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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
Like Children
June 10, 2018, Jeff Germo

I was working on my sermon at Island Grind on Monday when Morgan came in with little Davy, who is five years old. Knowing that I was going to be preaching on Jesus and children, I thought I would do some research by having a conversation with Davy while Morgan was occupied. He asked me what I was working on. I told that I was writing my sermon. I asked if he knew what that was and he said that he watches the videos with his mommy sometimes. I was quite surprised that he would be even slightly interested in watching one of my sermons, so I asked him if it was boring. He said, “No, it’s not boring.” I said, “Really? You actually watch my sermon and you find it interesting?” I was starting to get my ego pumped back up again, which I sort of need every Monday. And then he added. “I have a toy to play with so I don’t get bored.” “So, you don’t actually find my sermons interesting?” “Nope.” I quickly pulled my head out of the clouds and planted my feet on the ground.

Then Morgan stopped by and we had a little chat. I told her about the conversation I had with Davy and she told me about a conversation Davy had with their pharmacist just before they came to Island Grind. The pharmacist is big African man with a thick accent. Davy looked up at him and asked, “How come you talk different, and how come you are black?” The man very graciously and gently gave him a scientific answer in language Davy could understand.

Kids are great. There are some character qualities kids have that beautifully display the character of God, and unfortunately they can get lost as they get older and the life gets squashed out of them.

We are still in our sermon series, *Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is*. What we have been doing is going through the entire Bible from front to back hitting on some major themes along the way. We are in the New Testament now and working our way through some encounters with Jesus.

Today we are going to look at an encounter Jesus had with some children. There are a few such encounters recorded in the Gospels and we will touch on some of them. I want to set up the context of this first scene before we look at it. You can turn in your Bibles to Mark 9:33-37. There is a lot of drama that happens in Mark 9.

It begins with Jesus taking Peter, James, and John on a hike up a mountain. These three were sort of the executive team that Jesus spent most of his time with. Once they reached the summit of the mountain, Jesus’ appearance changed. His clothes glowed a bright white, and while the trio was watching, Elijah and Moses, from the Old Testament, showed up and began talking with Jesus. And then to top off this profound mountain top experience, they heard the voice of God booming from a cloud that all of a sudden enveloped them. The voice said, ***“This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him”*** (Mark 9:7).

On their way back down the mountain Jesus told them not to tell anyone else about what they had experienced until he had risen from the dead. So, the three are feeling pretty special. They were the only ones of the disciples privileged to be a part of that supernatural event. Jesus specifically called them out to let them in on that experience.

Once they got down the mountain they rejoined the other disciples who were engaged in an argument with some religious teachers. Jesus asked what they were arguing about and someone from the crowd spoke up and told him that he had brought his son, who had been demon possessed to the disciples to be healed but they couldn’t do it. So they began to fight about it. Jesus, of course, cast the demon out of the boy and he was completely restored.

So, we have Peter, James, and John, who had the mountain top experience with Jesus that the others weren't privy to. And then we have the other disciples at the bottom of the mountain who had an experience of failure. You gotta imagine what must have been going through each of their minds. The mountain toppers feeling pretty high and mighty and the bottom dwellers feeling shamed.

Then Mark says they left that region, wherever that was, we're not sure, and traveled through Galilee. Jesus tried to stay away from populated areas because he wanted some alone time to train the disciples. It was during one of their workshops that he told them that he was going to be betrayed and killed, but that he would rise from the dead.

Immediately after this they arrived in their ministry centre again. We'll pick it up from there.

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Mark 9:33–37 (NLT)

33 After they arrived at Capernaum and settled in a house, Jesus asked his disciples, "What were you discussing out on the road?" 34 But they didn't answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else."

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36 Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me."

Keep this narrative on the sticky side of your brain while we take a look at another situation where the disciples got into an argument with each other. It happens in the next chapter, Mark 10. Let me set the scene for this encounter as well.

Right after Jesus taught his disciples about the humility of children, John told Jesus that they had seen someone casting out demons in the authority of Jesus so they tried to stop him because they weren't part of the inner circle. Jesus reprimanded them and told them not to stop them. If people are not against us, he said, they are for us.

A little while later some parents brought their children to Jesus.

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Mark 10:13–16 (NLT)

13 One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. 14 When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children."

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15 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." 16 Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Jesus had a very high view of children. They were not to be "seen and not heard."

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There are some qualities children have which Jesus said many adults have lost and need to recover.

