

Revitalize: Childlike or Childish?

Lately Face book is starting to remind me of the slam books we used to pass around in Junior High. Remember those? Before the digital age we would staple together paper into little books and put someone's name on the front. The book would get passed around and people would write what they thought of that person. Then that little book would get to the person named. So often the comments were forms of bullying—mean remarks about the person's looks or intelligence or reputation. Occasionally a slam book would be positive, but that wasn't as fun for the bullies. I know that other slam books were more elaborate notebooks with pages for multiple victims and even a sign –in page. Each school and grade had their own version.

But face book is out there for the entire world to see. It's not passed around in secret. I've seen direct comments that name the victim of someone's anger (usually). Worse, I've seen people make cutting remarks that don't name any names, but refer to an incident or something else that point to someone very clearly. It's not very nice. And it's not just teenagers doing this, it's adults as well.

You know, as I thought about how face book slamming is so much like our awful behavior as young teens, I was thinking about the difference between childish and childlike behavior.

The definition of childish is: of like or appropriate to a child, silly and immature—showing the unpleasant qualities children often have. When I think of childish behavior I think of: pouting, whining, selfishness, thoughtlessness, recklessness, being wild, undisciplined or untaught, stubbornness and the 'give me' and 'that's my toy' attitudes.

The Bible addresses childish behaviors and attitudes: "When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put childish ways behind me". I Corinthians 13:11. We need to grow up, according to the Bible and put our childish ways behind us. "Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right". Proverbs 20:11. Even children are held accountable for their actions and attitudes.

But wait! Not all the attributes of children are undesirable. Matthew 8:2-3 says, "He called a little child to 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'".

Childlike is defined: (of an adult) having good qualities associated with a child. Innocent; pure and simple; like to learn. Other childlike characteristics are trust, believing, wonder, everybody is a potential friend or playmate, and they resolve conflicts and get over them quickly. "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise...." Psalm 8:2.

In Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16 you can see that the children had no fear of Jesus. Their parents were bringing them to Him and there didn't seem to be any fussing by the kids. In fact the disciples were trying to shoo them away. Matthew 21:15-17 tells about the little children shouting 'Hosanna' in the temple.

Children don't have filters when it comes to loving Jesus, and neither should we. I was watching the kids play at the park last Sunday and they made friends with everyone around them. They shouted with joy, they ran and were filled with the wonder of the beautiful day. It's too bad that as we grow up we lose that ability in the name of maturity.

If we are grown up, we need to put away the *childish*, negative attitudes and continue to embrace the *childlike* attributes that will help us inherit the kingdom of heaven. But we need to be mature enough to know the difference.

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