

Taking Candy from a Baby

"Its like taking candy away from a baby!" I have often used that phrase and have heard others use it many times. It points out the ease of accomplishing a certain feat. It seems to emphasize the weakness of the child rather than the strength of one who adopts it as his slogan.

Children are weak and vulnerable. But they are, in many ways, heroes. As one writer for *Theology Today* expressed it: "Children have a fundamentally positive significance and role in Old Testament-Jewish tradition. They are seen as a divine gift and sign of God's blessing, in accordance with the very blessing of the Creator upon humanity in primal history." (Judith Gundry-Volf, *Theology Today*, 2000, 470.) Ladies such as Hannah freely express their desire to bear children, even praying for God to give fertility, and dedicating their children to God's service. My own mother prayed unceasingly that God would call her four sons into ministry. As a result, He called two of them to pastor ministry and another was ordained and served faithfully as a deacon. But she valued and prayed for the fourth Son, as well as her four daughters, that God would save and use them in His kingdom work.

When the disciples asked Jesus about who would be the greatest, the strongest in the kingdom of God, Jesus, brought a little child to them, declaring, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). He was not interested in exploiting the weakness of children but in magnifying their inherent strengths.

The strength of childhood is humility. In humility the child depends upon a mother's love for to supply every need. In humility the child trusts his/her parents to provide these needs. Humility is recognizing one's weakness and trusting another's loving kindness. Jesus humbled himself in weakness, submitting to the ruthlessness of his executioners. Paul admitted that he found strength in weakness (2 Cor. 12:10).

Jesus, in Mark's gospel (Mark 10:13-16), declared that one who will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child could never enter it. He must have been referencing the custom of welcoming a person into one's house by becoming the servant of the guest. Jesus blessed the little children and declared that reign (kingdom) of God belonged to them. His disciples would shew the children away. But Jesus saw great value in children. Today's culture has two great failings. Great value is placed neither on youth nor those who are very aged. People in between must see the world's toys as just toys, to be put aside by adults. They must also renew their knowledge of the wisdom of the elderly.

While it may be easy to take candy from a baby, it certainly puts one in an unfavorable position before Christ Jesus! Contrarily, to exalt the child is to gain qualification for participation in the royal rule of king of Kings. Childlike faith, then, means recognizing one's inabilities, and coming to depend upon God who can and will supply all our needs through His riches! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

—Bill Johnson
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