



Keeping a Childlike Faith

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Mark 10:15).

The following sketch shows how a Christian lives in childlike faith while experiencing the world in different stages of life. Readers may wear costumes or add props appropriate to the age group they are representing. Consider asking an organist, pianist or other musician to help lead the singing.

Toddler: How old am I? I’m three! My mommy loves me, my daddy loves me ... and I have a cat and I like apples and toast and juice and I have my own room! We fold our hands to pray — Mommy showed me how — and we close our eyes and say “Five little angels around my bed: one at the foot, one at the head. One to sing, one to pray, and one to chase my fears away. Amen.” Then she kisses me and says “Jesus loves you, sweetheart.” I know Jesus loves me, He loves everybody!

Narrator: When you’re a baby, everyone holds you, feeds you, takes care of you, and rejoices when you learn something new. Little ones learn something new every day, and they simply accept how good and caring Jesus is! So now we sing with the faith of a child:

All: Jesus loves me! This I know, For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong; They are weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

LSB 588

School Age: This has been a fun year in school. I’m almost done with third grade and next year I’ll be a fourth-grader! This year I had a lot of homework. I spent a lot of time riding my bike, and I have a favorite TV show that has kids my age in it. It’s really cool — I never miss it. I come home right after school and have my snack and watch my show. Then we have supper, Daddy reads a devotion, and then we pray. My older sister and I go to Sunday school. We learned many exciting stories from the Bible. My teacher’s favorite stories were the ones about Jesus. She cried when she told us how He died because every time she thinks about it, she remembers how much Jesus loves her. Then she got very excited when she told us that Jesus rose from the dead. My teacher made us sing that up-and-down song about (*singing*) Hallelu-Hallelu-Hallelu-Hallelujah-Praaaaaaise-yeeeeee-the-Loooooord. She was so happy about Easter!

Narrator: In those young years of elementary school, the children are small in a world of tall adults who make decisions for them. Children trust parents and teachers to tell the truth, to be kind and fair, and to explain how the world works. When attending church and hearing the Bible are part of a child’s life, the child accepts Jesus as He is presented in Scripture: One who came to be the Savior of *all people* in the world. So now we sing:

All: Jesus loves the little children; all the children of the world!
Every child in every land, Jesus holds them in His hand.
Jesus loves the little children of the world!

Jesus died for all the children; all the children of the world!
Every child in every land, Jesus holds them in His hand.
Jesus died for all the children of the world!

Teenager: Um ... hey. You want me to talk? Why? What do you want to know? Um. I'm fine, I guess. You know, school and all. What do I like to do? Um, I don't know. Well, I guess I like music, and my friends, and ... well, I play one sport pretty well but that was in the fall, so, you know, I'm not playing right now. What's important? My friends, definitely, they are the best. My family, yeah, we do a lot together — mom and dad and my younger sister and my older brother. We do church on Sundays, which is good — yeah, it's good and I have some really close friends, well, two really close friends there. We have Bible study before church, but I sit with my family in church. I get it better now that I'm older. I used to be bored, but now I kind of get it, and I think it's cool how we pray for everything that's happening in the world. Favorite songs? The ones I know best, I guess. Um ... *Take My Hand and Lead Me* is a good one, so is *The Lamb* and *You Are My All in All*. Yeah, my faith is important, more than ever. I can see how when I'm older I'll want to bring my own family to church one day.

Narrator: How can you keep a childlike faith when it's so important for a teenager to do *nothing that appears childlike*? Yet even teenagers remember what they learned as children and are now learning to apply Jesus' teachings to their own lives. In Holy Baptism, they were made children of God, and now they are maturing as disciples of the Lord. So even teenagers love the thought behind this hymn:

All: Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow His example pure,
Through a world that would deceive us And to sin our spirits lure.
Onward in His footsteps treading, Pilgrims here, our home above,
Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where You guide.

LSB 685, LW 381

Young Adult: I don't know if I've ever felt more alone, even though I see everyone at work and I still see my family every weekend. How can you have over 300 Facebook friends and say you're lonely? I know it doesn't make sense because I'm always busy, but I just don't know where it's all leading yet. I hope the pieces of the puzzle will come together in the next few years, but right now I'm just charging ahead and doing my best. I have two nieces and I'm a godmother for one of them. I grew up in my parents' church, and I went mostly to one Lutheran church in college. When I came back, I went to church a lot with my friends, so I've kind of gotten around and seen other churches. For whatever reason, I'm back here though. My church is a home for me, a place I know, and even though most people here have little kids or are older I still like it best here.

I don't think I've ever prayed so much in my life — I mean, I prayed before and all, but now I'm praying for my future and for help to get me through problems and I'm praying for my friends. I'm leaning on God, and I know I'm not alone. I know He's always there for me.

