

BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN

by Richard Rice

1981

I'D LIKE TO INVITE A LITTLE GUEST OUT ON THE STAGE, IF HIS FATHER WILL PLEASE BRING HIM TO THE FRONT OF THE ROOM HERE. I'D LIKE TO HAVE YOU ALL MEET STANLEY. NOW CAN YOU IMAGINE A CHILD THREE YEARS OLD PREACHING HIS FIRST SERMON? WELL, HE'S GOING TO HELP ME IN JUST A MINUTE, I WILL EXPLAIN WHY A LITTLE LATER ON.

DID YOU EVER WONDER WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD SUCH A LOVE AND FASCINATION FOR LITTLE CHILDREN? HE WAS ALWAYS PICKING THEM UP, LOVING THEM, PLAYING WITH THEM. HE HAD A TREMENDOUS INTEREST IN THEM. NOW CHRIST WAS NOT A POLITICIAN; HE WASN'T TRYING TO MAKE MARKS WITH THE PEOPLE, BUT HE DID HAVE A SPECIAL, UNIQUE INTEREST IN THESE LITTLE TOTS. DID YOU EVER WONDER WHY?

OPEN YOUR BIBLES TO LUKE 18:15, AND WE'LL BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE REASONS THAT CHRIST DID REALLY TRULY LOVE LITTLE CHILDREN DURING HIS DAY. "AND THEY BROUGHT UNTO HIM ALSO INFANTS, THAT HE WOULD TOUCH THEM: BUT WHEN HIS DISCIPLES SAW IT, THEY REBUKED THEM. BUT JESUS CALLED THEM UNTO HIM AND SAID, SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD SHALL IN NO WISE ENTER THEREIN!" THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE DISPOSITION AND THE UNIQUE NATURE OF A CHILD THAT CAUSED JESUS CHRIST TO TAKE NOTICE. LATER ON, WE FIND IN THE BIBLE, THAT HE PICKED THEM INTO HIS ARMS AND HE BLESSED THEM.

NOW, WHAT IS THERE ABOUT CHILDREN THAT JESUS CHRIST SEEMED TO LOVE SO MUCH? HE SAID TO US EMPHATICALLY IN AT LEAST TWO DIFFERENT OCCASIONS IN THE BIBLE, WE MUST BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN. THERE ARE THREE BASIC REASONS THAT JESUS CHRIST HAD THIS FASCINATION. THE FIRST IS THIS: A NEWBORN BABY IS A NEW AND FRESH CREATION OF GOD. A LITTLE CHILD COMING INTO THE WORLD IS WITHOUT SIN, MALICE, GREED OR ANYTHING. A LITTLE CHILD REFLECTS SOMETHING OF GOD: PURE, INNOCENT, CLEAN, SIMPLE, OUTGOING, HAPPY — ALL THOSE TRAITS AND ATTRIBUTES JESUS CHRIST SAW IN A CHILD, AS THE VERY ESSENCE OF GOD HIMSELF. DO YOU AND I AS ADULTS, AND AS CHRISTIANS, WHO HAVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD, SEEM THIS WAY TO OUR FATHER? ARE

WE THAT OPEN, SINCERE, SIMPLE AND WHOLE-SOME? JESUS CHRIST WAS ATTRACTED TO THESE LITTLE CHILDREN BECAUSE HE SAW THAT CERTAIN PURITY IN THEM: THE ESSENCE OF GOD HIMSELF.

THE SECOND REASON THAT JESUS CHRIST LOVED LITTLE CHILDREN IS BECAUSE HE SAW IN A CHILD ITS MAJESTIC POTENTIAL AS A MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY. AS HE HELD THESE INFANTS IN HIS ARMS, HE COULD ENVISION THEM SOME DAY BECOMING A GLORIFIED SON OF GOD. JESUS CHRIST VIEWED EVERY BABY AS A POSSIBILITY, AS A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY, SOMEONE THAT HE CAME TO DIE FOR, SOMEONE WHO SOME DAY WILL BECOME ENBLAZENED WITH GLORY. CHRIST HAD THAT FAR REACHING VISION IN MIND. AND HE SAW DOWNSTREAM MANY, MANY YEARS, AT A TIME WHEN THIS LITTLE CHILD, BECOMING OF AGE MAYBE 80 OR 90 WITH GREY HAIR, WOULD HAVE QUALIFIED FOR SONSHIP IN THE FAMILY OF GOD.

THE THIRD REASON JESUS CHRIST LOVED LITTLE CHILDREN, IS BECAUSE A YOUNG CHILD REFLECTS THE KIND OF ATTITUDE AND DISPOSITION GOD WANTS US TO GROW INTO AS CHRISTIANS. JESUS CHRIST SAW IN THEM A "PHILIA" TEMPERAMENT, A VERY CALM, STEADY, ATTITUDE; A SWEETNESS, A MEEKNESS, A KIND OF JOY, A SPONTANEITY. HE IS SAYING IN SO MANY WORDS TO US, AS ADULTS, THIS IS WHAT YOU HAVE GOT TO BECOME TO BE A SON IN MY FAMILY. NOW, AT ONE TIME, WE WERE ALL LIKE THAT. BUT WE BEGAN TO HAVE IMBUED INTO US SATAN'S ATTITUDES, MOODS, DISPOSITION, SELFISHNESS, AMBITION, LUST FOR POWER, WANTING THE TOP RUNG OF THE LADDER, WANTING TO BE NOTICED, HAVING THE PRAISE OF MEN, BECOMING VIOLENT. I CAN SEE WHY CHRIST SAID, MY DEAR BRETHREN, LOOK AT THESE INFANTS IN ARMS, THINK ABOUT THEM AND ANALYZE WHAT MAKES THEM TICK. THIS IS WHAT I WANT YOU TO BE.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN GOD'S CHURCH, TODAY, SO FAR AS I CAN SEE? IT'S A SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY. WE ARE ACTING LIKE SELFISH, SPOILED CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT WELL TRAINED. THERE IS A PROBLEM WHERE WE TEND TO FEEL JEALOUS OF EACH OTHER, WE ARGUE, CAST DISPERSIONS, WE DO THINGS THAT ARE UNSEEMLY AND UNGODLY. YET WE ARE ADULTS. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO HAVING THESE BEAUTIFUL, WONDERFUL TRAITS OF CHILDREN.

I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU SOME DIS-

TINCT QUALITIES OF CHILDREN, BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST TOLD US TO HAVE THAT CHILDLIKE ATTITUDE AS CHRISTIANS. I SHALL COVER 16 DISTINCT ATTRIBUTES OF CHILDREN. JESUS CHRIST SAID TO US, I WANT YOU TO ACQUIRE THESE TRAITS BECAUSE THESE ARE THE THINGS I SEE IN THE LITTLE FELLOWS AND GIRLS WHO SURROUND ME AND I LOVE SO MUCH.

I REMEMBER HAVING A VERY INTERESTING EXPERIENCE. THERE WAS A TEACHER SOME TIME AGO IN LOS ANGELES, A MEMBER OF GOD'S CHURCH WHO REALLY LOVES CHILDREN. AFTER THE SERMON WAS OVER, I COULDN'T HELP BUT BE IMPRESSED TO NOTICE HOW MANY KIDS WERE FLOCKING AROUND THIS GENTLEMAN. HE WAS A VERY, STRIKING, INTELLIGENT MAN; TREMENDOUS LEADER. BUT I STILL TO THIS DAY REFLECT ON THAT MAN'S BASIC ATTITUDE. HE DIDN'T LOOK ON THOSE KIDS AS A NUISANCE; HE LOVED THEM. THEY WERE FLOCKING AROUND AND ASKING QUESTIONS AND TALKING AND HE LOVED IT. JUST LIKE JESUS CHRIST. LITTLE CHILDREN LOVED JESUS CHRIST, BECAUSE HE KNEW HOW TO EXPRESS TO THEM AFFECTION AND WARMTH. AS I SAID, HE SAW IN THEM A POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING A TREMENDOUS, GLORIFIED, MAJESTIC SON. AND, YES, HE SAW IN THEM SOMETHING THAT HE WANTS US TO HAVE.

THE FIRST AND THE MOST NOTABLE TRAIT THAT CHILDREN EXPRESS IS: HUMILITY. LET'S NOTICE MATTHEW 18:1, "AT THE SAME TIME CAME THE DISCIPLES TO JESUS, SAYING, WHO IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN? AND JESUS CALLED A LITTLE CHILD UNTO HIM, AND SET HIM IN THE MIDST OF THEM, AND SAID, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, EXCEPT YOU BE CONVERTED [YOU HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART AND TURN AROUND AND GO BACK TO THE RIGHT WAY], AND BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN, YOU SHALL NOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL HUMBLE HIMSELF AS THIS LITTLE CHILD, THE SAME IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." SO, JESUS CHRIST SAID THEN, ONE OF HIS MOST OUTSTANDING AND NOBLE TRAITS WAS HUMILITY.

