

Mark 10:13-16 (NIV)

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

14 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.

15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

41-10-03-SoulShift-2 Slave to Child

servanthood, children, family, fatherhood, Lent

Mark 10:13-16

True discipleship and servanthood are part of a family relationship.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading)

–**Title: SoulShift #2: Slave to Child.** I realize some won't need this sermon. You don't relate to God with a slave mentality, but with a child mentality. If so, this talk only reinforces what you're already living.

–In the **Scripture reading**, “*the disciples rebuked*” those bringing children to Jesus for Him to bless. Jesus used this as a chance to talk about true discipleship. He said in v.14-15, “*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.*”

–Jesus wanted to teach that a child is the model for being a disciple.

HOM.idea. BUT, we can easily mistake a slave mentality for discipleship. That's why it's important first to realize that

I. We Must Not Base Our Status with God on Performance

- A. Before this episode, Jesus addressed a similar situation by setting forth a child as the model– **Mat 18:1-4** (NIV), At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He 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. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
- B. The key phrase here is “change and become like little children”– They'd followed Jesus for 2 whole years as disciples, but He said they still needed to “change” [NKJV uses the word “**converted**”].
- C. They needed to be “**converted**” from looking at discipleship as a status symbol, because that only produces a slave mentality...
 1. “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Slaves measure their status based on performance: “*I outdid the other slaves today. I served so well, I deserve special recognition.*” (Jesus cuts off that argument in Luke 17:10, “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” (No special recognition there at all!))
 2. Christ's answer to “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” points to another status—the status of a child. Slaves think in

terms of *performance*, but a child in terms of *relationship*.

TRANS: You can't find fulfilment in a *slave mentality*, because you'll always be a *slave to others' expectations about performance*. The heart of God is a *Father's heart*. When He expects His children to *serve*, we will always find in Him the *greatest example of servanthood*.

II. We Must See Servanthood in the Proper Perspective

A. God is *Creator*. His ongoing work in creation includes us, who are *images of Him*. (Scripture gives *that* status to no other creature!)

1. we say, "He's the spitting image of his dad". (When God made us "in the image of God," He was declaring our status as His children.)
2. The terminology "image and likeness" is *offspring language*— Gen 5:3. When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. (Scripture explains Scripture!)

B. God gave us, His offspring, creative work for us to do: *first*, to procreate more images of Him, but also to *serve in the ongoing needs of creation*. In Genesis, He told us:

1. To rule over everything (that's *servant leadership*).
2. To name things, starting with animals (that's *servanthood in language, organization, communication, and science*).
3. To tend and cultivate the earth (that's *serving God in the realm of ecology, agriculture and creativity*).

C. Because we're made in God's image, *servanthood* fulfills us as *human beings*, AND serving will be *our ongoing joy and privilege in eternity*— Rev 22:3, No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

TRANS: That's the *proper perspective*: We're *servants*, because we're the *children of the Servant God*. **True discipleship and servanthood are part of a family relationship**. The *wrong perspective* is to imagine that our status with God is *based on service (what we do)* rather than *on relationship (who we are)*. We must avoid the *slave mentality*....

III. We Must Find Our True Selves as Children of the Father

A. Both the Prodigal Son and his brother failed to see this [The story is in Luke 15: The younger of a man's two sons demands his inheritance early, and wastes it all partying. Then, in severe poverty, he realizes his error and

returns home. When his father celebrates his return, his brother is totally upset.]

1. In this story, the younger son saw his return to his father with a slave mentality—Luke 15:17-19 (ESV), But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. **Treat me as one of your hired servants.**"' (His *recognition of the gravity of his sin* was right, but it *blinded him* to a *true vision of who he was and who his father was*).
 2. His *angry older brother was blind, too*. His father entreated him to *join the celebration of his brother's return— Luke 15:29-30* (ESV), but he answered his father, 'Look, **these many years I have served you**, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' (His vision also was dominated by a *slave mentality*. He saw his father as a *taskmaster* and related to him based on *performance*.)
- B. What's the father's response? (meant to *illustrate God's response*)
1. For the wayward son, *we* might punish him by stipulating harsh conditions for coming back, **BUT NO— v. 20**, ...his father saw him and was **filled with compassion** for him; he ran to his son, **threw his arms around him** and **kissed him**. (Far from treating him like a *servant*, he *welcomed him back* for exactly *who he was: his son, his child*.)
 2. And the father's appeal to the disgruntled son was also *solicitous and gentle— v.31-32*, 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'
- C. Both sons were lost in this story—lost in a slave mentality.
1. Only the father was seeing straight, relating to them *not as a taskmaster*, but as *the epitome of loving, caring fatherhood*.
 2. His children needed to learn that the *family relationship is the foundation*, and all the *serving* that follows is a *family activity*.

CONCLUSION:

God wants *children* not *slaves*. His children *will find joy and fulfilment by serving* "in the kingdom" for all eternity, because **true discipleship and servanthood are part of a family relationship**. If some of us need this "**soul shift** from "Slave to Child, let's ask God our Father to help us "change and become like little children."