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*Introduction:*

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I love children. I guess that is why, at almost 60, on most weekends you can find me camping, or hiking, or bowling with the boyscouts.

I will never forget the day my daughter was born. Cindy was born in a time when the philosophy of hospital maternity wards was to shield the newborn from any contact with humans outside of the mother and the maternity ward personnel. I was not allowed to touch my daughter until she was out of the hospital building and in our car for the ride home. So the first time I saw my daughter she was in an incubator. Now I am always goofing off and it was no different back in those days. As the nurse stood there next to the incubator watching me look at my daughter for the first time, I don't know why, but I said, "Look, it has teeth." The nurse promptly slapped me. Now I was not trying to insult anyone, I guess I was only trying to relieve the pressure of sitting in that waiting room for hours, nervously wondering if my wife and my newborn daughter were going to be ok. It was a great relief to know my wife was ok, and to see my healthy daughter for the first time. The slap from the nurse brought me back to reality and the process of learning to be a good father was before me. I had no idea how to do that, but I had one thing going for me on this new endeavor and that was the fact that I was a Christian.

There is nothing in the world like the proper relationship between a father or mother and their children. Notice I said proper relationship. Learning the balance of love and discipline is one of the most difficult tasks to master. The perfect example of this relationship is seen in Jesus' relationship with the Heavenly Father. A proper balance of love and discipline is the picture John wanted his readers to see as the model for our relationship with God.

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*Body:*

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### **What is a child?**

John talked a lot about the topic of children in his letters especially in 1 John 3. Let's see what we can learn from his letter.

#### 1 John 3 (NIV)

[3:1] How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called **children** of God! (John calls the followers of Jesus children of God. He communicates to us that this title is given to believers as a lavish gift from God. Lavish comes from a French word that means a downpour of rain, to wash. It is used to mean expending or bestowing profusely. When you consider that we are creatures of God and sinful creatures at that, you begin to understand the lavishness of this gift. God loves His enemies in that He makes them His children through the lavish gift of His Son Jesus.) And that is what we are! The reason the world does

not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Dear friends, now we are **children** of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. (“What we will be”, speaks of an ongoing process of growth and maturity which is imperative of children.) But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (“We shall be like Him”, indicates the objective for our growth.) [3] Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. (John describes the process of growth as a purifying process.)

[4] Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. [5] But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. [6] No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. (Verses 4 through 6 give some detail to the purifying process. This purifying process involves His power and His righteousness which is at work in the lives of those who believe in Him. But how does that happen? John recorded an encounter Jesus had with a Pharisee named Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus that he must be born again. He explained to Nicodemus that this was a spiritual birth not a physical birth. “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” Jn 3:3 [NIV] When a man or a woman confesses their sinfulness, and their belief in Jesus Christ, they are “born again” spiritually. At that moment the Spirit of Christ comes to live within them. It is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ that works powerfully within us to bring about this purifying process. This brings us to be more and more like Christ as we go through this purifying process. And the title given to these believers is, “Children of God”. This is a beautiful picture of that process. Like a child learning to walk and talk and grow and mature, it is the progress that is measured, not the perfect performance of each task along the way. There are two great crisis moments in the process. The first crisis is when we confess, and believe, and are born again spiritually. The second crisis is when we make a total commitment to Christ; we give the new life we have in Christ back to Christ for His management and guidance. There are many other crisis moments in the life of a Christian but these two are the doorways to the cleansing process John is talking about. Then John gives a warning...)

[7] Dear **children**, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. [8] He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. [9] No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. [10] This is how we know who the **children** of God are and who the **children** of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. (His warning is a mandate to not forget that we must stay in the way of this purifying process. We cannot let anyone lead us astray. We must remember what righteousness is; it is the one “who does what is right”. We must remember the source of our lifestyles. Sinfulness is of the devil, the purifying process which destroys the works of the devil comes from God. Our lifestyle is the result of the

one we submit our lives to.)

[11] This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

[12] Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.

And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. [13] Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

[14] We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.

Anyone who does not love remains in death. [15] Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. (The final

outcome of this purifying process has eternal consequences. Our lifestyle leads to eternal life or not. That lifestyle is defined by the love we allow Christ to express through our daily lives.)

[16] This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [17] If anyone has material possessions

and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in

him? (Here John gives some explanation about what this love is.) [18] Dear **children**, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

[19] This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our

hearts at rest in his presence [20] whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is

greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (How great to have a parent

who knows everything. When we were children we did not always believe that our

parents knew what they were talking about. Now admittedly, they did not always

know what they were talking about but they did know way more that we did as their

children. Then John summarizes what he has just said...)

[21] Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

[22] and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do

what pleases him. [23] And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son,

Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. [24] Those who obey his

commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us:

We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

### **Jesus was a child:**

Look at Jesus' relationship with His Father... There are so many scriptures that talk about Jesus' relationship with his Father that we could spend a long time here.

However there are a few very important passages that give us a clear picture of this relationship.