A CHILD IS WITHOUT FEELINGS OF VANITY, CONCEIT OR PRIDE. HE HAS NO FEELINGS OF SELF-IMPORTANCE, HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT POWER STRUGGLES. HE IS WITHOUT WORLDLY AMBITION, LUST FOR POWER AND PRESTIGE. HE DOESN'T TRY TO IMPRESS OTHERS, OR WIN THEIR APPROVAL. NOW, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A CHILD WHO HAS THIS BASIC TENDER DISPOSITION THE WAY CHRIST WANTS US TO HAVE. SOME CHILDREN, WHEN THEY GROW OLDER, DON'T HAVE THIS. THEY LOSE IT. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN PROPERLY TRAINED AND THEY HAVE LOST A SENSE OF VALUES AND ESTEEM, THAT GOD WANTS THAT CHILD TO HAVE IN HIS LIFE.

NOTICE MICAH 6:8, "HE HAS SHOWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD; AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUSTLY AND TO LOVE MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD?" WE'RE TO WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD AS GOD IS HUMBLE. DID YOU REALIZE THAT GOD IS HUMBLE, TOO? YOU DON'T SEE LIGHTNING STRIKE EVERY SO OFTEN TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT GOD IS GOD. WE DON'T HEAR STRONG VOICES FROM HEAVEN IN SAYING, FOLKS, LOOK AT THAT MOUNTAIN I DESIGNED OVER THERE. I DID THAT! HE DOESN'T SCREAM OUT OF THE HEAVENS WITH THE VOICES OF ANGELS CALLING ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE SUN IS THERE, THE MOON IS THERE, OR THE STARS FLOATING UP IN SPACE. GOD DOESN'T DO THAT. GOD SHOWS HIS HUMILITY BY SERVING US. THIS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST WAYS THAT YOU CAN EXPRESS HUMILITY THAT I KNOW. IT IS CONDESCENDING TO SERVE. THINK OF CHRIST AS BEING THE MOST SUPERIOR HUMAN WHO EVER LIVED AND INDEED HE WAS; HE WAS GOD ON EARTH. HE WAS THE GREATEST, THE MOST FANTASTIC LEADER WHO EVER WALKED THIS EARTH. BUT THE BIBLE SAID THAT JESUS CHRIST STOOPED TO SERVE. AND HE WHO WILL BE GREAT AMONG YOU, LET HIM BECOME A SERVANT, THAT'S WHAT HE SAID. AND SO AT PASSOVER, HE WASHED THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES. GOD IN HEAVEN CAME TO THIS EARTH, EMP-TIED HIMSELF OF ALL GLORY AND DIVINITY, GOT ON HIS KNEES AND HE WASHED THE DISCIPLES' FEET. NOW THE WASHING OF FEET WAS A JOB GIVEN TO SLAVES DURING THAT DAY. THEY WERE HIRED FOR THAT PURPOSE BY THE MASTER OF THE HOUSEHOLD. NO MATTER WHAT OUR OFFICE, NO MATTER WHAT OUR RANK IN THE WORK OF GOD, WE MAY BE PROFESSORS OR TEACHERS, DEPARTMENT HEADS OR MANAGERS, BUT IF WE WANT TO TRULY BE GREAT IN THE WAY GOD SAYS BE GREAT, WE HAVE TO SERVE IN HUMILITY. SO OFTEN, THE TENDENCY IS FOR US TO FRATERNIZE WITH PEOPLE WHO WILL GIVE US SOMETHING BACK. IF A RICH MAN WALKS IN, AND HE HAS NINE CADILLACS, AND 15 MANSIONS ACROSS THE WORLD, THE TENDENCY FOR US IS TO FRATERNIZE WITH HIM. THE SUBTLETY OF THAT IS WE WOULD LIKE FOR HIM TO GET TO KNOW US SO THAT WE MIGHT GET SOMETHING POSSIBLY LATER ON. WE WOULD LIKE TO ENJOY HIS FRIENDSHIP. IF A PERSON SHOULD VISIT THE CHURCH WITH OVERALLS ON AND RAGGED SHOES, AND TATTERED SHIRT, AND ISN'T QUITE THAT WELL DRESSED OR CLEAN IN APPEARANCE, THE TENDENCY WOULD BE TO SHY AWAY AND IGNORE. JESUS CHRIST SPENT TIME WITH POOR PEOPLE; PUBLICANS, SINNERS, THE NOBODYS, THE OUTCASTS. NO WONDER JESUS CHRIST SAID, WHY DON'T YOU ACT LIKE CHILDREN, BECAUSE THEY DON'T MAKE A DISTINCTION. THEY ARE NOT A RESPECTER OF PERSONS. OUR PROBLEM IS SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY. OUR PROBLEM IS SELFISHNESS AND VANITY. WE WANT TO BE NOTICED AND LOVED, APPRECIATED. AND THOSE

UGLY ATTITUDES DEFILE US AS SONS OF GOD. THOSE ATTITUDES ARE OF THE DEVIL!

THERE'S AN INTERESTING QUOTE IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS DESCRIBING DAVID REGARDING HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIGH THINGS AND LOFTY THINGS. PSALMS 131:1, "LORD, MY HEART IS NOT HAUGHTY, NOR MINE EYES LOFTY: NEITHER DO I EXERCISE MYSELF IN GREAT MATTERS, OR IN THINGS TOO HIGH FOR ME. SURELY I HAVE BEHAVED AND QUIETED MYSELF, AS A CHILD THAT IS WEANED OF HIS MOTHER: MY SOUL IS EVEN AS A WEANED CHILD." DAVID HAD THIS CHILDLIKE ATTITUDE. THAT'S ONE REASON THAT I THINK THE LIVING GOD SO LOVED DAVID BECAUSE HE WAS HUMBLE AND HE DIDN'T MIND DOING MENIAL WORK AND STOOPING TO HELP OTHERS. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO GO HELP SOMEBODY WHO HAD CANCER AND COULDN'T ATTEND TO HIS PARTICULAR BATHROOM PROBLEMS AND THIS PATIENT NEEDED YOUR HELP? WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO STOOP AND HELP AND BATHE AND CHANGE THE CLOTHING, THE BEDSHEETS? A LITTLE CHILD, WHEN TOLD TO DO SOMETHING, RESPONDS. NO DISTINCTIONS. NO ARGUMENTS. NO QUESTIONS. HE DOESN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT AT ALL, EXCEPT JUST DO IT. NOW, THAT IS WHAT CHRIST SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE FOR US TO HAVE HUMILITY IN THAT WAY.

PRIDE IS THE ONE THING THAT GOD HATES PERHAPS ABOVE ALL SINS. BECAUSE PRIDE IS WHAT CAUSED THE DEVIL TO FALL. PRIDE IS SELF. P-R-I-D-E. THE MIDDLE LETTER IN PRIDE IS I AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE VANITY, IT ISN'T GOD, IT'S "I" AND THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DEVIL. "I" GOT IN THE WAY. SO HE WAS LIFTED UP WITH HIS GRANDEUR AND HIS MAJESTY AND HIS STRENGTH, HE FELT I'M JUST AS GOOD AS GOD IS. HE CEASED SERVING OTHERS. HE STARTED SERVING SELF. SO HUMILITY IS AN IMPORTANT THING FOR US TO CAPTURE AS CHRISTIANS.

THE SECOND TRAIT IS: PURITY AND INNOCENCE. A CHILD IS WITHOUT MALICE, GUILF, ENVY, OR JEALOUSY. A CHILD IS NAIVE AND VERY TRUSTING OF OTHERS. NOW YOU MAY WONDER WHAT I MEAN WHEN I SAY, A CHRISTIAN SHOULD, IN A WAY, BE NAIVE. DOES THAT MEAN BLIND, UNTHINKING, THAT WE MUST BECOME A CARBON COPY? NO, I DON'T MEAN THAT. BUT A CHRISTIAN TRULY IS NAIVE IN THAT A GENUINE SON OF GOD TRUSTS GOD TO SOLVE HIS PROBLEMS. HE IS NAIVE IN TRUST TO GOD. HE DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT THE OUTCOME. HE DOESN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT PEOPLE HURTING HIM OR HARMING HIM. IF HE IS WALKING WITH GOD, HE HAS SUPER TRUST AND FAITH IN GOD. HE'S NAIVE IN THAT SENSE. NOT NAIVE BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE BRAINS, BUT NAIVE BECAUSE HE IS TRUSTING IN THE LIVING GOD! A CHILD IS LIKE THAT. HE DOESN'T PLOT. A CHILD DOESN'T SCHEME TO

GET SOMETHING FOR HIMSELF, TO HARM OTHERS, AND TAKE FROM THEM. A CHILD'S LIFE IS SIMPLE AND UNCLUTTERED. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE ON EARTH ARE THOSE WHO HAVE THAT SPIRIT AND ATTITUDE, A DISPOSITION THAT IS SO TEACHABLE AND SO KIND, GENEROUS, AND OUTGOING.

