

July 21, 2014 - "Believe Like a Child"

Tomorrow we begin VBA 2014. Our Renton family has come to First Baptist Church in order to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the kids of this community. We have prayed many months for this week, and we look with anticipation at what God is going to do in the hearts of many children.

Mark 10:13-16, "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, and blessed them."

The manifestation of God's love for us is so clearly and simply revealed, a child can understand and respond to it.

Jesus loves little children, their tender hearts and minds; what a contrast they are to the hardhearted Pharisees and dull-minded Disciples, who continually were, "seeing but not perceiving, hearing but not understanding."

Where a child may easily trust in Jesus, an adult is much more reluctant to respond because they lack the innocent faith and trusting nature of a child. It was God's desire and pleasure to provide His gospel of salvation to trusting, believing, and receptive hearts:

Matthew 18:3-4, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Luke 10:21, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."

Entrance into God's family is revealed to little children.

The word translated "change" in Matthew 18:3, means to turn from sin and self, to God and salvation, this is done in response to God's Spirit leading us to repent and believe in God's Son (**John 3:16; 16:8; Acts 2:21; 2Corinthians 5:17**).

God reveals Himself to all who believe in and trust Him, all who come to Him like little children whose minds and hearts have not been hardened by years of exposure to this fallen and corrupted world.

Most young children trust their father [Okay, let go, I'll catch you]; but as children grow up, they are exposed to a variety of experiences, leaving them more calculated and somewhat distrusting of their fathers [But, what if you don't catch me?].

Satan used a similar ploy, trying to tempt Him in the wilderness:

Matthew 4:5-7, "The devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If You are the Son of God, he said, 'throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.' Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

The Son of God did not need to "test" the Father; He fully trusted Him, as we also must trust Him, by believing and receiving salvation through Christ, like a tenderhearted child.

There is a song that has been around for at least 100 years, and I'm pretty sure that most, if not all of us, have sung its lyrics. The song is, "Jesus Loves the Little Children," and it is one of the first songs many children learn in church.

The words are so simple and so true: "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world: red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world." [In 1991, alternate words were written, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world - *Every color, every race, all are covered by His Grace*, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

There is another favorite song, "Jesus Loves Me," that has been around for 150 years, it expresses God's deep love for children. There are five verses to the song, here are three:

1st "Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong. Refrain: "Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so."

2nd "Jesus loves me this I know, as He loved so long ago, taking children on His knee, saying 'Let them come to Me.' Refrain:

4th "Jesus loves me, He who died, heaven's gate to open wide. He will wash away my sin, let His little child come in. Refrain:

God's love is merciful and it is freely given. Anyone coming to God with a childlike faith, trusting and believing in Jesus Christ, will receive forgiveness for their sins and salvation for their soul, and the God of all Creation will become their Father for all of eternity.

God offers for us to know Him, to trust Him, and even to serve Him; God has proved His love by taking upon Himself our penalty for sin, just as He promised He would do (**Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 8:1; 10:9-10, 13**).

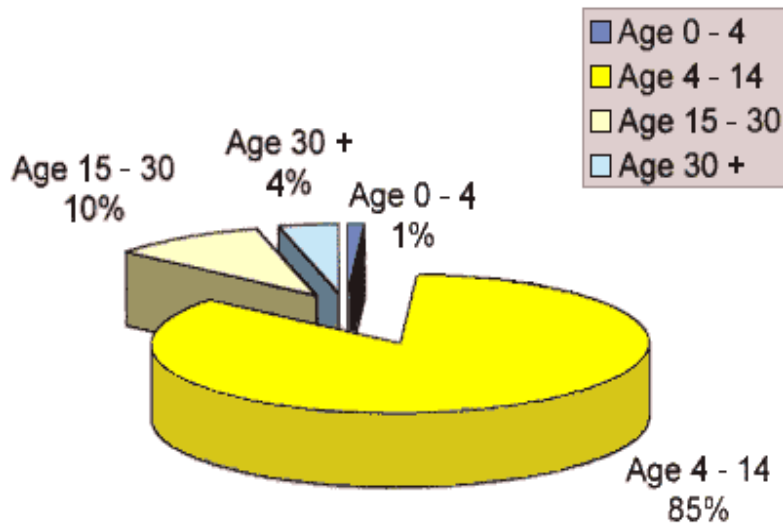
God is loving, merciful, faithful, gracious, compassionate, and forgiving, and He wants to have a personal and intimate relationship with each one of us that starts here on earth and continues in heaven for eternity, with everything in creation being made new.

1Timothy 2:3-4, "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men [everyone] to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

2Peter 3:9, "The Lord [doesn't want] anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

God wants us to believe in Him and to receive His greatest gift. He is a loving and gracious Father who cares for, and abundantly provides for, His children.

The first and foremost gift from God is forgiveness and eternal life, available only through His Son, Jesus Christ (**John 14:6**); you must come to God as a little child - humble, believing and trusting - or you will not enter the kingdom of heaven, you will not become a child of God, for God reveals Himself to little children.



VBA starts tomorrow, the children who come will be told about Jesus Christ all through the week; for many of them it may be the very first time they have been introduced to the God Who loves them so much, that He and laid down His own life for them.

I cited two verses earlier today - **Matthew 18:3**, where Jesus is speaking to His followers saying, *"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,"* and **Luke 10:21**, where Jesus, says, *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."*

God loves His children, and Jesus repeatedly expresses His loving protection and provision for little children.

Matthew 18:5-6, "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

All true believers and followers of Christ who attend the First Baptist Church of Waldport, OR, and Trinity Baptist Church in Renton, WA, sincerely desire that children be brought to Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that nothing will hinder them, and that none of them will be led away from the saving grace of our Lord: VBA is a wonderful opportunity for children to be led to God's Son.

Please, all of you, be in prayer this week for those who are serving the Lord here at VBA, that the Love of God will be shown through our lives.

Please pray for the children who attend, that their hearts might be tender and receptive, and that they will hear and believe the Good News of Jesus Christ - confessing Him as Lord and Savior - receiving God's gift of forgiveness for sin and eternal life, and this is granted by the One and Only True God Who loves them now and forever.