One of John's first accounts of Jesus talking about His relationship with His Father is found in John chapter 6. Jesus has just fed the 5000 and they are feverishly following Him around expecting Him to always meet their physical needs. But Jesus wants them to understand that there is something more important than the meeting of their physical needs and desires.

John 6:25-33 (NIV)

[25] When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi,

when did you get here?"

[26] Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. [27] Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

In [verses 25-27](#) Jesus establishes the importance of the spiritual needs that we have which are more important than the physical needs. Instead of seeing the miracle that Jesus had performed to feed them, the people can only feel the satisfaction of full bellies. They only seek to have them filled over and over again. Each time it is stretched full, it demands to be filled again and this time it takes a little more to fill it.

[28] Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

[29] Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

In [verse 28-29](#) Jesus establishes the entry point at which those spiritual needs can be met. It has always been and always will be belief in Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is the one God sent to resolve the problem of sin in mankind.

[30] So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? [31] Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

In [verses 30-31](#) we see the greed of sin in action. Even with a great sign like feeding the 5000, they still demand another sign. Then in [verses 32-33](#) Jesus reveals to them that the source for true satisfaction comes from His Father.

[32] Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is **my Father** who gives you the true bread from heaven.

[33] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Jesus of course spoke of Himself and the sacrifice He would eventually make for the sin of all mankind. The sacrifice of His life would take care of the sin problem that mankind is dealing with giving them eternal life. The passion of the cross was spoken of in many O.T. prophesies but it would not be the sign that Jesus would give them. The empty tomb would be the great sign. But most of them would not believe it either because they were only looking to satisfy their immediate physical needs.

Jesus would try to make it clear to them over and over, again and again, that God, His heavenly Father was the important factor. Jesus wanted them to know that the relationship He had with His Father was the important proof of the truth they often tried to explain away for their own convenience.

John 10:37-38 (NIV)

[37] Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. [38] But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

Jesus clearly established the fact that He was a child of God the Father. He tried to convince the religious leaders and the people that the Father-child relationship was what controlled everything Jesus did on earth. It was this Father-child relationship that brought Jesus through the torture and death of the cross. It was the relationship Jesus had with His Father that drew Him to the completion of His task of saving mankind.

John wanted us to know that we are children of God.

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### *Conclusion:*

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Splash Down, by Phil Ware

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last (Luke 24:6 NASB)

She stood there with her toes squeezing the edge of the pool so she could reach as far as her arms would allow her without tipping over and falling into the water. She wanted to be willing to jump into the water, but my hands were just out of her reach. She would have to jump and trust that my hands would be there when she hit the water. It was a trust issue, not a "want it" issue. Eventually, she summoned up her courage and took the leap.

Many a parent knows the sometimes-laborious process of getting a child confident enough to jump into the water. More than a rite of passage or some parental fiendish delight, when you live in Texas around lakes and pools, it's a necessity. More than just learning to swim, a child needs to know how to handle landing with an unexpected splash in the face and navigate to safety. But you don't start with your child on the diving board saying, "Come on, baby, jump in. You can do it! I'll just sit here in my lounge chair sipping lemonade and watch you."

No, you start with your child sitting on the side of the pool with his or her toes in the water, holding your hands, and sliding smoothly into the water. All the while, those tiny hands are firmly in the grip of your strong hands, knowing that you won't let them go. Little by little, you move a bit more away and they have to reach, then stand, and eventually jump to reach your hands. For most kids, this makes the adventure more and more fun as they gain confidence as the process continues. BUT ... sooner or later, you are so far away that your child can lean, even jump, but not quite reach your hands. Your little one has to trust that even if he or she cannot physically touch you at splash down, you are still there and your hands are close by to reach, rescue, and applaud -- whatever the situation might demand.

The last recorded words of Jesus from the cross are, "Into your hands do I commit my spirit." If we allow ourselves the boldness to look at Jesus this way, we can understand these words in ways that connect with our experience. From the moment of Jesus' cry in the Garden, we enter into the tender relationship of a son and his father.

"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine" (Mark 14:36 NLT).

Yes, Jesus words, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" are the cry of a child launching in the direction of the unknown and trusting that the strong hands of his loving Father are there waiting for them after the jump and the splash down. No matter how we want to clothe Jesus with the divine, we cannot remove from him the reality of his humanness. This is the mystery and the grace of God in human flesh. So in the middle of Jesus' launch into the unknown -- remember he is called the "pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2 NRS) -- he was trusting Abba Father for his leap of faith. He had done this all of his life, so now, when his greatest leap was necessary, he could launch himself in faithful trust that the "hands" of his Abba were near.

And because he made the leap before us, we can believe, too. For no matter how far the leap may appear, and no matter how far away the strong hands of rescue may seem, we can know that the Father waits for our launch into the unknown ... not just to rescue us, but also to applaud his precious child who trusted that he was waiting for them at splashdown.

So with Jesus, we can quote the Psalmist and confidently say, "[I entrust my spirit into your hand. Rescue me, LORD, for you are a faithful God](#)" (Psalm 31:5 NLT).

We can know that the Father waits for our launch into the unknown.