

What We Will Be Like

I want you to listen to this scripture again . . . because if . . . you really understand it . . . you really see its point . . . hear its message . . . and experience its implications . . .

“See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

. . . You will have hope . . . You will know that you are God’s child . . . that your children are God’s children . . . that you are loved by God . . . and although you don’t realize your identity yet as children of God . . . you will! And having this hope . . . this vision of who you are ultimately . . . you are preparing to see Jesus . . . and to see yourself . . . your full potential realized. Here’s a little song . . . repeat it after me . . . Oh, how he loves you and me . . . Oh how he loves you and me . . . he gave his life . . . what more could he give . . . Oh how he loves you . . . Oh how he loves me . . . Oh how he loves you and me!

God, in Jesus loves you . . . (stretch out your arms full across) this much. He loves our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren . . . he loves the saints . . . the people we are descended from

In the handout you received this morning, we ask the question, “As a kid, did you learn to float on water?” What does it take to learn how to float? _____ You have to trust yourself that you can do it . . . you have to hope that you can do it . . . you have to have faith that you can do it . . . You have to trust the water . . . and you have to trust yourself in the water. And you have to trust that you have the love of someone who will save you when you begin to sink.

Jesus said that we have to be like little children to enter into the Kingdom of God. Young children have certain innocence in that trust, hope and faith come naturally. You can see that in this poster. You can tell just by looking at the child- Joey, we’ll call him – that Joey feels safe in the arms of his father.

You can almost feel Joey’s excitement by the way he seems to be reaching out, as though he wants to touch the birds. If he could speak, you know he would probably be saying something like, “Wow, look at that dad!”

You know . . . if we want to grow spiritually. To mature fully as Christians and disciples of Jesus, to realize our full potential as Children of God, as Church, and as Society . . . we need to trust God . . . to trust God’s teaching and direction . . . and to trust that we will accomplish and become what God says we will. And we have to commit to our children . . . recognizing that they are God’s children . . . and we have a responsibility to God and to them . . . to teach them how to trust God, hope in God, and have faith in God and God’s promises. We sometimes forget that we are God’s children . . . we believe that we are our mortal parent’s children only and live that way . . . and we forget that our children and God’s children . . . and raise them as and to be our children only. To remember that we are God’s children . . . to live as God’s children . . . and raise our children to live as God’s children is good stewardship . . . its good use of our resources of time, talent, and money. Scripture articulates this responsibility we have as

parents and teachers, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6.

You are wearing those "I believe stickers" . . . let me ask you "Do you believe?" If you believe will you answer, "I believe?" Do you believe? "I believe!"

We read in Mark 10:13-16 that people were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

You can be like Jesus and welcome a little child in to your arms and raise that child up, not just on your lap but into faith . . . into a relationship with God . . . helping them to trust God . . . leading them to have the same hope you have as a believing Christian that God has had mercy on you . . . that God has forgiven you . . . that God has saved you . . . and God has set you on a course of eternal life. . . and God has done this through God's Son, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Faith like this . . . hope like this is contagious! Don't you know this! That's what I see when I see this picture!

Let me hear you answer if you do believe. Do you believe? I believe.

There are countless opportunities to teach Joey, and all God's children, about God's role in his life. Take food, clothing, and shelter, for example. These are considered the basics of life. Stewardship means teaching Joey that there is nothing, absolutely nothing made by man that doesn't require the raw materials provided by God. Our food comes from the earth. The cotton for making our clothing comes from the earth. The lumber, concrete, and steel that are used in building our homes and offices, our cars and all the "stuff" we accumulate as we journey through life; it all comes from the earth. So where would we be without God? The truth is that we wouldn't even exist. In Psalm 24 we read, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Oh, the beauty of the earth! Give thanks!"

The money we earn to buy our daily bread comes from the time and talent we have been given by God. To live a fulfilling, meaningful, and enriching life, the scriptures give us words to live by; words that form the foundation of our relationship with God and every relationship we have in life.

