close, which of these is God putting his finger on for you? Have you turned? Have you taken the first step of following Jesus? Take a moment and ask your Father to help you see clearly where you are, because being like a child starts with seeing like a child.

Let's pray.