

# Fragile...Handle With Care

## Baby Dedication

Matthew 18:1-6

*At the same time came the disciples unto 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, Verify I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye 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.*

*And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*

*But who shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

Verse 9

*Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

Thank God for the traditional observation that we have made in many years...baseball, apple pie, and Mother. Our nation has come a long way since it was founded over 230 year ago.

When someone says we have come a long way, that could be taken in many difference senses. There have been major improvements and inventions over the past many years which qualifies our insight into saying we have truly come a long way.

We have improved the roads from the rugged muddy trails of yesterday and now the worst of interstates are so much better.

We have come from the horse and buggy days to the comforts of today's present automobiles.

We have seen the brush arbor days turn into the beautiful cathedrals of today that stand on many corners of our great country.

Many things are so much better today that the comparison is not even fair.

Yet everything that has changed has not been for the betterment of society. Some things need not, and should not have changed, but the corruptness and evil of our generation has created a darkness over our society that we have never faced in any previous generation.

**Notice just a few statistics.**

- Every day four children die of child abuse.
- There are three million reports of child abuse annually.
- Presently there are 1.6 million violent crimes per year in our country. That equates to 1 for every 1,750 people.
- Teens experience the highest rate of violent crimes of any other age group.
- One out of five elderly age 65 or older will experience some type of theft before they die.
- The greatest crime against humanity today is that of homelessness. It has become a serious problem in most states of the Union.

I provide this information, not to be negative, but to provide you an insight into the nature of humanity in our world today. Too often we ignore these things because we feel they don't affect us or our day-to-day activity.

We have become less concerned about each other in spite of the words of our Master who said, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

We have rejected the admonition of the Lord when he tells us we can't love God, whom we haven't seen until we learn to love our brother who we have seen.

Where does that leave us? Just where do we go from here? Simple! We must go to the Word of God because of a sense of urgency so we can understand the direction we must take.

That leads me to the text I read a few moments ago.

It is ironic that when Jesus was confronted by the disciples to identify the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called a little child over to his side.

- A child.
- One of a kind.
- A human being of significance.
- Not a mistake or an oops.
- Not an unwanted fetus or aborted corpse.
- A child who was so important to the Lord that he told the disciples to become like one.

And further, Jesus told them that if they could not bring themselves to become like a child, then they would not qualify for heaven.

Jesus always had a motive and direction in his ministry. When the disciples asked the question about the greatest, they probably were hoping to be included in some type of special recognition.

“John you’re the greatest because you display a beautiful display of love.”

“No, Peter it must be you because you are so bold and stalwart in your character.” “Maybe it would be Matthew for his political position and intellect.”

Which one would it be? Who would wear the crown of the greatest in the kingdom and have the bragging rights from that day forward?

Yet not one of the disciples received even one word of recognition. Kind of tells us something doesn’t it? Jesus said you and I have to be like a child to get any accolades from heaven.

To prove my point, the only time you find heaven standing at attention toward a human being is when that person is repenting. And don’t you think repenting is somewhat a child-like expression? Surrender, submission, giving over to the will of the Father? At that point, all heaven rejoices!

The next time you feel you deserve special recognition from heaven, think about it.

In his discourse of children, Jesus explained his position. He said, "Whosoever receives a little child in my name, it is the same as receiving me." Seems pretty important if you ask me.

That curtain climber, that food slinger, that puddle jumper, that sassy britches, that pompous and proper adolescent, that one we are quick to shove off into oblivious ignominy, that one is so important, Jesus said I have to be like one and to accept one is like accepting the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Oh, there is one more thing Jesus said about these little brats and stinkers and pumpkins. He said if anyone offends one of them that believed in Him, it would be better if you would chain a concrete block around their neck and jump off the Mississippi River bridge into the deepest point. Yes, I know I embellished a little but you get the point.

Anyone who offends one of these children...wow, there is not much chance for survival for that individual.

And that's where I get my point to deliver to you today. That child....Elizabeth....is mighty important to the Lord! I know that our society tells us that we adults are to be such that our children grow up and imitate us. The steps we take are the steps our children take...yet Jesus said it's just the opposite of what you think. Don't offend one of these that you are supposed to be like.

Just how important are these little ones to the Lord? He compared them to the kingdom of heaven, He called them a heritage unto the Lord, He loved them and took time to hold them. He was moved with compassion at their needs. So the bottom line is you and I need to be careful how we treat them.