NOW FOR THE CHRISTIAN, WE ARE TOLD IN MATTHEW 5:8, "BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART: FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD." DO YOU REALLY WANT TO COME TO SEE GOD, TRULY LIKE HE IS? YOU WILL COME TO SEE HIM FOR WHAT HE REALLY IS, WHEN YOU BECOME PURE. THE CLOSER YOU GET TO GOD, THE MORE YOU WILL SEE HOW GREAT AND MAGNIFICANT HE IS. YOU WILL COME TO SEE HOW LOVING, KIND, AND GENEROUS HE IS. NOW, IF WE HOPE FOR THE KINGDOM AND ARE STRIVING TOWARD IT, THE BIBLE SAYS WE WILL PURIFY OURSELVES. OUR MOTIVES WILL BE PURE. WE WILL CLEAN UP OUR MINDS DAILY FROM ANY LUSTS THAT HAVE GOTTEN IN; IMMORAL LUSTS, LUSTS TO TAKE FROM OTHERS, SAYING THINGS ABOUT YOUR FELLOW MAN, THAT'S GOING TO PUT HIM IN A BAD LIGHT, TO BLOCK HIS GROWTH.

AS A MINISTER FOR YEARS I HAVE SEEN THIS HAPPEN IN LOCAL AREAS. SOME PEOPLE GET FILLED WITH JEALOUSY AND DON'T LIKE THE IDEA THAT SOMEBODY ELSE IS GROWING AND THEY MIGHT OUTRANK THEM AFTER AWHILE. SO WHAT DO THEY DO? WELL, THEY BEGIN TO PLOT AND SCHEME WAYS TO BEAT DOWN THAT PERSON BY SAYING THINGS AGAINST HIM. ALL IN ALL THOUGH, WHEN IT IS SAID AND DONE, THOSE WHO ARE PURE IN HEART COME OUT ON TOP. THEY'RE VINDICATED AND THE OTHERS USUALLY GET FOUND OUT.

IS THIS SERMON SO SIMPLE TO YOU AND SO MEANINGLESS AND UNNECESSARY, IT'S NOT REALLY TAKING ROOT? THAT IS ONE WAY THAT YOU CAN KNOW IF YOU ARE LIKE A CHILD. YOU REALLY CAN KNOW, YOU CAN GAUGE YOURSELF NOW BY YOUR ATTITUDE, IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE HEARING, IT MEANS THAT YOUR HEART IS HARD, NOT TEACHABLE, NOT RESILIENT, NOT MOLDABLE, NOT PURE. ASK YOURSELF WHEN TEMPTED TO DO SOMETHING OR SAY SOMETHING THAT IS QUESTIONABLE, IF YOU HAVE A PURE HEART, IS THIS SOMETHING I WOULD DO IF GOD WERE WATCHING, IF CHRIST WERE HERE? WOULD I SAY THAT ABOUT SOMEBODY IF CHRIST, MY SAVIOUR, WERE STANDING RIGHT BY? WOULD I THINK THOSE THOUGHTS ABOUT THAT WOMAN OR A MAN IN A WRONG SENSE, IF JESUS CHRIST WERE HERE TALKING TO ME? WOULD I PLOT AND SCHEME, WOULD I GOSSIP? WOULD I BEGIN TO TALK ABOUT MY FELLOW MAN IN A JUDGMENTAL FASHION, MAKING HIM LOOK TERRIBLE, AND DESTROY HIS GOOD NAME AND REPUTATION? I KNOW OF ONE YOUNG MAN WHO WAS ALL BUT DESTROYED BECAUSE OF JEALOUSY AND ENVY

ON THE PART OF SOMEONE ELSE, AND HE TAINTED HIS NAME, HE BLACKENED HIS RECORD, HE VILLIFIED THIS MAN'S OUTSTANDING RECORD OF LEADERSHIP. HE GOT OTHERS ON THE BANDWAGON AND THEY BEGAN TO WORK AGAINST THIS YOUNG MAN. THEY ALL BUT DESTROYED EVERYTHING HE HAD BUILT. AND GOD HAS FINALLY COME TO THE RESCUE AND TURNED IT AROUND AND THE EXPOSERS ARE GOING TO BE EXPOSED. AND YOU CAN BE SURE THAT GOD WILL DEAL WITH THOSE WHO TRY SOMETHING LIKE THAT. THERE'S A LIVING GOD! WHEN WE SIN AGAINST OUR BRETHREN, YOU CAN BE SURE GOD'S WRATH IS UP IN A STIR, IT'S A FEARFUL THING TO FALL IN GOD'S HANDS, NOW, IF WE HAD A CHILD-LIKE ATTITUDE OF INNOCENCE AND PURITY, WE WOULD NEVER DO THAT!

THE THIRD QUALITY THAT I HAVE LISTED ABOUT A CHILD IS: TOTAL TRUST. CHILDREN HAVE TOTAL TRUST AND DEPENDENCE ON PARENTS; TOTAL, COMPLETE, UNQUESTIONED TRUST. A CHILD IS UTTERLY HELPLESS. HE CAN'T PROVIDE HIS NEEDS, SO HE DEPENDS ON MOM AND DAD WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT. HE DOESN'T WORRY WHETHER DAILY NEEDS LIKE FOOD, SHELTER, OR CLOTHING WILL BE PROVIDED, HE JUST KNOWS THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO HIM. NOW DO WE LOOK TO OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN WITH THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE? ARE WE ANXIOUS AND WORRIED? GOD LOVES US SO MUCH MORE THAN A FATHER LOVES HIS SON! GOD LOVES US SO MUCH HIGHER WITH GREATER AND INTENSE LOVE, MANY, MANY TIMES HIGHER.

A CHILD BELIEVES EVERY PROMISE OF HIS PARENTS. HE RELIES ON HIS PARENTS FOR EVERY ABSOLUTE NEED THAT COMES ALONG IN LIFE, AND HAS CONFIDENT TRUST IN THEM. A FATHER CAN THROW A CHILD UP IN THE AIR. HE DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT BEING CAUGHT. PITCH HIM IN THE SWIMMING POOL WHERE MOTHER IS SWIMMING AROUND, HE DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT IT. DO YOU AND I HAVE THAT KIND OF TRUST AND ATTITUDE?

NOTICE PHILIPPIANS 4:19, "BUT MY GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY BY CHRIST JESUS." JUST AS A CHILD NEVER QUESTIONS WHETHER MOM AND DAD LOVE HIM, AND IS NEVER AFRAID OR RELUCTANT TO ASK FOR ANYTHING IN NEEDS, SO YOU AND I SHOULD HAVE THAT KIND OF TRUST IN OUR FATHER. THAT'S WHY CHRIST SAID SO MANY TIMES, WE MUST BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN.

ONE REASON THAT YOU AND I GET ANXIOUS AND DOUBTFUL IS BECAUSE WE ARE NOT MEASURING UP, WE ARE NOT CLEANSING OUR LIVES OF SIN; WE FEEL GUILTY AND CONDEMNED. THERE ARE TIMES THAT WE THINK, WELL, GOD IS LETTING ME DOWN IN A CRISIS, AND HE HASN'T ALWAYS COME

TO MY RESCUE. I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TRUST HIM. A PERSON WHO THINKS THAT GOD HAS LET HIM DOWN IN A CRISIS HASN'T BEEN PATIENT LONG ENOUGH! HE HASN'T GIVEN GOD A CHANCE TO REALLY SHOW THAT HE'LL DELIVER HIM. AND SO ONCE WE LOSE FAITH AND TRUST, WE START WORKING OUT THE PROBLEM OUR HUMAN WAY. WE GO TO OTHERS, WE GET ANXIOUS AND NERVOUS. WE LEAVE GOD OUT OF IT. NOT SO WITH A CHILD, A CHILD IS SO TRUSTING, FULL OF FAITH, DEPENDENT UPON HIS MOM AND DAD, BUT NEVER HAS A QUESTION OF THEIR LOVE AND APPRECIATION AND LOYALTY. JESUS CHRIST SAID THAT WE MUST BECOME LIKE THAT TO PLEASE OUR FATHER.

MATTHEW 6:25-34 IS A LONG SERIES OF VERSES THAT TALK ABOUT FOOD, SHELTER, AND CLOTHING. AND IT SAYS, YOU FIRST SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, THEN THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU. WE ARE TO EMULATE THAT EXAMPLE WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, WE REALLY ARE.

