

Who Are the Little Children That Come to Christ?

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In Christ's parables, as well as his interactions with people, he would use certain words and phrases metaphorically. For instance, he used the words "mother" and "brothers" to convey a spiritual lesson about one's priorities in life. He did this because it is human nature for us to give precedence to our physical families over our spiritual family members.

Then one said to him (Christ), "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with you." ⁴⁸But he answered and said to the one who told him, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹And he stretched out his hand toward his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Mt. 12:47-50; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In like manner, Christ used a situation involving little children "metaphorically" to convey how one's attitude can affect their ability to be taught spiritual truths. Most importantly, his statement to the adults was meant to emphasize that human authorities are not to obstruct the relationship between Christ and those whom his Father was giving to him for instruction in spiritual matters (Jn. 6:44; 65).

Then little children were brought to him that he might put his hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and **do not forbid them**: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19:13-14; emphasis added).

So even Christ's disciples were not to interfere and come between Christ and those his Father had given him. As we will see, those who seek to obey God can serve as "helpers" but not as "lords" over God's people.

But Jesus called them (his disciples) to himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶Yet **it shall not be so among you**; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave" (Mt. 20:25-27; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

When speaking to adult members of the early church, the apostle John also used the phrase "little children" metaphorically.

My **little children**, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²And **he himself is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1Jn. 2:1-2; cf. 2:12-13, 18, 28; 1Jn. 3:7, 18; 1Jn. 4:4, 21; emphasis added).

John was reinforcing the importance of being "receptive" and "teachable" as very young children usually are (Mt. 18:4). He also stressed that Christ's actions made it possible for the sins of repentant individuals to be forgiven on an ongoing basis. Consequently, John's comments were meant to encourage the brethren, while keeping them focused on the fact that Christ gave up his life in order to restore their relationship with Almighty God. Therefore they were Christ's servants, and not the property of human religious leaders.

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body (through your conduct)

(1Cor. 6:20; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

You were bought at a price; (therefore) **do not become slaves of men** (spiritually speaking) (1Cor. 7:23; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, **even denying the Lord who bought them...** (2Pet. 2:1a; emphasis added).

One of the primary tactics used by these false preachers is to place themselves in positions of authority over their followers, and then many forms of abuse follow. The worst is preventing the "little children" from having a direct relationship with their real teacher, Jesus Christ. The religious leaders during the time of Christ's earthly ministry did a very effective job of this as do the religious leaders of today's world.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of **hell** as yourselves (hell: Gr. Gehenna; a city garbage dump outside Jerusalem where refuse, the bodies of dead criminals and animals were disposed and burned) (Mt. 23:15; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Jesus Christ referred to his disciples as "little children" (or "little ones", see Mt. 18:6 below), even though they were adults. He did this to emphasize a number of things including the fact they had not yet reached spiritual maturity, which the apostle Paul spoke about in 1Corinthians 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12-13.

Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek me; and as I said to the

Jews, "Where I am going, you cannot come," so now I say to you (Jn.13:33; emphasis added).

Instead of routinely calling the powerful leaders of this present evil age to repentance (Gal. 1:4), Almighty God calls the weak (1Cor. 1:26-28). Jesus Christ referred to these weaker individuals as "babes".



YOU WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE; (THEREFORE) DO NOT BECOME SLAVES TO MEN (SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING).

1 Corinthians 7:23; Ed. notes in parenthesis; emphasis added

At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because **You have** hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have **revealed them to babes**" (Mt. 11:25; emphasis added).

Because early church members were in the process of learning God's truth correctly, they could potentially be deceived by anyone who presented themselves as a religious authority. Christ had a stern warning for such people.

But whoever causes one of these **little ones** who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him (or her) if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Mt. 18:6; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Sadly, many religious authorities claim they understand God's truth and, as a result, millions of people blindly believe and follow them. Consequently, these religious leaders have prevented their followers, who are potentially Christ's "little ones", from having a direct relationship with him. In essence, these religious authorities become "substitute teachers" because they have not encouraged their followers to prayerfully examine God's word for

themselves (2Tim. 2:15). Therefore, any possibility of developing a personal relationship with the only delegated teacher of God's word, becomes impossible.

But you, (the multitudes, and Christ's disciples; cf. vs. 1) do not be called Rabbi (teacher); for one is your teacher (and leader), the Christ, and you are all brethren (Mt. 23:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

And do not be called teachers; for **one is your teacher, the Christ** (Mt. 23:10; emphasis added).