Narrator: It seems like a childlike faith grows, doesn't it? What started as a small seed has grown a small trunk, branches and is beginning to leaf out and flower. This is the miracle of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word. It is written in Isaiah 55:11-12a: *"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace."* So along with young adults, who see the Lord going before them into the future, we sing with them:

All: With the Lord begin your task; Jesus will direct it.
For His aid and counsel ask; Jesus will perfect it.
Ev'ry morn with Jesus rise, And when day is ended,
In His name then close your eyes; Be to him commended.

Let each day begin with prayer, Praise, and adoration.
On the Lord cast ev'ry care; He is your salvation.
Morning, evening, and at night Jesus will be near you,
Save you from the tempter's might, With his presence cheer you.

LSB 869, LW 483

Parent: I'm a parent of two children in grade school. Let every day begin with prayer! I look in the mirror and I'm starting to look like my mother. I sound like her too. I never knew how much it took to keep a household going and IT NEVER ENDS: laundry, dishes, meals, cleaning, driving, keeping track of the kids' assignments, seeing friends from church, spending time with my husband. I'm surprised I've never run out of gas in the car because I get so distracted, I sometimes don't even look. It's exhausting, but it's a "thankful exhausted," if you know what I mean. My family means so much to me, and now I'm the one teaching my kids how to pray. I don't know how people live without faith in Christ. After all, He forgives us so we learn how to forgive other people. I never knew how important that would be in my marriage and at work. It just seems ... well, being a Christian means living in God's grace. When I'm in church the hymns, the liturgy, the prayers all speak to me and I know I'm part of God's people in Christ for all time. I'm a daughter, a wife, a mom, a witness at work, and at church I receive His grace that carries me through it all.

Narrator: Remember the days of being distracted, and all your energy was used up, and you were wishing for a nap or bedtime so you wouldn't be in demand by everyone? Even in those years, the Lord is going ahead of you preparing the way. His angels protect you in traffic, His love supports you when you feel unappreciated, our strength is renewed in the Word and in Holy Communion. Many parents, wishing the world could slow down a bit, appreciate this next hymn:

All: Be still, my soul; The Lord is on your side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;

In ev'ry change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

LSB 752, LW 510

Empty Nesters: Well, it's just us, but we're hanging in there! Our son lives in another state and has a steady job. Unfortunately his marriage didn't last, but he seems to be managing okay and we hear from him quite a bit. Our daughter is married and has two children and we see them every week and sometimes get the grandkids. But this is a different phase for us: we're both back to work. Well, I'm back to working again. My husband always did. Saving for retirement, you know. We lost my husband's dad last year from ALS. It was hard for all of us, especially the kids and grandkids, because Grandpa was a lot of fun, but it was like the disease took him away even before he died. We see so much good going on at church so we're very involved there. We like to support all the children's programs, and we hope our church grows and is a place for families, or at least a place that meets their needs like the church did for us. We love our pastor and his sermons and we need the truth of God's Word in this world more than ever. Taking care of our parents, watching our adult children face the world, it's all so scary. But then we see the joy in our grandchildren's eyes and we have hope. That childlike faith is so amazing, so pure. Those kids have no idea how glad we are that they're baptized and learning to pray just as we did when we were children.

Narrator: Through every season of life, we grow in our understanding of how the Lord is our strength and forgiveness. We see more clearly how the Lord guided and helped us, and we desire to give back to the Lord and to the Church that brought us where we are today. We trust in Jesus Christ who keeps us safe year after year as we sing:

All: Jesus, Savior, pilot me Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll, Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal.
Chart and compass come from Thee. Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

LSB 715, LW 513

Senior: I'm wearing purple, and I'm proud of it! And I love Jesus and there's no two ways about that! I have time like I never had time before, and yet it seems like I don't because I keep busy. Sometimes I forget what time it is, and take a nap when I should be doing something, but I can do that at this point in my life! I have such hope for the children, such hope for the future. Oh, I know the news is terrible and kids are forced to grow up so much faster than before, but I believe it's always been that way. The children in Jesus' day had to worry about food and Roman soldiers and thieves and angry neighbors, yet Jesus took time to welcome them. In Luke 18 He stood a child in the midst of adults and He said, *"Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will*

never enter it.” Childlike faith. I guess since I’ve lived this long, I get to go back to having a childlike faith. I just trust Him.

think about heaven, how I’m forgiven, and I pray that my whole life gives glory to God. He becomes greater, I become less. More than ever, I pray with confidence that He hears me and that He loves me. That’s it: Jesus loves me: it’s the most important thing I ever learned here on earth.

Narrator: Who knew we would see what we’ve seen in our days—so much change! But through it all, God remains faithful. He has called us together to be His beloved Church, giving abundant mercy to all who believe in His Son. We are His through baptism into Christ, and we remain God’s children through life, death, and into eternity, as we sing:

All: Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea.
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

LSB 878, LW 490

All Scripture references are from the ESV.