NUMBER FOUR: A CHILD IS RESPONSIVE AND OBEIENT. LITTLE CHILDREN JUST SPONTANEOUSLY OBEY WHENEVER THEY ARE GIVEN A COMMAND TO DO SOMETHING. I AM AWARE BY EXPERIENCE WHAT A CHILD REALLY IS LIKE, ALTHOUGH MY CHILDREN ARE MUCH OLDER. I CAN THINK BACK TO THOSE YEARS WHEN THEY WERE LIKE THAT, THERE'S NO RESISTANCE, NO ARGUMENT. YOU TELL A CHILD TO GO FETCH A BALL AND THAT CHILD WILL USUALLY RUN WITH GLEE! HE LOVES ACHIEVEMENT, LIKES TO PLEASE. HE LIKES TO MAKE MOM AND DAD HAPPY. HE PICKS UP THE TOYS WHEN INSTRUCTED AND COMES WHEN CALLED. THERE IS NO THOUGHT OF DISOBEYING IN A CHILD'S MIND. YES, THEY LEARN DISOBEDIENCE LATER BECAUSE PERHAPS WE AS PARENTS HAVEN'T DONE THE BEST JOB. WE HAVEN'T BEEN CONSISTENT, WE HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN RIGHT ON TOP OF THINGS. A CHILD SHOULD HAVE THESE QUALITIES UP THROUGH THE YOUNGER YEARS, THE TEENAGE YEARS, THE ADOLESCENT YEARS. IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE THAT SPIRIT AND ATTITUDE; WHO ARE SO ANXIOUS TO LEARN AND ARE TEACHABLE. IT'S BEEN MY EXPERIENCE TO FIND MANY TIMES, THESE ARE THE ONES WHO DON'T HAVE A LOT OF FINE THINGS. THEY HAVE NOTHING TO PLEASE YOU WITH. WHAT A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE THAT IS.

ARE WE RESPONSIVE TO GOD AS A CHILD IS TO HIS PARENTS? WE SHOULD BE. PSALMS 119:60 SAYS, "I MADE HASTE, AND DELAYED NOT TO KEEP YOUR COMMANDMENTS. YOU DON'T STOP TO REASON OR RATIONALIZE AROUND THIS COMMANDMENT. EPHESIANS 6:6 SAYS, "...AS THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST, DOING THE WILL OF GOD FROM THE HEART." IT'S GOING TO BE SAD, SAD DAY FOR SOME OF

GOD'S OWN PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE CHURCH THAT WILL STAND BEFORE CHRIST AT HIS COMING, ASHAMED. THEY MAY MAKE THE KINGDOM, BUT THEY WON'T GET A REWARD. THEY'LL GET A CROWN, BUT THERE WILL BE NO JEWELS IN IT, THERE WILL BE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE INDIVIDUAL HAS REALLY WALKED WITH GOD THAT MUCH, BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN SELFISH, THEY'VE BEEN IMMATURE AS CHILDREN, THEY HAVE NOT REALLY DRIVEN THEMSELVES, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN HUMBLE WITH THEIR GOD, OR HAVE NOT BEEN RESPONSIVE TO HIS WORD. THEY HAVEN'T DONE THE WILL OF GOD FROM THEIR HEARTS. THEY HAVEN'T OBEYED QUICKLY.

ONE OF THE GREATEST EXAMPLES OF A LEADER, I FEEL, IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD. WHOEVER THIS LEADER IS, A DEACON, A LAYMEMBER WHO IS A PILLAR, OR A MINISTER, WHEN HIS FOLLOWERS REALLY KNOW THAT HIS LIFE IS CLEAN AND HOLY AND RIGHT, THAT HE IS OBEDIENT, THAT LEADER SETS A FANTASTIC EXAMPLE. THAT SERVANT IS ONE WHO, WHEN HE READS HIS BIBLE, SAYS, THANK YOU, GOD, I SEE SOMETHING HERE THAT HADN'T BEFORE DISCOVERED; AN APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH THAT REALLY TRULY APPRECIATE. FATHER, HELP ME TO INCORPORATE THAT INTO MY LIFE. YOUR COMMANDMENTS ARE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND IF I INCORPORATE THAT WITH YOUR SPIRIT HELPING ME, I WILL BECOME LIKE YOU ARE. WHEN YOU AND I READ OUR BIBLE, DO WE HAVE THAT APPROACH AND ATTITUDE? I'VE TOLD OUR LEADERSHIP TRAINING CLUB, THAT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ALONE, THERE ARE 1,050 COMMANDMENTS. NOW THE TRUE SON OF GOD, THE TRUE LEADER, THE TRUE SERVANT, IS ONE WHO SAYS, I WANT TO KEEP EVERYONE OF THEM. THEY ARE GOING TO MAKE ME HAPPY, AND I AM GOING TO BE PRODUCTIVE, AND USEFUL, AND FRUITFUL. OTHERS WILL GET THE JOYS FROM IT TOO. THEY WILL SEE AN EXAMPLE PERHAPS THAT WILL INSPIRE THEM.

IF YOU AND I COULD JUST UNDERSTAND HOW BIG OUR INHERITANCE IS! WE'RE ENJOYING PART OF IT NOW AS A SON, BUT THE REAL BLESSINGS ARE TO FOLLOW FOR ETERNITY, IT IS SO EASY TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE CARES OF THIS WORLD, AND SEE ONLY THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND GO AFTER NEEDS THAT SATISFY THE FLESH NOW. DID YOU HEAR THAT LITTLE SNAP OF MY FINGER? NOW, WHEN YOU COMPARE THIS LIFE TO ETERNITY, THAT'S HOW SHORT-LIVED THIS LIFE IS. IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, WE WILL SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON THIS LIFE, BECOMING AMBITIOUS FOR THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD, POSITION, POWER, MATERIAL THINGS. NOT SO WITH A SON OF GOD. A REAL DEDICATED SON OF GOD THINKS BEYOND THIS. HE SPANS ETERNITY BECAUSE HE IS OBEYING HIS FATHER WITH ALL HIS HEART.

POINT NUMBER FIVE: A CHILD ADORES AND IMITATES HIS PARENTS. A CHILD WILL WATCH, STUDY, AND CLOSELY OBSERVE THE BEHAVIOR, AND CONDUCT OF MOTHER AND DAD. HE WILL IMITATE WHAT THEY DO AND SAY. SO IF YOU ARE A PARENT, YOU'VE GOT TO WATCH WHAT YOU SAY, BECAUSE THE KIDS WILL PICK IT UP AND FOLLOW YOU. A CHILD WILL TRY TO WEAR THEIR PARENTS' CLOTHING, WALK THE WAY THEY DO, COPY THEIR MANNERISMS, THEIR TONE OF VOICE — EVERYTHING! THEY REFLECT THEIR PARENTS' MOODS, ATTITUDES, AND EMOTIONS. SLOWLY, DAY BY DAY, THESE KIDS ABSORB THEIR LIKENESS. I KNOW A FINE MINISTER AND HIS WIFE WHO ARE ALWAYS SMILING. YOU LOOK AT THEM AND THEY'LL SMILE, I DON'T CARE HOW DREARY IT IS OUTSIDE, HOW MUCH IT IS THUNDERING OR LIGHTNING. YOU NEVER HEAR A NEGATIVE WORD FROM THIS ONE PASTOR. HE'S A VERY FINE GENTLEMAN, AND HIS WIFE IS THAT WAY. THEIR KIDS ARE THAT WAY, TOO.

I RECALL YEARS AGO HAVING WORKED WITH A WIDOW, WAY BACK SOME PLACE IN ANOTHER PART OF THE COUNTRY. SHE WAS HARD AND AUSTERE, AND SHE WOULD USE UGLY WORDS AND GIVE COMMANDS LIKE A SARGEANT. AND THOSE KIDS OF HERS WERE JUST TERRIFIED! I WOULD VISIT AND THEY WOULD LITERALLY STAND OR SIT AND STARE, AFRAID TO DO ANYTHING, OR SAY ANYTHING, BECAUSE THEY MIGHT GET SNAPPED AT. THEY MIGHT GET SLAPPED LATER ON. LATER, THAT PERSON BEGAN TO WAKE UP AND SEE THE MISTAKE THAT WAS BEING MADE. THAT LADY TODAY, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, HAS A PLEASANT CHILDLIKE SMILE, A TENDER NATURE, VERY RESPONSIVE; IT'S A MIRACLE! AND THANK GOD, MOST OF THE KIDS HAVE TURNED OUT RIGHT, AND THEY ARE IN GOD'S CHURCH, THAT WAS A MIRACLE.

FOR US AS CHRISTIANS, HERE IS THE COUNTERPART. EPHESIANS 5:1 SAYS, (I AM READING FROM THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION). "THEREFORE BE IMITATORS OF GOD AS BELOVED CHILDREN. AND MATTHEW 5:48 SAYS, "BECOME PERFECT AS YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT." DO YOU THINK THAT YOU BRING YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN GREAT JOY AND DELIGHT WHEN HE SEES YOU'RE ABSORBING HIS NATURE, HABITS, VALUES, CHARACTERISTICS, OUTLOOKS, AND DISPOSITION, WHICH BASICALLY IS JOYFUL? IF I CAN THINK OF ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE TO YOU GOD'S BASIC PERSONALITY, IT IS JOY. PSALMS 16:11 SAYS THAT THERE IS JOY IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND PLEASURES FOREVERMORE. THAT'S WHY CHRIST SAYS, "MY JOY I LEAVE WITH YOU." IT IS NOT HARSHNESS AND AUSTERITY AND A STERN LOOKING FACE THAT JUST IS UNINVITING. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS A JOYFUL EXPERIENCE. I THINK OUR FATHER IS VERY MUCH MOVED AND INSPIRED WHEN HE SEES THAT WE ARE DELIBERATELY CONCENTRATING ON IMITATING HIM! HE SEES

THE HUMILITY INSIDE. HE SEES HOW RESPONSIVE WE ARE — HOW OBEDIENT, PURE, AND SIMPLE IN OUR LIVES. HE SEES THAT WE WANT BECOME CHILDREN. WE REALLY SHOULD HAVE THAT APPROACH.

