

46-13-05-Understanding the Inner Child

inner healing, childhood, parenthood, childishness, childlikeness

1 Cor 13:11

When we face our *childishness*, God helps us embrace *childlikeness*.

### INTRODUCTION:

–Before proceeding in 1 Cor 13:11, let’s review the preceding message:

1. We each have an “*inner child of our past*” affecting us today.
2. For *childlike* spiritual growth, we must confront our *childish* ways.
3. When God’s light exposes *childishness*, we need a “rising” response.
4. We make room for growth by ***katargeo***: “*put childish ways behind*” us.
5. We replace immature behaviors by adopting the ways of love.

–The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of v.11 (“*When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.*”) helps us confront, not abandon, our inner child. It’s part of us! To put the Love Chapter into practice, we need to know and understand our inner child, so that we can draw on its proper function of childlikeness. **HOM.idea.** The 1<sup>st</sup> part of v.11 can guide this self-understanding: “*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.*”

### **I. “When I was a child,” Means God Had a Purpose for Us Being One**

A. God equips infants for rapid growth with *reflexes* that are both a *necessity* and a *divine illustration* [**Breastfeeding** depends on an amazing set of reflexes: a baby’s *rooting, latching, and sucking*, coupled with a complex maternal let-down reflex from *nipple stimulation*; **learning this in advance HS biology** ended my adolescent doubts about *there being a Creator*.]

1. Babyhood needs nurture for growth, and God that need to tell us of an ongoing need. (Babies naturally “crave” *momma’s milk*, but as we become distracted by the world, we must be reminded to “crave” God’s spiritual nurture– 1 Pet 2:2. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.)
2. Babies need parents. (*Maternal instincts* illustrate God’s caring nurture– Isa 66:11a,13a (GW), You will nurse and be satisfied from her comforting breasts.... As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.)

B. God equips children to learn by giving them *curiosity & openness* to new experiences, with *sponge-like ability to soak up* knowledge. (They receptively imitate what they see and hear from parents.)

1. This **receptivity** in youth is the key to learning **and** a key feature of *childlikeness*. (Many Jews rejected Jesus with their *childish*

pride of knowledge— **John 1:12**, “Yet to all who **received** him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become **children** of God.”)

2. **This is why**, in **Mat 18:2-3**, [Jesus] called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and **become like little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

**TRANS:** *Childlike receptivity* was God’s intended attitude for us, but children can be misled, as *God’s first children were in Eden*. **God tells parents in Prov 22:6**, Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. **But if a parent’s poor example leads a receptive child into unloving behavior**, the same happens: “when he is old he will not turn from it.” [**Walt Whitman** had great insight in his poem, “There Was a Child Went forth Every Day”: “His own parents, he that...fathered him and she that... birthed him... they gave this child more of themselves than that, / They gave him afterward every day...they and of them **became part of him**.... / The mother with mild words... / The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, angered, unjust, / The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure, / The family usages, the language, the company.../ These became part of that child who went forth every day.... and will always go forth every day.] **If we’ve inherited immature behaviors** from the a parent whose *inner child* was in control, Jesus can help us. **When we face our childishness, He helps us embrace childlikeness.**

## II. Three Areas Where *Childish* Behaviors Need to Be Overcome

A. **Expressions of the will**— “When I was a child, I *talked* like a child.”

1. This word “*talked*” means “*made sounds, babblings*.” (When babies cry to get *fed* and *changed*, they *learn the power of vocal-cords*.)
2. Soon, the *desires of their will* are expressed—**if they’re denied**, they *revert to crying*, but now *with words!* [**Our granddaughter** kept crying, “*I need to go to the big bed*” (her parents’), and she added “*please*.”]
  - a. In adults, their *crossed wills* and *denied wants* **can have uglier tantrum-vocabulary**, if the *inner child* has taken the wheel.
  - b. *Childish*, “*getting-my-way*” behaviors can be replaced by *the self-composure of childlike trust*. [**Infants** often frantically go after the breast, *until weaned*.]— **Psa 131:1a,2**, My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty.... But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like **a weaned child is my soul within me**.
  - c. **This Psalm’s preface**, “A Song of Ascents,” **hints that we can have a “rising” response**, when God’s light reveals our *unweaned will*.

B. **Emotional attitudes**— “When I was a child, I *thought* like a child...”

1. This word “*thought*” can mean “*had feelings*.” [**An emotion** is defined as “*a state of mind derived from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships*.”]
    - a. **Knowing each other’s feelings** is *relationally crucial* for us, so **God made them visible on faces**. [**6 facial expressions** built-into all babies in every culture: **joy, sadness, fear, anger, surprise** and **disgust**.]
    - b. *Feelings* are good, but they can be *misguided in childish ways*.
  2. **Emotional dysfunctions in past home-life** can be passed on to us.
    - a. If we grew up **where worrying or fretting was normal behavior**, our *inner child* may get *anxious about any* perceived threat. (God’s remedy is again, *a childlike self-composure*— **Psa 37:7**, Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; **do not fret** when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.)
    - b. If **prolonged grief** was how our family handled losses, *common upsets* can bring on *depression*. (*Childish discouragement from life’s ups-and-downs* can be transformed by *childlike, receptive trust* in God— **Psalm 43:5** (HCSB), Why am I so **depressed**? Why this **turmoil** within me? Put your **hope in God**, for I will still **praise Him**, my Savior and my God. — *Counting our blessings stimulates praise!*)
- C. **Immature logic**— “When I was a child, I *reasoned* like a child.”
1. This word “*reasoned*” means “*came to a conclusion*.” (**Little ones** have *little to go on* for drawing conclusions *on their own*.)
  2. It’s a *healthy process* for *babies* to *learn by trial-and-error*, but a *painful process* for *older children* to *learn the hard way* by not following *sound guidance*. (*Childishness insists*, “*I can do it myself!*” while *childlikeness asks*, “*Can you show me how?*”)
  3. Sadly, *children* can be shown *wrong ways* of thinking about life.
    - a. **Some ideas from youth** can *tyrannize* an adult life. (If raised by *perfectionists*, the *inner child* **never “measures up;**” if parents were *too indulgent*, the *inner child* **has to get its will and way**.)
    - b. *Childlike receptivity* allows God to *re-Parent* us by *bestowing mature, sound logic*— **Psa 111:10a**, The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

## **CONCLUSION:**

—This message merely scratches the surface. We’ll learn more about our *inner child’s assets* and *liabilities* in exploring the Love Chapter. But hold on to this idea: **When we face our childishness, God helps us embrace a childlikeness** that makes us *eager to learn how to love*.