Words like Faith, Hope, Trust Love . . . **Words like** Encouragement, Honesty, Fairness, Integrity. . . **Words like** Charity, Compassion. Forgiveness, Loyalty . . . **Words like** Gratitude, Dedication, Sacrifice, Honor . . . **Words like** Graciousness, Optimism, Courtesy, Respect . . . **Words like** Ethics, Appreciation, Selflessness, Thanksgiving . . . **Words like** Blessings, Service, Character, Wisdom . . . **Words like** Courage, Responsibility, Confidence, Friendship, Excellence, Fellowship. . . Powerful words . . . states of being

It is in the practice of these words that we discover the real life . . . the Kingdom of God . . . the reality of God . . . the life of faith seeking understanding and knowledge of God and life in God's life. Living on the basis of these words with understanding is good stewardship.

Let me hear you say what I know you want to say. Do you believe? I believe!

Like us, and the generations before us, it is in the meaning of these words, that Joey will have a foundation for Believing in Tomorrow. He will learn that happiness is not found in the tangible things of this world, but in the intangible lessons of God's world.

Sometimes we wish that our children came with an owner's manual . . . one especially designed for each one. Well, they do! It's not a manual of how to be Joseph and Mary's son but a manual of how to be God's child. And we can use that manual to raise up Joey and teach him.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 says: Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Impress these commandments upon your children. You impress them. Not the school, not the government, you. That's what you are here for as a Church. "You who are on the road (on this life journey) must have a code . . . that you can live by . . . so, teach your children well."

So how do you impress these life lessons upon Joey . . . these Stewardship lessons? You do it when you pray together, and teach him to say grace at mealtime. You do it when you take him to Sunday school and participate in the activities of the church. You do it when you teach a child about God, about Jesus, about the Holy Spirit, about the Holy Scripture, about service and about giving. And when you do so you are investing in your child and in all the children of the world.

You do it when you teach him to put part of his allowance in the offering plate, and have a ready answer when he asks, "How much am I supposed to give to God?" The children can make a pledge to God also! Every child of God can stand up and be counted by pledging their love, their allegiance and their support to God in the organization God has set aside to work on his behalf, the Church!

You do it when you take time to listen to him and take great interest in the things he is doing in school. You do it also when you do your best to answer those difficult questions that come with discovering the world he lives in. Questions like, "How high is high? Or, why can't I fly like a bird?"

All of these opportunities we have to impress God, God's love, God's Word upon ourselves and our children . . . to grow as God's children to the full stature of saints, like those we celebrate today . . . to raise our children . . . children in our church . . . children in our community . . . to be God's children! This is an exciting time for this church as we move forward to foster the spiritual development of all God's children!

Your giving to your church, by your financial contribution, your time, your talent, and your effort, will serve God in bringing about God's Kingdom here upon the earth . . . it will serve our community and city by bringing more people to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and increase the good people do as they love their neighbor . . . This will make our community, our city, our nation and world a better place . . . it will serve one another as we encourage and assist one another in growing in faith and in understanding and maturity of faith . . . and you will benefit as you will grow as you participate in the most meaningful work of all . . . service to God in bringing forth God's kingdom, improving the human and world condition and attaining to eternal life.

The good news is this . . . We are God's children . . . And God loves us, one and all . . . And Christ is returning . . . We will discover Christ within and among us . . . and when we see Christ we will see ourselves as we really are . . . which is like him!

And lest we forget, you also do it when you teach Joey that life is a two way street traveled by both parent and child. Colossians 3:20-21 puts it this way: *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

To parents, grandparents, great grandparents, godparents, aunts and uncles, and all adults, I would say, pay special attention to that last one. Be careful not to embitter children. Keep your anger in check by thinking back of when you were a kid. The chances are, you weren't an angel. Be quick to forgive. This, too, is stewardship; the wise use of our resources, in this case our minds, thoughts, hearts, emotions, and behaviors

In short, the way to teach Joey about life is by example, especially where words are concerned. Be quick to offer words of encouragement, not only to Joey, but for everyone you meet. This is stewardship training. Encouraging people is an act of love that can brighten an otherwise gloomy day. "*An anxious heart weighs a person down, but a kind word cheers a person up,*" says the author of Proverbs 22:6.