OBSTINANCY, BEING ADAMANT, AND SELF-WILLED, ARE NOT TRAITS OF GOD. FEELING HURT, INFRINGED ON AND INSULTED IS NOT THE ATTITUDE OF A CHILD! IT'S THE ATTITUDE OF A SPOILED CHRISTIAN. YOU AND I SHOULD NOT TAKE INSULTS QUITE THAT READILY. WE OUGHT TO HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF TOUGH SKIN. WE SHOULD NOT RETALIATE AND GET ALL UPTIGHT AND ANGRY AND REVENGEFUL WHEN SOMEBODY TURNS ON US, OR SAYS SOMETHING TO HURT US.

NUMBER SIX: A CHILD IS TEACHABLE AND RECEPTIVE. SMALL CHILDREN WILL BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU TELL THEM. THAT IS, WHEN MOM AND DAD SAY, THE MOON IS MADE OF CHEESE, THEY WILL BELIEVE THAT. YOU AND I AS ADULTS HAVE TO MAKE DISTINCTIONS, WE HAVE TO ANALYZE AND CONSIDER ALL FACTS TO BE SURE THAT WE ARE RECEIVING TRUTH, AND NOT JUST BE BLOWN ABOUT BY EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE. BUT SO FAR AS BEING TEACHABLE AND RECEPTIVE TOWARD OUR FATHER, WE SHOULD BE LIKE CHILDREN ARE. CHILDREN LOVE TO CURL UP IN YOUR LAP, TO BE TAUGHT, TO HAVE YOU READ A BOOK TO THEM. THEY LOVE TO HEAR STORIES. THEY ARE LIKE SPONGES, SOAKING UP EVERYTHING THAT YOU SAY; ANXIOUS TO LEARN. A SMALL CHILD DOESN'T QUESTION THE VALIDITY OR TRUTH OF WHAT YOU SAY. HE BELIEVES IT; HE ACCEPTS IT. A CHILD IS ALL EARS, ALL EYES, ABSORBING EVERY EXAMPLE, DRINKING IN EVERY WORD.

NOW AS SONS OF GOD, AS DEAR BELOVED CHILDREN, AS MATURE ADULTS, AS LEADERS IN GOD'S WORK, YOU ARE SOME DAY GOING TO STAND BEFORE THIS WORLD AND BE A WITNESS. YOU AND I NEED TO HAVE THIS SPIRIT TOWARD OUR FATHER WHEN WE READ HIS WORD AND COME TO CHURCH. TO GOD, EVERYBODY IN THIS AUDIENCE HERE COULD LEAVE TODAY, HAVING HAD THEIR HEARTS CHANGED. BUT ONCE WE GET IN SUCH CONDITION OF HARD-HEARTEDNESS AND OBSTINANCY, IT'S VERY DIFFICULT EVER TO GET THROUGH. YOU SEE, SOMETIMES WE EQUATE COMING TO CHURCH AND BEING INSPIRED A LITTLE BIT WITH BEING A CHRISTIAN. TAKING IN KNOWLEDGE SOMEHOW MAKES US ALRIGHT. THAT'S NOT TRUE, BEING ORTHODOX IN DOCTRINES DOESN'T MAKE ANYBODY REALLY RIGHT EITHER. IT'S INCORPORATING IT AND LIVING IT AND DIGESTING IT AND THEN FOLLOWING THROUGH, THAT MAKES ONE RIGHT. IT'S NOT JUST BEING A NICE CHRISTIAN WHO SITS AND THINKS AND AGREES, BUT DOESN'T CHANGE. A TRUE SON OF GOD IS TEACHABLE AND RECEPTIVE. A CHILD IS THAT WAY — VERY RECEPTIVE.

I PETER 2:2 SAYS, "DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD THAT YOU MAY GROW THEREBY." YOU HAVE THAT KIND OF ANXIOUSNESS TO LEARN, THAT EAGERNESS TO GET IN TO THE WORD OF GOD AND TO LEARN NEW THINGS OUT OF OLD THINGS, THINKING OF NEW APPLICATIONS, ASKING, HOW CAN I APPLY THIS TO LIFE? IT SAYS IN I PETER TO BE COURTEOUS ONE TO ANOTHER. A TRUE SON OF GOD WHO IS BEGOTTEN WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD, WHO HAD ALL THESE CHILDLIKE TRAITS WILL STOP AND THINK THAT THIS COMMANDMENT SAYS TO BE COURTEOUS. ANOTHER ONE SAYS TO BE HOSPITABLE. ANOTHER ONE SAYS BE KIND AND TENDERHEARTED. WHEN YOU STOP AND ANALYZE EACH OF THESE POINTS, YOU'LL EVALUATE HOW TO DO IT, YOU'LL PLAN TO DO IT. YOU WILL DELIBERATELY PLAN SOMEWHERE DURING THE DAY TO APPLY THAT UNTIL YOU SAVOR THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING THAT COMMANDMENT. THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD. IT MEANS TO KNOW THAT WHATEVER IS HERE IS TRUE AND IT IS SO GOOD AND REFRESHING AND NOURISHING, THAT WHEN YOU ABIDE IT, YOU LIVE IT, YOU ARE GOING TO COME OUT SHINING, BEAUTIFUL, MATURE, POWERFUL AND AN EXAMPLE WHO WILL AN IMPACT ON SOCIETY.

NUMBER SEVEN: A CHILD IS CONTRITE AND REPENTANT. A LITTLE CHILD HAS A TENDER CONSCIENCE. OFTEN JUST A MILD SCOLDING WILL BRING HIM TO TEARS AND CHANGE. HE'S SAD WHEN PARENTS ARE ANGRY OR DISPLEASED WITH HIM. HE WANTS TO BE FORGIVEN QUICKLY. I THINK THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS LIKE THAT, I THINK THAT'S ONE REASON PAUL WAS PRONE TO GET DISCOURAGED AND DEPRESSED. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE A TENDER CONSCIENCE AND WHO ARE TREMENDOUSLY CONSCIENTIOUS TEND TO BE THAT WAY. THEY ARE MORE SENSITIVE TO SIN IN THEIR LIVES AND IT SEEMS LIKE THEY'RE LOSING THE BATTLE, THEY'RE LOSING GROUND, WHEN REALLY THEY'RE GROWING! NOW, WE CAN CARRY THAT TOO FAR AND BE OVERLY TENDER, OVERLY CONSCIENTIOUS. THERE'S A BALANCE IN THERE SOMEWHERE. CHRIST IS SAYING, IN A MATURE WAY, I WANT TO SEE IN YOU CONTRITION, SORROW, SADNESS FOR THE THINGS YOU DO WRONG. THE BIBLE HAS A LOT TO SAY ABOUT THE CONSCIENCE BEING PURGED FROM DEAD WORKS; BEING TENDER.

ISAIAH 66:2 SAYS, "...TO THIS MAN WILL I LOOK, EVEN TO HIM THAT IS POOR AND OF A CONTRITE SPIRIT, AND TREMBLES AT MY WORD!" BRETHREN, ARE WE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THESE THINGS WHEN WE HEAR THEM? DO THEY SOUND SO TRITE, SO FLOWERY AND SENTIMENTAL? I TRUST THAT WE ARE NOT OF THAT HEART AND MIND. I TRUST THAT WE ARE TRULY HUMBLING OURSELVES. WE SHOULD RESOLVE TO GET RID OF PROBLEMS AND JEALOUSIES THAT ARE THERE, THOSE SPIRITS

AND ATTITUDES OF HARMING, GRASPING, GETTING AND DEMANDING OUR RIGHTS! THERE SHOULD BE A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION, NOT COMPETITION. A SPIRIT OF GOD PRODUCES A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION. IT PRODUCES A SPIRIT OF TEAMWORK, GOD SAYS, I WANT YOU TO HAVE THAT CONTRITE, TENDER, TEACHABLE ATTITUDE SO THAT YOU TREMBLE WHEN I SPEAK BECAUSE YOU LOVE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN AND JESUS CHRIST.