You (Christ's disciples) call me teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am (Jn. 13:13; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This does not mean that we should ignore what human beings are saying in regard to God's word, but the following scripture confirms that each individual is responsible for developing a relationship of trust in their real teacher, Jesus Christ, and not with human beings who may, or may not, understand a particular aspect of God's will.

Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.¹¹ These were more fair-minded (Lit. *noble, well-born*) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and **searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so** (true) (Ac. 17:10-11; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Almighty God delegated the responsibility of "teaching" to Jesus Christ. Therefore, everyone else is just a "helper" in this process, which the apostle Paul confirmed in the book of Philippians, Romans, and Corinthians.

And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. **Hear him!**" (Mk. 9:7; cf. Lk. 9:35; emphasis added).

And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all **for your progress and joy of faith** (Php. 1:25; emphasis added).



AND DO NOT BE CALLED TEACHERS;
FOR **ONE IS YOUR TEACHER, THE
CHRIST.**

Matthew 23:10; emphasis added

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,² that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed **she has been a helper of many and of myself also** (Rom. 16:1-2; emphasis added).

Not that we (Christ's apostles) have dominion (rule) over your faith, but **we are fellow workers for your joy**; for by faith (trust in your real teacher, Jesus Christ) you stand (2Cor. 1:24; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Not only do human religious leaders usurp Christ's authority as "teacher", they also usurp the worship that is to be directed only to Almighty God by applying titles such as "reverend", "father" and "holy father" to themselves. What did Christ say about this, and why do so many followers of these false religious leaders acquiesce?

Do not call anyone on earth your father (in a religious sense); for **One is your Father, He who is in heaven** (Mt. 23:9; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; Holy and **revered is His name** (Ps. 111:10; KJV).

So this world has many “substitute teachers of religion” with titles indicating they should be held in high regard, to the point of bordering on worship. All of these things are contrary to God’s word and, therefore, it should come as no surprise that religious leaders during Christ’s ministry actively challenged his authority to teach by discrediting him at every opportunity. Why? Because they regarded him as a threat to their control of the people, just as religious leaders of this present world do today.

But now you (Jewish religious leaders) seek to kill me (Christ), a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.⁴¹ You do the deeds of your father (the Devil; cf. Jn. 8:44). Then they said to him, **“We were not born of fornication;** we have one Father – God” (Jn. 8:40-41; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Then one was brought to him (Christ) who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and he healed him, so that the mute man both spoke and saw.²³ And all the multitudes were amazed and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it they said, **“This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons”** (Mt. 12:22-24; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Ironically, there are some church organizations that have their ministers “bless the little children” once a year by laying their hands upon them. This is completely contrary to the example of Christ commanding his disciples to allow the little children to come directly to him. Again, it demonstrates the control that human religious leaders want to have over those who follow them. They want people coming to them and

acknowledging their authority; not Christ’s. The truth about why this event occurred in Matthew 19:13-15 is lost on those religious leaders who are blinded by their own position and agenda. Thankfully, those who worship God correctly can see through this falsehood, and understand that Christ was making it abundantly clear that he alone is to be recognized as “the teacher”. Everyone else is merely assisting as they are able, and doing what is expected of them.



HE HAS SENT REDEMPTION TO HIS PEOPLE; HE HAS COMMANDED HIS COVENANT FOREVER; HOLY AND REVERED IS HIS NAME.

Psalms 111:10; KJV

So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (Lk. 17:10).

Unfortunately, the self-serving and aggrandizing attitude of the religious leaders during Christ’s ministry continues in the religious organizations of this world today.

But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.⁶ They love the best places (place of honor) at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, “Rabbi, Rabbi” (Mt. 23:5-7; Ed. note in parentheses).

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward (Mt. 6:5).

As a consequence of the many abuses associated with this world’s religious systems, it

is all the more imperative for true believers to take personal responsibility for their relationship with Almighty God and His son Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:3; Php. 2:12-13). Otherwise, there will be the danger of believing every falsehood that is espoused by so-called leaders of religion.

That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive (Eph. 4:14).

Earlier in this study the question was asked, "why do so many followers of religious organizations acquiesce when their leaders take titles like "father", "holy father", or "reverend"?" The answer is that the majority of this world is deceived, including its religious systems (2Cor. 11:13-15; Rev. 12:9; 17:1-6). Thankfully, when Christ returns to remove every form of falsehood, all "the little children" that remain will have direct access to him (Isa. 2:2-4).

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