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It is interesting how the human mind works. While I do not have an in-depth knowledge about that, I do know that we sometimes get things on our minds and it bounces around there. For some reason this week, one particular image from scripture came to mind and would not move on. That image was Jesus and children.

People were bringing their children to Jesus. The disciples were turning them away. It had become a part of their task to prevent Jesus from being smothered by the large crowds that always turned up when he was around. They were being good soldiers in shielding Jesus. Jesus recognized what was happening and used it as an opportunity to teach. He said, "Let the children come to me for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

On another occasion, the disciples were bantering about who was the greatest among them. They were basing greatness on such things as power, authority, and influence. They posed the question about greatness to Jesus. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Clearly children are onto something that would be worthy of our attention.

It is especially interesting to me that Jesus referred to children and the kingdom of heaven at least three times, and it is religious people—those vying to get into heaven—who seem to complicate things. Jesus indicates that there is something much more important happening here, and it is not complicated.

I presume that if you were to ask a churchgoer to tell you what is required to get into heaven, becoming like a child would not be on the list. In fact, the Jewish faith lists 613 commandments by which they strive to live in an attempt to be faithful to God.

Jesus said, "Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." To be clear, Jesus said we must become child-like not childish. He did not excuse the childish ways that even adults sometimes exhibit.

I do not want to overcomplicate Jesus' words, but I do want to be true to what he said and to remind us of two of the admirable qualities of children.

## **Children are honest.**

Tanner was a 7-year old boy who was playing in a T-ball game. He attempted to tag a runner who was going from first base to second base. The umpire called runner out. Tanner quietly told the umpire that he did not actually tag the runner.

Two weeks later Tanner was playing in another game that happened to have the same umpire. Tanner was playing shortstop and, after fielding the ball, he tagged a runner who was heading to third base. The umpire called the runner 'safe.' Tanner did not say anything but the umpire could tell that Tanner was surprised by call.

The umpire asked Tanner if he tagged runner. Tanner responded that he did indeed tag the runner, so the umpire changed her call and the runner was out. Parents and coaches protested. The umpire explained that she learned to trust Tanner because of his honesty.

Children are honest. Sometimes too honest for our comfort. We are told that honesty is the best policy; while not always the easiest, it is always the best. We would do well to be honest with others and ourselves. It is much less stressful when we are honest.

There is an image etched in my mind's eye of a little boy I saw at the Hanes Mall years ago. He was proudly wearing cowboy boots, a hat, vest, gun belt, and short pants. He was happy. He did not feel the need to be anything other than who he was. He was obviously not trying to live into expectations that others had of him. He was honest with himself and quite comfortable with who he was. That's a great way to live.

## **Children are trusting.**

They are dependent on others for the essentials of life. They have no other choice but to trust others. They know that their past needs have been met, and they have no worries about their future needs. In fact, they do not even know what a 'need' is.

How would life be if we were completely confident that God would meet our needs? It has been said that "faith is a total dependence on God." The Bible tells us that we are saved by grace through faith. Total dependence on God is the prescription. Children have been showing us that for a long time.

Even though we grow in our faith, and life becomes more complicated, and we feel the weight of some responsibility, it might be a good practice to look at the children and learn from them.

After all, Jesus said if we hope to enter the kingdom of God, we must become like little children.