POINT NUMBER EIGHT: A TOTAL LACK OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS. A CHILD IS UNASHAMED OF WHAT HE IS. STANLEY DID NOT TRY TO MAKE ANY MARKS WITH ME. HE JUST WALKED AROUND, HAPPY, SMILING, UNASHAMED, OPEN, UNASSUMING, UNPRETENTIOUS. HE IS UNCONCERNED ABOUT PEOPLE'S OPINIONS OF HIMSELF, HE'S NOT FULL OF VANITY. A CHILD DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT PEOPLE'S OPINIONS, THAT'S THE WAY CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE. WE PLACE HIGHER VALUE ON PEOPLE'S OPINION THAN WE DO ON GOD'S OPINION, AND THAT'S WRONG. HE MAKES NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND WOULD GO TO A BEGGAR AS FAST AS HE WOULD TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. A CHILD MAKES NO DISTINCTION LIKE THAT. NOW CAN'T YOU AND I LOOK ON HUMAN LIFE WITH HONOR, AS A CHILD DOES? DO WE HAVE TO BE ALL UPTIGHT ABOUT PEOPLE AND WHAT THEY THINK OF US? SHOULDN'T WE BE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT GOD THINKS AND QUIT COMPARING OURSELVES TO EACH OTHER? YOU MIGHT HEAR A TERRIFIC SPEAKER AND YOU WONDER, CAN I EVER BE LIKE THAT? WHY SHOULD YOU MAKE THOSE COMPARISONS? GOD IS WORKING IN YOU IN A SPECIAL, UNIQUE WAY. YOU SHOULDN'T TRY TO COPY OTHER PEOPLE IN THAT WAY AND COMPARE YOURSELF. YOU DEVELOP WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO DEVELOP AND YOU BECOME GLORIOUS TO GOD IN YOUR ARENA OF LIFE.

ONE OF THE GIFTS OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT IS HELPING OTHERS. EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS BEEN GIVEN THAT GIFT. NOBODY CAN SAY, I DON'T HAVE ANY OF GOD'S GIFTS. BECAUSE YOU DO HAVE THAT ONE FOR SURE. AND YOU MAY HAVE MORE, BUT YOU HAVE THAT ONE. NOW THAT GIFT SHOWS ITSELF IN THE WAY THAT YOU SERVE PEOPLE. SOMEONE BROUGHT TO OUR OFFICE THE OTHER DAY SOME AVOCADOS. HE TRAVELED OUT OF HIS WAY, A LITTLE DISTANCE, TOOK SOME TIME TO BRING THEM TO US. THAT WAS GOD'S SPIRIT WORKING. ONE OF THE GIFTS THAT WE CAN REALLY GIVE AWAY IS ENCOURAGEMENT, SPENDING TIME WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE LONELY. MAYBE THAT IS HOW YOU CAN USE YOUR GIFT OF HELP — BY LISTENING TO OTHERS AND ENCOURAGING THEM.

THE NAME BARNABAS MEANS ENCOURAGEMENT. THE REASON THAT PAUL LOVED BARNABAS SO MUCH APPARENTLY, WAS BECAUSE BARNABAS

HAD THE ABILITY TO ENCOURAGE AND LIFT PEOPLE UP. HE WAS A VERY POWERFUL, POSITIVE SERVANT. AND PAUL FOUND THAT HE NEEDED THAT KIND OF ASSOCIATION INSTEAD OF SOMEBODY WHO CAME AROUND FINDING FAULT WITH HIS PREACHING. MATTHEW 5:3-12, "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." NOW A PERSON WHO IS POOR IN SPIRIT, IS GOING TO FOLLOW THE NEXT STEP, "BLESSED ARE THOSE THAT MOURN: FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED." WHEN WE ARE POOR IN SPIRIT, WE SEE OUR INSUFFICIENCY, OUR INADEQUACY, AND IT LEADS US TO MOURNING. AND THE MORE WE LOOK AT OURSELVES IN THAT WAY, WE REALIZE WE NEED HELP, LET'S FORGET ABOUT OURSELVES. LET'S START SERVING AND GIVING TO OTHERS, THEN THESE FEARS WILL DISSIPATE.

NUMBER NINE: A CHILD IS HAPPY, OUTGOING AND AFFECTIONATE. LITTLE CHILDREN OFTEN EXPRESS SPONTANEOUS JOY AND AFFECTION. THERE IS NO INHIBITION OR EMBARRASSMENT. CHILDREN SQUEAL GLEEFULLY BECAUSE THEY ARE HAPPY LITTLE PEOPLE. THAT'S THE WAY THAT GOD SAYS WE SHOULD BE.

OF COURSE, THERE IS A PLACE FOR MATURITY IN THIS TYPE OF APPROACH. BUT THE ATTITUDE OF BEING AFFECTIONATE AND HAPPY SHOULD BE THERE, WOULDN'T YOU MUCH RATHER BE AROUND PEOPLE WHO SMILE A LOT AND WHO RECOGNIZE YOUR PRESENCE AND ARE AWARE THAT YOU ARE THERE, WHO ARE FULL OF COURTESY, AND MAKE YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE AS OPPOSED TO SOMEBODY WHO STANDS AT A DISTANCE, MAYBE IN A SOPHISTICATED, VAIN, PROUD, MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU LOOK?

WE SHOULD BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN IN BEING HAPPY, OUTGOING AND AFFECTIONATE. WE'RE ALL TOGETHER AS A FAMILY AS SONS OF GOD! AND EVERYBODY SHOULD SHARE IN YOUR JOY AND AFFECTION! I PETER 1:22 SAYS LOVE TO YOUR BRETHREN FERVENTLY. LOVE YOUR BROTHER WITH DEVOTION, AND WITH REAL MEANING. WHEN YOU HAVE OTHERS TO VISIT YOU, BE COURTEOUS AND HOSPITABLE TO THEM, TREATING THEM AS DEAR GUESTS IN YOUR HOME.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TIMES, IT WAS A SIN TO DISREGARD A STRANGER, ONE WHO DID NOT ATTEND THE NEEDS OF A STRANGER COMING THROUGH, WOULD BE LOOKED ON AS HAVING BROKEN A LAW OF GOD. WE SHOULD BE LIKE CHILDREN TREATING PEOPLE AS WE WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED. REMEMBER YEARS AGO, MY WIFE AND I STAYED IN THE HOME OF SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE JUST RECENTLY BAPTIZED. THESE PEOPLE COULD DISARM YOU; THEY WERE SO ANXIOUS TO DO ANYTHING IN THE WORLD TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AND

COMFORTABLE. THEY SAID, PLEASE PULL OFF YOUR SHOES, WE DON'T MIND, WE PULL OFF OUR SHOES. THE NEXT MORNING WE AWOKE FROM OUR NIGHT OF SLEEP. IT WAS A SABBATH MORNING, AND WE HEARD A KNOCK ON THE DOOR AT ABOUT 6:00. IT WAS TIME TO GET UP. WENT TO THE DOOR, AND NOBODY WAS THERE, BUT GUESS WHAT WAS THERE? A LITTLE TRAY WITH TWO COFFEE CUPS AND SOME CREAM AND SUGAR, AND SOME GOOD-IES.

I RECALL YEARS AGO ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE EXAMPLES OF OUTGOING AFFECTION I'VE EVER EXPERIENCED. IT'S SOMETHING THAT HAS LONG STAYED WITH ME. A YOUNG COUPLE HAD BEEN BAPTIZED AND WERE EXPERIENCING TREMENDOUS FINANCIAL REVERSES, HE WAS IN COLLEGE AND TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING TOO, AND IT WAS TOUGH ON HIM. WHEN HE CAME INTO THE CHURCH, HIS FATHER OSTRACIZED HIM, KICKED HIM OUT OF THE HOME. SO THE SON HAD TO GO ON HIS OWN. AND THEY STRUGGLED THROUGH FOR QUITE A FEW WEEKS. ONE DAY, AT CHURCH, THE COUPLE CAME UP AFTER THE SERVICE AND ASKED IF I WOULD MIND COMING TO HAVE LUNCH WITH THEM ON TUESDAY, IT WAS A 150 MILE DRIVE, BUT THEY NEEDED TO TALK ABOUT SOME OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES.

IT TOOK THREE HOURS TO GET THERE. SO WE CAME, KNOCKED ON THE DOOR, AND THE HUSBAND GREETED US AND GAVE US A CHAIR AND SOME WATER. AFTER 15 MINUTES, THE WIFE FROM THE KITCHEN SAID, WELL, FOLKS, IT'S READY, WILL YOU PLEASE COME AND EAT? AND SO WE ALL WENT IN, FOUR OF US, SAT DOWN AT THE TABLE, AND THERE WERE THE SOUP BOWLS, AND A LITTLE CRACKER BY THE SIDE OF EACH BOWL. THEN SHE BROUGHT OUT THE SOUP — CHICKEN SOUP. IT WAS MOSTLY WATER WITH A LITTLE BROTH. WE AND HAD A LOT OF FUN TALKING, SOCIALIZING AWAY, AND SHE SAID, WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME MORE SOUP? I SAID, WELL, YES, THAT'S PRETTY GOOD SOUP. HOW ABOUT SOME MORE? SO, WE ATE THAT. AND SHE SAID, WOULD YOU LIKE SOME MORE SOUP? AFTER AWHILE, SHE SAID, THAT'S ALL WE HAVE. DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING, BRETHREN, THAT TO ME WAS ONE OF THE MOST CHILDLIKE AFFECTIONATE, OUTGOING GESTURES I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED. THEY WERE WILLING TO SHARE THEIR SOUP WITH US, NOT ASHAMED, NOT SELF-CONSCIOUS, ALTHOUGH IT WAS ALL THEY HAD TO OFFER. BUT, WHAT AN EXAMPLE THAT HAS STUCK IN MY MIND. THAT'S THE WAY YOU BE A CHILD. THAT'S THE WAY YOU BECOME A SPIRITUAL CHILD.

THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO VISIT WITH MR. ARMSTRONG WILL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE A CHILDLIKE ATTITUDE. HE HAS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF BEING CHILDLIKE, OPEN AND

SINCERE. HE DOESN'T HIDE ANYTHING; HE'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S ON HIS MIND, HE DOESN'T MIND TELLING YOU EXACTLY WHAT HE'S THINKING. IF YOU'RE AROUND HIM VERY LONG AND YOU WILL SEE IN THAT MAN A GENUINE CHILD LIKE ATTITUDE, AND IT'S REFRESHING. HERE IS GOD'S LEADER FOR THIS AGE AND HE IS A GREAT MAN. WE SHOULDN'T DEIFY A MAN AND HE WOULD NEVER WANT THAT. THAT WOULD BE ENTIRELY WRONG! BUT I'LL GRANT YOU THIS: WHEN I GO THERE WITH ALL THE OTHER FELLOWS, WE ALL COME BACK FEELING A LITTLE MORE HUMBLE, A LITTLE MORE MEEK, A LITTLE MORE MATURE BECAUSE WE'VE SEEN THE GIANT AT WORK.

NUMBER TEN: A CHILD IS THANKFUL FOR THE SIMPLEST THINGS. A CHILD CAN DERIVE GREAT ENJOYMENT FROM SIMPLE THINGS SUCH AS AN EMPTY OATMEAL BOX, MEASURING SPOONS, A RAG DOLL, A STICK, OR ANYTHING. EXPENSIVE TOYS ARE NOT NECESSARY TO MAKE HIM HAPPY. HE'S NOT ALL CAUGHT UP IN GADGETS; JUST LITTLE SIMPLE THINGS CAN MAKE HIM HAPPY. HE CAN OCCUPY HOURS OF HIS TIME WITH BLOCKS OF WOOD. HE LOVES SIMPLE THINGS. NOW, WHEN IT COMES TO US AS ADULTS, WE LIKE COMPLEX THINGS. WE LIKE GADGETS. GOD TELLS US THOUGH, IN I TIMOTHY 6:8, "HAVING FOOD AND RAIMENT, LET US BE THEREWITH CONTENT." WE BECOME A LITTLE ANXIOUS AND UNGRATEFUL FOR WHAT WE HAVE. WE SHOULD START TO COUNT UP OUR BLESSINGS ON OUR KNEES. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR PRAYERS, BEFORE YOU REALLY GET DOWN TO PERSONAL THINGS. THE LORD'S PRAYER, BEING THE MODEL PRAYER, SHOWS THAT GOD SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE FIRST BILLING; YOU ALWAYS SHOULD APPROACH GOD WITH REVERENCE, AND GODLY FEAR, AND PRAISE, ADORE, AND THANK HIM. START COUNTING UP YOUR BLESSINGS. IF YOU ARE MARRIED, YOU HAVE A WIFE OR HUSBAND. THINK OF HOW NECESSARY AND WONDERFUL AND NEEDFUL A WIFE OR HUSBAND IS TO YOU. YOU HAVE YOUR CHILDREN. HOPEFULLY, THEY ARE IN GOOD HEALTH. YOU HAVE A HOME. YOU HAVE A SALARY. YOU HAVE ALL THESE BLESSINGS. YOU HAVE A CAR. IF YOU ADD UP ALL THESE MATERIAL BLESSINGS AND THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS, YOU WOULD BE THANKING AND THANKING GOD FOR HOURS ON END. TODAY, IT SEEMS, WE HEAR MORE COMPLAINTS IN THE WORLD THAN WE DO THANKS. HOW ABOUT YOU? ARE THERE MORE COMPLAINTS IN YOUR HOME THAN THANKS? IT SHOULDN'T BE THAT WAY.

NUMBER ELEVEN: A CHILD IS UNSELFISH AND EAGER TO SHARE. LITTLE CHILDREN LIKE TO SHARE THEIR TOYS, EVEN THEIR FOOD. THEY WILL BRING YOU A FLOWER FROM THE YARD. AT A VERY YOUNG AGE, THEY HAVEN'T LEARNED SELFISHNESS YET. IF YOU ASK FOR THEIR BOTTLE, THEY'LL POKE IT RIGHT IN YOUR MOUTH, IF YOU ASK FOR PART OF

THEIR COOKIE THAT'S HALF EATEN, THEY'LL GIVE IT RIGHT TO YOU. THEY'RE VERY EAGER TO SHARE WITH YOU. THEY DON'T THINK OF PULLING BACK AND SAYING, THAT'S MINE! THAT'S AMAZING. CHILDREN WILL PILE TOYS IN YOUR LAP AND WANT TO SHARE THOSE THINGS WITH YOU. GOD SAYS HE LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER. THAT'S THE WAY WE SHOULD BE AS ADULTS, BEING CHEERFUL TO GIVE. BUT IT'S TOUGH SOMETIMES TO PART WITH MONEY, IT'S EASY TO BE STINGY. BUT JESUS CHRIST WAS FOREVER GIVING. THE APOSTLES WERE ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING TO GIVE OTHERS.

A GENUINE TRUE CHRISTIAN IS GENEROUS. THAT IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST MARKS OF HIS ATTITUDE THAT I KNOW, PROVING HE IS A CHRISTIAN, GENEROUS WITH TIME, GENEROUS WITH MONEY, GENEROUS WITH ANYTHING HE HAS, GOD SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE FOR US TO BE LIKE THAT, HE LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER. I KNOW OF ONE MAN WHO MAKES IT A POINT TO TEACH OTHERS TO GIVE. AND HE IS ALWAYS GIVING SOMETHING. IT'S A TRUTH OF LIFE THAT THOSE WHO GIVE THE MOST ARE BLESSED THE MOST. AND THOSE WHO HOLD BACK AND SHRINK AND ARE STINGY ARE OFTENTIMES THE ONES WHO GET INTO THE MOST TROUBLE. AND THEY ARE HAVING DIFFICULTIES FINANCIALLY. A GENEROUS SOUL GIVES TO GOD. THERE ARE THESE INDIVIDUALS WHO SAY THAT THE TITHING LAW HAS BEEN ABOLISHED. THEY SAY THAT IT SHOULD BE LEFT UP TO US TO DECIDE HOW MUCH TO GIVE, AND OFTENTIMES ARE THE ONES WHO CEASE GIVING ANYTHING, THAT IS INTERESTING TO ME. THOSE WHO SAY, IT IS MY RIGHT TO CHOOSE WHAT I WANT TO GIVE GOD, OFTENTIMES END UP GIVING NOTHING, IT'S A FACT! SO, WE SHOULD BECOME FULL OF THAT ATTITUDE OF UNSELFISH GIVING AND SHARING.

NUMBER TWELVE: A CHILD IS MEEK, FORGIVING, AND NONVENGEFUL. A LITTLE CHILD IS QUICK TO FORGIVE AND FORGETS THE WRONGS THAT ARE DONE TO HIM. HE MAY CRY FOR AWHILE IF HE'S INJURED, SHOVED DOWN OR HIT WITH SOMETHING, BUT WITHIN MINUTES, THE MATTER IS FORGOTTEN. THERE IS NO LINGERING GRUDGE, NO DESIRE FOR REVENGE. AFTER A SPANKING, THE CHILD QUICKLY REGAINS HIS COMPOSURE, AND IS BACK TO HIS LITTLE SWEET SELF AGAIN. IF A PLAYMATE INJURES HIM, HE'S READY TO RESUME HIS FRIENDSHIP WHEN THAT LITTLE FELLOW HAS SAID, I'M SORRY. YOU AND I, BRETHREN, COULD LEARN THAT TRAIT, BECAUSE YOU KNOW AND I KNOW THAT WE DON'T FORGET INJURIES DONE TO US, WE'LL BRING THEM UP TEN YEARS LATER! NOT A CHILD. A CHILD WON'T BRING IT UP FIVE MINUTES LATER. BUT WE, EVIL MINDED ADULTS WHO HAVE BEEN SO ENGULFED WITH THE DEVIL'S INFLUENCE, BRING OUT OLD THINGS. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN BURIED AND FORGOTTEN.

EPHESIANS 4:32 SAYS TO BE TENDER HEARTED AND FORGIVING. THEN, THIS VERSE IN I CORINTHIANS 14:20 SAYS, "BRETHREN, BE NOT CHILDREN IN UNDERSTANDING: HOWBEIT IN MALICE BE YOU CHILDREN." IT SAYS THAT A CHILD DOESN'T HAVE GUILF, MALICE — NO FITFUL TEMPER TO GET BACK. CAN YOU SEE WHY CHRIST SAID WE MUST BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN TO BE IN THE KINGDOM?

NUMBER THIRTEEN: A CHILD TREATS PLAYMATES AS EQUALS. CHILDREN WILL SHARE TOYS, PLAY GAMES WITH NO THOUGHT OF WHO IS SUPERIOR OR BETTER. NO POWER STRUGGLES FOR TOP POSITION WHEN THEY PLAY TOGETHER. THEY WANT TO PLEASE EACH OTHER AND HAVE FUN TOGETHER. THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD.