After this encounter with children, while they were going up to Jerusalem, a rich young ruler ran up, knelt down in front of Jesus and asked how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus had a conversation with him and found out that his god was his wealth. It was keeping him from worshipping the true God and being a part

of what God was doing in his kingdom. Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach his disciples that there is a big difference between God's economy and the economy of the world. He said,

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Mark 10:31 (NLT)

31 But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then."

Immediately following this Jesus again told his disciples while they were walking up to Jerusalem that he was going to be betrayed and sentenced to die. He said that he would be mocked, spat upon, flogged with a whip and crucified, but that he would rise again on the third day.

Now, here's the interesting part.

The next thing that happens is, James and John, the two brothers who were nicknamed The Sons of Thunder because of their anger problem, secretly went up to Jesus and asked him if they could be his right hand men, one sitting on his left and the other on his right when he sits on his throne.

Do you see what's happening? The first time Jesus told them that he was going to die and rise again, the disciples argued about who was the greatest. The second time he reminded them of that fact, James and John saw an opportunity for advancement and went behind the backs of the other disciples, asking for special positions in his kingdom above the other disciples. They still hadn't got the point.

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Mark 10:41–45 (NLT)

41 When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. 42 So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them.

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43 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

There is a big difference between God's economy and our economy. That is what Jesus meant when he taught his disciples about the child-like qualities we should have.

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Mark 10:13–16 (NLT)

15 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."

We need to remember that when Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God, he is not talking about a place. He is talking about the rule, reign, or power of God. Remember when Jesus taught his disciples to pray what we call the Lord's prayer, he said, "**Pray like this:**

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"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:9-10)

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God's kingdom, then, is where what God wants done gets done. In heaven God's will is always done. On earth not so much. 2 Peter 3:9 says that ***"God is not willing that any should perish, but all to come to***

repentance.” The sad truth is that not everyone will repent and turn to God. Many will perish, unfortunately.

So, when Jesus said,

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Mark 10:13–16 (NLT)

15 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it...” what was he saying?

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He was saying, **if we want to see the rule, or reign, or power of Jesus in our lives there is a child-like way we need to recover.**

We have all been wounded along the way in our stories. These wounds keep us from being the persons God has called us to be if we don't deal with them. They get in the way of us loving others in the way God has called us to love. We need to recover some of our lost child-like ways.

So, what are the qualities of little children that Jesus wants us to have? And just to be clear, the Greek word for children here is 'little children,' not teenagers, but infants or toddlers. There is something that happens to us as we grow out of childhood. We lose some qualities that we need to recover. What are they?

I put this to some of the church staff and here are some of the things they said:

Ryan said, “Little children love and trust without worrying about judgement.”

Lisa added, [They are] “fearless, uninhibited, accepting, trusting, absolutely open to learning, joyful and they spread their joy, they don't mask emotion - they are sincere and honest, transparent....so many things!!”

Emma gave her input: “They have true faith, they believe without qualms.”

Jackie said: [They are] “Naive. Dependent”

Adrian said, “I think they ask questions without fear of looking dumb or foolish.” And then added, “My kids also tell me when my answers are not clear.”

Lisa added to her other comments: “A child is also dependent on the adults/other people in their lives, always looking to them for direction, guidance, learning - it's natural and continual.”

Ryan chimed in again with, “They are honest about what they think/feel.”

This was a huge help for me. Ruthie and I couldn't have kids, so we have to experience these things in little snippets. We haven't had the joy of a close up experience over a long period of time seeing children develop.

After I got the staff to weigh in, I put it out on Facebook and asked the same question. Keep in mind that the answers to my question are not theological or Biblical answers. They are what people have observed about the characters of children.

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Those are all qualities that we can easily lose when we, 'mature.' We actually have a wrong idea of what it means to mature.

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As we get older we start to feel pressure to measure up to standards that other people have placed on us, or, for various reasons, have placed on ourselves. When children are very young they have no problem asking for help. Young children know they are dependant. They know they need their parents. There is, of course, a healthy process of gaining our independence that is necessary. Part of becoming an adult is to get to the place where we can function on our own. But that can be taken to an extreme if we get to the place where we think we don't need anybody, including God.

Little children have no problem letting us know they are needy. Once we become adults we like to pretend we are in control and in charge.

Ruthie and I were walking in Beaver Lodge Lands a few days ago. We have our best talks when we are walking in the woods because we are free from distractions, and I am very easily distracted. On this day we were deep in conversation, walking along the main trail when one of the bridges came into view. There were some kids' bikes laying in the middle of the bridge. As we got closer we saw some young boys, eight or nine years old, playing in the creek below. That sort of gave me a happy feeling as my mind went back to adventures I had with my cousins when I was younger.

