

Mary as a child of God

Mary was but a child when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her. When she responded, she said "Yes" and her "Yes" was unconditional-- no excuses, no rationalizing, no weighing of the pros and cons. She trusted God so completely to take care of her and to give her whatever she needed to do the great work that had been assigned to her. She trusted God with a "childlike faith." She was a child of God.

Like any child, she had a question, but could she have possibly understood the answer the Angel Gabriel gave her any better than the news he announced to her? She did not have knowledge, but she had faith and trust in God, and she loved God.

How many times are we told in the Gospel that it is childlike faith that will save us and that only those with childlike faith will enter the kingdom of God.

[Mat 18:1] At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

[Mat 18:2] He called a child over, placed it in their midst,

[Mat 18:3] and said, "Amen, I say to you, **unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

[Mat 18:4] Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

[Mark 10:13] And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

[Mark 10:14] When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

[Mark 10:15] Amen, I say to you, **whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.**"

[Mark 10:16] Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

[Luke 18:14] I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

[Luke 18:15] People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them, and when the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.

[Luke 18:16] Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

[Luke 18:17] **Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.**"

When someone is saved by a miracle performed by Jesus, it is because of his or her childlike faith, and Jesus almost always addresses them as a father would a child:

[Mat 9:2] And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, *child*, your sins are forgiven."

[Mat 9:20-22] A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak.

She said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured."

Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you." And from that hour the woman was cured.

[Mark 2:3-5] They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "*Child*, your sins are forgiven."

[Mark 5:25-27 & 31-34] There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak.

But his disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it.

The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.

He said to her, "*Daughter*, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

Those who were cured in these stories were not children. They were adults. Yet, Jesus saw their childlike faith and performed the miracle.

We hear that we are "children of God." What characteristics of a child make him more likely to get to Heaven than an adult?

A child loves completely without distinction. Race, creed and political affiliation mean nothing to him. He does not care if a person is beautiful, important or wears pretty clothes. Those things are irrelevant.

When you do something that hurts a small child, if you say a heartfelt, "I'm sorry," and give him a hug, he forgives you completely and doesn't hold it against you or try to figure out how to get even.

A child will ask questions about things he does not understand, but when we give him a superficial answer knowing that his mind could never comprehend the complete picture, he is satisfied to accept that answer and trust us.

A child allows himself to be comforted and loved, throwing open his arms wide to accept and return as many hugs as his Father will give him.. How many adults will not allow God to help them—to love them? How many do not understand how loved they are? How many keep their arms crossed in front of them rather than reaching out to God?

A toddler cannot stand well on his own. A child is not self-reliant. Neither are adults. Some just don't realize it.

How often have we seen a little child sobbing because he is sorry for something he has done wrong even if no real harm came of it. Sometimes he doesn't even realize what he did was wrong or why it was wrong. All he senses is that he did something that was not pleasing to his parents. He is sorry, primarily, because he loves his Father and Mother and wants to please them.

Unconditional love, complete trust, overwhelming faith, total forgiveness, and reliance on a stronger force: Aren't these the key elements of a good relationship with God?

What is childlike faith? Childlike faith is complete trust. It is love. It is waking up in the morning and being delighted at a sunrise and knowing it was sent by your loving Father to delight you. It is saying out loud, "Thank you Father!" It is knowing that when you suffer, he suffers with you, and that when you cry, he will find ways to comfort you if you let Him. It is feeling confident enough to enter the day knowing that his steps are matching yours and feeling loved enough to know that when you lay your head down at night, he watches over you. It is understanding that God has a sense of humor and that if you think that you are just too big for your britches, you can expect to be taught a little lesson. If you respond to a gentle correction, you know there is no need for more severe measures. It is allowing yourself to be delighted with all of the beauty He creates and to recognize beauty in all the people around you, even those who are not beautiful by human standards. It is like when you were a child, you found your father's sunglasses and you put them on and you saw everything through the same colored lenses that He did. It was a different world, wasn't it? A childlike faith allows us to see good more clearly and to be amazed at life's simple pleasures whether you are 10 or 100.

Do you have a childlike faith? If not, why not?

In the face of so much cynicism, sarcasm and negativism, not to mention anti-Christian media assaults, it is not easy to maintain a childlike faith today.

How does one gain a child like faith?

How does an adult learn to trust God with his or her life?

Do you think having a childlike faith would make a difference in your life?

We are children of God, but do we have childlike faith or do we insist on having knowledge and then faith if the knowledge or the evidence supports it? Mary is called the New Eve. What was the original Eve's problem? She did not have childlike faith! Rather, she wanted knowledge. She had every reason to believe in God and to trust Him. He had given her and Adam a perfect world. Yet, she wanted knowledge. She chose not to rely on God.

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"

The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;

it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'"

But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die!

No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad."

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

When they heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:1-8

Then the LORD God said: "See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad! Therefore, he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever." Genesis 3:22

What is a sin? It is basically a mistake that leads you away from God. Eve's mistake was believing that knowledge would equip her to be Godlike and that then she could survive independent of God. The problem with Eve's plan, however, is that the Serpent (the Devil/evil) can only be opposed by a force stronger than it. God is the only force strong enough to oppose evil. The mistake we make today is following Eve's example and believing that we can handle life's temptations and struggles on our own. Too often, we only turn to God in our worst moments. We don't rely on him for the little things and all the intermediate struggles, which we think we should be able to handle. If, however, we had trusted Him and relied on him, like a child, from the beginning, how many of those worst case scenarios might never develop?

We must reject that model and embrace the model of childlike faith embodied in Mary. With humility, we must acknowledge that we are not self-reliant. We must turn to our Father like Mary did with our faces uplifted, and trust Him to lead us on the road to holiness.

It is said that rationalization is the Devil's best friend. Eve underwent a bit of rationalization. It went like this:

“Hmmm, the Serpent has a point. I know this tree produces good fruit. It sure looks good, and, well, I would like to be a little smarter. That couldn't hurt anything, could it. Will I die? Surely not! God loves me. He wouldn't do anything to me. I'll just have a little bite.”

Eve chose knowledge over faith. She didn't understand the whole picture, just as we can never be fully certain of the consequences of our acts. She should have trusted God and followed his guidance. Does that mean that we need to have faith without seeking understanding? No. But sometimes we need to have faith without complete understanding. We also need to distinguish between seeking an understanding and other destructive forms of thought such as rationalization.

When faced with inconvenient commandments (like thou shall not commit adultery) or other Bible messages that we don't quite like or that clearly are meant for someone else, do we rationalize why those teachings do not apply to “us” or do we trust what God has told us on the subject and follow His fatherly guidance?

Jesus told the rich young man that in order to gain the kingdom of heaven one must follow all the commandments and then, in addition, sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor.

Does this apply to you? If not, why not?

If it does apply to you, are you complying? If not, why not?

If when you die and get to the Pearly Gates, St. Peter says, “I'm sorry. You cannot enter. You did not sell your possessions and give the money to the poor.” Will you be surprised? Why?

Did anyone ever tell you the road to holiness would be easy?

Mary was not given an easy path to Heaven. Jesus did not have an easy path. None of the Apostles lives ended up grandly. God loved Mary, Jesus and the Apostles, yet they were not spared from suffering,

Do you believe the road to heaven is an easy one?

Does it require sacrifice? If so, what kind of sacrifice does it require?

Even if your journey is not easy, do you think you can maintain the childlike faith and trust that will allow you to enter the kingdom of Heaven?