NOW FOR THE CHRISTIAN, WE ARE TOLD IN I TIMOTHY 5:21, "...PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER AND DOING NOTHING BY PARTIALITY." BUT WE TEND TO DO THIS. WE LIKE CERTAIN PEOPLE, AND WE'LL HAVE THEM OVER. THEY'RE MAYBE MORE PRESTIGIOUS, SO WE FRATERNIZE WITH THEM AND MAYBE THEY CAN HELP US OUT. A PERSON WHO DOES THAT IS KIDDING HIMSELF. SOONER OR LATER, ONE WHO GOES THAT ROUTE AND DOESN'T TRUST GOD IS GOING TO BE EXPOSED AND HE WILL LOSE IT! BUT IF WE DO IT THE WAY GOD SAYS, LIKE A CHILD, HE IS GOING TO PROTECT US AND BLESS US AND DELIVER US, BECAUSE HE'S PROUD OF US.

NUMBER FOURTEEN: A CHILD IS ATTRACTED TO THE THINGS OF CREATION. HE IS ATTRACTED TO THE THINGS THAT GOD HAS MADE. THEY HAVE A NATURAL CURIOSITY AND A FASCINATION FOR THE THINGS OF NATURE. THEY WILL OFTEN PICK UP A BUG AND EXAMINE IT. THEY WILL RUN AFTER A PUPPY OR A KITTEN. WE HUMAN BEINGS, OFTENTIMES, KICK THE KITTEN, OR SHOO OFF THE DOG. A LITTLE CHILD DOESN'T. THINK THE DEVIL WOULD LIKE TO SEE US DESTROY CREATION BECAUSE HE HATES IT! WE OUGHT TO APPRECIATE WHAT GOD HAS DONE. FARM CHILDREN LOVE TO GATHER EGGS OR PICK NEW VEGETABLES FROM THE GARDEN. THEY LOVE TO SEE THINGS GROW, AND PLAY WITH FLOWERS AND THINGS LIKE THAT. GOD'S CREATION IS A FASCINATION TO THEM, A WONDER WORLD OF EXCITEMENT.

ISAIAH 40:26 SAYS TO LOOK UP ON HIGH AT WHAT GOD HAS CREATED. LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND SEE WHAT GOD HAS DONE. LOOK AT HIS CREATION. STOP AND THINK AND OBSERVE. SLOW DOWN AND LIVE, APPRECIATE CREATION. I THINK THAT CHRIST ADMIRES AND ADORES A FLOWER, BECAUSE HE PUT TIME AND EFFORT INTO THEM. HE LOVES CREATION!

YEARS AGO, I WENT FISHING AND HAPPENED

TO GET UP ON THE SABBATH MORNING A LITTLE BIT EARLY AND WENT BACK INTO THE BACK COUNTRY AWAY FROM THE CAMP, AND SAT DOWN TO JUST LOOK AND OBSERVE AND THINK. AND A FEW FEET FROM ME WAS THIS BEAUTIFUL FLOWER. A GORGEOUS, BEAUTIFUL, SUCCULENT SMELLING FLOWER. IN THIS BLAZEN GLORY, SUDDENLY THE THOUGHT CAME TO ME, NOW LOOK, GOD MADE THAT FLOWER, AND I PROBABLY WILL BE THE ONLY PERSON WHO WILL EVER SEE IT. IT'S GOING TO DIE, IT WILL FADE AND GO BACK TO EARTH, BUT NOTICE HOW GOD APPRECIATES IT. YOU AND I SHOULD LOVE CREATION, LIKE CHILDREN LOVE CREATION.

ROMANS 1:20, "FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS FROM HIM FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, EVEN HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD; SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE." GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF IN CREATION, BY THE THINGS WE SEE ABOUT US. IN THE FLOATING CLOUDS, THUNDERSTORMS IN THE DISTANCE, THE LIGHTNING THAT FLASHES — ALL OF IT TOGETHER — WE SEE GOD! GOD IS IN CREATION, GOD IS EVERYWHERE! GOD IS OMNIPOTENT, OMNISCIENT, OMNIPRESENT. AND WE SHOULD GLORY IN OUR GOD LIKE A CHILD DOES, A CHILD IS GOING TO PLAY WITH A SNAKE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. A CHILD IS FASCINATED WITH ANIMALS. YOU AND I SHOULD HAVE THAT ATTITUDE.

NUMBER FIFTEEN: A CHILD IS OBSERVANT, CURIOUS, AND INQUISITIVE. A CHILD IS FOREVER ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THINGS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED. HE CAN ASK MORE QUESTIONS THAN A LAWYER CAN ASK QUESTIONS ON A WITNESS STAND! HE'S CURIOUS, HE WANTS TO LEARN, GOD PUT THAT IN HIM. HE'S EAGER TO LEARN ABOUT THE WORLD ALL AROUND HIM. HE WANTS TO KNOW WHY AND HOW DO THINGS WORK. HE LIKES TO TINKER WITH OBJECTS, AND TAKE THINGS APART. A CHILD HAS A NATURAL CURIOSITY, A DESIRE TO LEARN. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT YOU AND I AS CHRISTIANS SHOULD DELIGHT TO LEARN OF GOD AND HIS WAY. PSALMS 1:2 SAYS THAT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN DELIGHTS IN AND MEDITATES ON GOD'S LAW. HE SHOULD BE INQUISITIVE, CURIOUS, OBSERVANT, PSALMS 119:18 SAYS, "OPEN THOU MINE EYES, THAT I MAY BEHOLD WONDROUS THINGS OUT OF THY LAW." IF WE ARE OBSERVANT, CURIOUS, AND INQUISITIVE, WE'RE GOING TO GROW, AND GOD WILL LOVE US FOR IT. HE WILL SAY, THERE IS MY SON IN WHOM I AM PLEASED.

FINALLY, NUMBER SIXTEEN: A CHILD IS OPEN, HONEST, AND TRUTHFUL. CHILDREN WILL ANSWER HONESTLY AND FRANKLY WHEN CONFRONTED WITH ANY PROBLEM. THEY WON'T LIE IF ASKED, DID YOU GET INTO THE COOKIE JAR? WELL, LATER ON, THEY LEARN TO LIE, BUT AT FIRST THEY WON'T. THEY ARE

NOT DECEITFUL, THEY DON'T FEAR THE TRUTH, THEY WILL RELATE DETAILS AS FAR AS THEY KNOW WITHOUT FEAR OF PUNISHMENT. A CHILD OF TWO OR PERHAPS THREE WILL SAY THINGS THAT WILL EMBARRASS YOU BECAUSE THEY ARE SO HONEST! THEY DON'T HAVE ANY THINGS TO HIDE. HE'S HONEST WITHOUT SHAME. WE ARE TOLD IN EPHESIANS 4:15, "BUT SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, MAY GROW UP INTO HIM IN ALL THINGS, WHICH IS THE HEAD, EVEN CHRIST."

IN PSALMS 15:1-2 SAYS, "LORD, WHO SHALL ABIDE IN YOUR TABERNACLE?" THE LAST VERSE SAYS, "AND SPEAKS THE TRUTH IN HIS HEART." THERE'S A PLACE FOR TACT. WE SHOULD EXERCISE DIPLOMACY, BUT BRETHREN, DON'T YOU LIKE TO BE AROUND PEOPLE WHO ARE SINCERELY OPEN WITH YOU, AND HONEST, WHO WILL TELL YOU THE TRUTH? YOU KNOW THAT IF THEY ANSWER YOU THAT THEY ARE SINCERE, THEY ARE GENUINE. YOU KNOW IF THEY SAY THEY'LL DO SOMETHING, THEY'LL DO IT, BECAUSE THEY HAVE GOD'S CHARACTER. THEY ARE LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN. YOU SEE BRETHREN, GOD LOVES LITTLE ONES BECAUSE AS I'VE SAID THEY'RE UNTAINTED, THEY MAY HAVE THE DEVIL WORKING IN THEM, BUT IT'S NOT YET THAT OBVIOUS, IT'LL COME OUT LATER. THEY'RE PURE, UNSPOILED REFLECTIONS OF GOD, YOU SEE SOMETHING OF GOD IN AN INNOCENT CHILD. THAT'S WHY CHRIST, WHEN HE HELD THEM IN HIS ARMS AND LOOKED IN THEIR FACES, SAW ALL THESE THINGS. AND HE SAID, MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU WANT TO BECOME GREAT, REALLY GREAT, THINK ON THESE CHILDREN. ANALYZE THEM, STUDY THEM, BE LIKE THEM, ACQUIRE ALL THESE QUALITIES THAT MAKE YOU SO PRECIOUS TO YOUR FATHER AND TO ME.

CHRIST SAYS TO INHERIT THE KINGDOM, YOU MUST HUMBLE YOURSELF AS A LITTLE CHILD. I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU, ARE YOU DOING IT?

END