We kept walking past them and turned off on one of the other trails and continued our conversation. After about five minutes or so, we heard a young panicked voice holler out in the distance, "Ryan, Josh, I'm lost, and alone. I don't know where I am and I'm not feeling very safe." We kept walking towards the voice and came upon a young boy pushing his bike and looking scared. We asked him a few questions to find out how we could help. He was a precocious, talkative little guy, but he also had a naivety about him that was very endearing.

We asked where he lived so we could help get him home. He said, "I can't. Stranger, danger." That was obviously something he had learned at school or from his parents. I offered to call his home for him. He shook his head. Same answer. So, we walked and chatted with him until he found his friends.

We have no idea what his name was, but we learned something about him. He was okay shamelessly yelling out to the forrest that he was in need of help. He knew he was lost. He was okay yelling out that he did not feel safe.

When we get older we can, unfortunately, lose that ability to ask for help. We think we need to have the answers. We think we need to be strong. Maybe you were hurt when you were in your developmental years, or maybe even as an adult. Perhaps you made a vow to yourself that you would never let yourself be hurt again, so you became strong and hard, and maybe even deeply angry. You have lost some of those child-like qualities that Jesus wants us to have.

We come by our propensity to cover up, pretend, and blame, honestly.

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It was back at the original fall at the beginning of time that things went bad. Before Adam and Eve believed the lie of Satan that they didn't need God, they were completely contented in the knowledge that they were utterly dependant on God. They had a child-like faith and trusted God implicitly. They were connected to him as the source of life. They knew, as Paul said to the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17, that in him they lived and moved and existed. They were plugged into God as their source. They lived in perfect peace.

As soon as they believed the lie of Satan that God was trying to 'rain on their parade' and keep them from being their own source of power, they chose to go their own way. When they were caught, they pointed their fingers and blamed each other, Satan and even God. Their peace was destroyed. Ever since then we have been doing the same thing. We cover up. We pretend we are strong even though inside we feel weak and somewhat demolished. And we try to order our lives so we don't need God.

We are all broken, and yet, we pretend we aren't, just like Adam and Eve. Contrary to the belief of many Christians, God's mission for us is not to make bad people good, or just get us to change or manage our behaviour. His mission for us is to fix what was broken at the fall.

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What the fall did was disconnect us from the Father. We have been disconnected from our Power Source.

What Jesus did was make it possible for us to get reconnected to our Creator. Satan's lie is that we don't need God's power, so when we move from infancy, to childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood, at each step and with each wound we acquire along the way, we order our lives to live without God. We build walls. We get angry because we don't have control over the bad things that happen to us. We claw and scratch, and desperately try to live our lives as if we don't need God or each other.

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By trying to be strong without God, we set ourselves up to fail. We set up big thick walls between us and God and us and others. We need to see that **God is up to something.** He is restoring the *shalom* that was lost in the garden. **Satan is up to something.** He is working at destroying God's *shalom* in all our relationships. And thirdly, we, left to our own devices, without the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, **we most naturally move away from God.**

The first thing we need to do to gain victory and live in the grace and power of God is to surrender to him, recognizing that we are broken and like a little child, totally dependant on him, incapable of being truly strong without him. We need to know we desperately need him.

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In order for us to see the power of God in our lives we need to be okay with not being okay, but not okay to stay there.

We are all in the same boat — every single one of us. None of us has gotten to the place where we can say we have arrived and don't need God or each other. Until we get to the place where we recognize our utter depravity, we will keep trying to cover up and hence forfeit the power of God in our lives.

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He wants to get us reconnected to him, the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who will change us so others will see Jesus in us.

Here's what Paul said:

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2 Corinthians 12:9–10 (NLT)

9 ...“My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Can you see how if we don't own up to our own brokenness and weakness we cannot experience the power of God in our lives? We cannot change ourselves. We desperately need Jesus, not just to save us for eternity, but to save us from ourselves now, so we can have real, authentic, deep relationships with each other and with God. We need to stop pretending, stop blaming others, stop deflecting, and surrender complete control to God and allow him to live his life through us.

When I am weak, then I am strong, for Christ's power works best in my weakness.

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I want to put this out to you: **What are some child-like qualities that you feel God would have you recover so you can experience his kingdom with more power?**