

There are two kinds of people in this world, people who listen to kids, and people who don't. I know that this sounds a bit narrow viewed but please bare with me a bit. We were all kids once. We all know what it feels like to be ignored, counted out, or treated as though we simply don't understand. I have held opinions on matters for as long as I can remember but for a large portion of that time, they were discounted because I was "just a kid". I spend a lot of time around children and you can usually tell which ones are listened to and which ones aren't. Some kids are so desperate for attention that they do extreme things to get heard. I think that when we stop and listen to them once in a while, we can tap into simple truths that can make our lives much happier. Don't get me wrong. I am not an advocate of child centered parenting where every decision is based upon making the child happy. (Although my children might disagree; I have been accused before of being seemingly hypnotized by a child's plea for fun.) Neither do I buy into the modern philosophies that avoid necessary correction for fear of stifling creative growth. I am a believer in participative involvement and proactive training for children. This requires interaction. We all know that communication requires listening to what people have to say. I believe that children deserve our appropriate respect and our ear, after all, there is a lot of wisdom hidden beneath that dirty ball cap.

By way of research for this article, I interviewed an eight year old, my daughter Aubrielle. (Keep reading if you want to be happy.) I asked her some of the same questions that I could be asking you. Her responses demonstrated remarkable wisdom in their simplicity and while they may be typical responses among eight year olds, they are light years ahead (or should I say behind) of most adults I talk to.

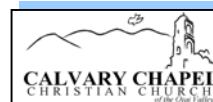
I started off by asking, "What do you think about world peace?" Her response, "I like peace". (How about you?) What do you think about families? I continued. Her reply, "Families should stick together". Wow! If only more adults kept it this simple. I am excited by her answers and continue forward. What do you think of the Ojai Valley? I asked. "Ojai Valley is a good place to live. There are a lot of nice people", she observed. Knowing I was onto to something here I began to expand my inquiry. "Do you have any advice for teenagers?" I asked. "Teenagers should help the younger ones." (Think about the implications here.) "Do you have any advice for grandparents?" "Grandparents shouldn't go too far from their grandchildren." "Do you have advice for parents?" "Love your children." "What about advice for other kids?" "Obey your parents". "Do you have any advice for pastors?" "Have patience" she encouraged. "Do you have any advice for the president?" "Have self control", she retorted. When I later showed Aubrielle's responses to my wife she was as fascinated as I was. She was concerned that you wouldn't believe that these responses were not coerced.

They weren't. She also was afraid that I was testing your patience by writing about children again. Let me assure you that I am not writing about children. I am putting your patience to the test in a much more personal way. I am writing about you. I believe the message here is for you, not the child in your life. You need to simplify the things in your life that you overcomplicate.

The Bible teaches of a childlike faith in Jesus, a simple belief and trust in the Savior of the World. Jesus tells parables of the folly of questioning the goodness of God. He saves some of His stern warnings for pseudo-intellectuals who stumble the faith of trusting children. Remember back to when you were eight, your logic was simpler, your knowledge limited, and just possibly, your insights were wiser. For some, your priorities were clearer. Did you believe in Jesus as a child? Believe Him today. Your priorities will return to you, the ones that you lost along the way. I am not saying that children always know what is best, surely that is not true, or we would be living on cookies at amusement parks. But then again, maybe an extra cookie or ride could do you a bit of good.

Finally, I asked Aubrielle two closing questions. "What do you think about church?" "Church is a good place to be." (See you Sunday.) "What do you think about Jesus?" I concluded. "Jesus is good in every way." (Bring your Bible.) Anything else you need to know? Just ask an eight year old who believes in Jesus.

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