They tell me that in prison, the criminal that is looked down on the most is the child abuser. Child abusers have a high rate of suicide while in prison.

A child abuser stands to be punished by other criminals at a greater rate than any other type of criminal.

If the worst of society can't stand a child abuser, then how do you think our Lord handles them?

Why do you think Jesus loved the kids? One reason is they followed Him.

Notice Jesus. At one time he had everything...at his burial he had nothing. When they killed him he could have retaliated, but instead he was joyful. He could have caused the cosmos to erupt into flames because of Calvary, but instead he held His peace for people like you and I.

His demeanor was pleasant, not harsh. His approach was real, not fabricated.

Sourpusses don't attract a following. People, including children followed him everywhere he went. Children avoid sourheads and bitter people. Children scampered after this man. Kids sat at his feet and came to the desert to listen to his words. A young boy with a sack lunch did. Kids don't give away their possession to just anyone...that boy did.

Why? Jesus was joyful and cared about everyone, including kids. Jesus embodied a stubborn streak when it came to kids. When the priests and religious leaders demanded He stop the kids from singing in the temple, Jesus responded. "No. If these stop singing, the stones will cry out!"

So Jesus was instructing us on something so important that we may have missed it. Consider the children. Yes, you must discipline them, teach them, love them, and care for them. But don't abuse them. He didn't and neither should we.

Abuse of children is a horrible crime today. I can't imagine a father or mother abusing a child in any way, yet it seems to be the latest craze among whom I call crazy people. Anyone who abuses a child is a coward. A freak of nature. An abnormal reprobate.

A low life. The dregs of society.

Our society lashes out at the abuser and it makes headlines quicker than most other stories as was evident just this week when a judge gave an abuser 60 days in jail. Even the most liberal of liberals cried out for justice. Even though a child may be physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, this is not the worst thing that could happen to a child. Jesus alluded to a crime that I'd like to call spiritual abuse.

Jesus said 'if anyone does anything harmful to a child who believes in me, it would be better for a millstone to be put around his neck and drop them off in the sea.' Note the key word. Believe! There is a spiritual application here that is important.

To spiritually abuse a child is a dastardly deed. Every child has a right to know who Jesus is for themselves. J. Edgar Hoover said, "put a child in Sunday School and you won't have social problems out of him when he is an adult." You may or may not agree with everything Mr. Hoover said or did, but he hit the mark on this statement.

Jesus promised a final sentence on that person who abused one of his little ones.

Elizabeth. Honey, you deserve the right to be in church every week. You ought to have the privilege to see, hear, and observe the worship of God's people.

Baby, you will see enough crime, smell cigarettes, see beer commercials, notice ungodly scenes on billboards, watch fights, and see all kinds of activity that is not right. This unfortunately seems to be the trend of our world.

But, you also deserve the right to see the Godly attributes of holiness, smell the aroma of worship, notice the righteousness of the saints, watch the care given by the church to the unfortunate, and see all the wonderful expressions of love that emanate from the portals of glory on God's people.

To be associated with anything less, is a crime. To not be allowed to experience the spirit of God moving on your life, honey, is criminal. To have to live without hearing your Father read you the Bible, or have your Mother stand beside your bed as you say your nightly prayer, is to be considered a horrible crime against you.

You, honey, are fragile...we have to handle you with care. In your life you will grow up. You will have to take vitamins, medicine, and eat foods that are yucky because someone says it is good for you. But understand, someone cares for you. You are fragile and you need the nourishments that will allow you to grow up to be a strong, healthy young lady some day.

You, honey, are fragile...we have to handle you with care. In this life, you need to grow up on spiritual nourishments. You need the Bible. The Holy Ghost. The fruit of the spirit. The grace of God. It may seem like at times these things taste awful, but understand, Jesus says they are good for you. You are fragile and you need the nourishments of Jesus Christ in order to grow up to be a strong, productive, and healthy young Christian.

Mom, Dad...she's fragile. You have to give her what is necessary for life. You are given the responsibility of holding her, caring for her, looking out for her best interests, and seeing that she becomes what God's blue prints for her allow.

Be careful. Grandma & Grandpa may assist. Family and friends can accompany. But the true test is yours. You give account to God for your children. Parents are the ultimate responsible individuals that God is looking at to insure children are raised properly.

Jesus said to do anything less is a crime. She's important today. She's beautiful this morning. She's a wonderful creation of God. A gift to Mom and Dad. Handle with care!