



Childlike

GIRLS ARE USUALLY EAGER TO GROW UP. We want to be mature, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. We learn quickly how to hide our ignorance. We greatly dread appearing naive. Sure, we still want to have fun; we don't want heavy responsibilities; but we do want those around us to notice that we are maturing young ladies!

Mark
10:13-16

Jesus said if we want to enter into His kingdom, we must become as little children. But wait a minute, we protest – we're trying to be grown-up! We may already be an adult age. Are we supposed to revert to childhood? No. That's not what God is asking. He doesn't want *childishness*, but *childlikeness*. He doesn't want immaturity, but simplicity.

I love observing children. They are, for the most part, so innocent. They are very trusting and assume that everything will happen as it should. They worry very little, particularly if an adult reassures them. They forgive quickly and are sensitive to others' feelings. They share easily. They feel deeply. They are very believing and very naive. We consider all this and think, *God wants me to be like that? That's the opposite of what I want to be! I want to be an intelligent, cultivated, mature woman. I want to be done with childhood.*

But wait, all of those qualities shouldn't be relegated to childhood. What about trusting and not worrying, forgiving and being sensitive, sharing, feeling deeply? These are characteristics we can't afford to grow out of.

God certainly does want us to grow into mature womanhood. He doesn't want us to be petulant and willful or

ignorant of right and wrong as children can be. He wants us to grow out of these immaturities and to grow more and more in graces such as simplicity, trust, and sensitivity.

God doesn't want us to pretend to be sophisticated and intelligent. He doesn't want us to act overconfident and worldly-wise. He wants us to be naive of evil and mistrust. He wants us to be simple in our trust for Him. He wants us to stop trying to figure everything out and leave it to His more-than-capable hands. He wants us to be as children in that we have a simple, implicit faith that He is our Father and will provide everything we need.

Dear God, I want to grow into godly maturity. I've been impatient to put childhood behind me. Lord, show me what to keep and what to put away. Help me grow into a godly woman. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Show Me, Lord

AS MOST GIRLS DO, I had dreams of marriage. But I also had dreams of being single. As I matured, I toyed with both ideas. Although I didn't realize it then, I enjoyed feeling as though it were my decision. I felt somewhat secure in the knowledge that it was up to me to accept or reject any young man who noticed me. I felt confident in my ability to know what kind of man I needed, or if I even needed one.

Psalm
25:4-14

One dark night I realized things were not working out according to my plans. Suddenly and harshly I came face to face with the realization that it was not my choice. It was not up to me to list the pros and cons of marriage

versus singlehood. Even more frightening was the realization that if God wanted me to marry, I couldn't choose the man. God had a plan for my life. It was up to me to accept His plan. If I didn't give up my right to choose, I couldn't be in His will. It was that simple.

I felt I couldn't give up, though. I wanted to be in control. I felt vulnerable, giving up my right to choose. What if God wanted me to marry, and I had a bad marriage? What if He didn't want me to marry, and I wished someday that I had? I just couldn't seem to let go of that very important part of my life.

The Lord created me. He knows me better than I know myself. He knows what I need. He has a plan. His plan was designed with my good in mind. In a sense I knew that, yet I was afraid. I struggled, prayed, and cried. That night, at midnight, I simply gave up and gave Him my right to choose.

He forgave me for holding out on Him for so long. He gently sorted out my tangled feelings and emotions. He assured me that He did have a plan for my life. He told me He wouldn't ask me to marry if it wouldn't be for my good. He told me He wouldn't ask me to be single unless He had a purpose. He told me He wouldn't ask me to marry a man I could not love and respect. I trusted Him.

God has not let me down. Little by little He reveals to me His plan for my life. It is not frightening. It is not too hard. His plans for me are better than any of my dreams had been. I can continue to look forward with expectation and not with dread to the unfolding of His will in my life.

Dear God, I'm going to stop trying to run things my way. I only experience confusion and turmoil. I'm going to stop worrying about my future and give it all into Your hands. You are the One who knows what I really need. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Free to Live

DO YOU REMEMBER FEELING RESTRICTED as a child? Your parents withheld from you things you wanted to have or do. Maybe you felt in bondage to their authority. You looked forward to growing up and escaping that. It seemed to you that if you could escape authority, life would be perfect, and you would be truly happy because you could do what you wanted. I remember thinking that way.

**Romans
8:1-17**

The problem was, as I matured, I encountered more restrictions: church standards, state laws, curfews . . . and on it goes. Interestingly, the more one struggles against these, the more binding they become.

The misconceptions we had as children can easily carry into the teen years and beyond. We may continue saying to ourselves, *If only I didn't have to obey so many rules. If I could do what I wanted, I'd be happy.* We may picture God as a restrictive killjoy, someone who wants only to make our lives boring and miserable.

If we do think that way, we've got it all wrong! The truth is totally the opposite. God sent His Son to free us and to give us joy.

Think about it honestly. If you could go and do whatever you felt like doing, with no restrictions, what would it be like? You could tell someone off, be irresponsible, hurt someone, give in to excesses, yield to temptations . . . It would be the life! Would it really?

Giving in to your own desires brings *bondage*, not happiness. There is absolutely no freedom in sin. You are a slave to the things your mind, body, and emotions tell you to do. Not only that, there will be reaping and eternal consequences.

True freedom is absolute denial of self. The flesh says, "Do this." With God's divine enablement, you can say, "No." That's freedom. God has freed us from sin, death, and ourselves. Let's not foolishly complain about our "restrictions," but rejoice in our freedom!

A challenge: If you've been feeling unhappy and restricted, sit down with pen and paper. Decide exactly what you would do if you had the freedom you wish for. Then write what bondage would result.

Dear God, thank You for the absolute freedom I can have in You. Just as a child is protected by his parents, I am protected by You. It is not bondage, but freedom. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Our Choice

DISCOURAGEMENT OVERWHELMED ME. In a moment of weakness, I had listened to some ungodly music. It was a habit I had overcome—or thought I had. I was frustrated with myself. I didn't want to live that way. I wondered why God made me able to choose. He could prevent me from sinning. He could have made me so that I had no choice but to live right. He could have, but He didn't. God has a reason for everything He does. I began to wonder why He gave man the power to choose.

Isaiah
63:17-19;
64:5, 6, 8, 9

He gives us the choice because He is fair and just. He gives us the choice because He wants us to serve Him voluntarily. He could have made us to obey Him mechanically. He could have made us like the birds and animals who praise Him without conscious thought or effort. But He didn't. God created humans with a mind, a conscience,