

Summary

This sermon explores what it means to come to God with the faith and humility of a little child, drawing from Matthew 18 where Jesus tells His disciples that unless they become like little children, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. The pastor shares personal stories about his own struggles with pulling away from God when He feels ashamed or has fallen short, and challenges the congregation to stop hiding from God and instead run back to Him the way a child runs back to a loving parent after getting in trouble. The sermon also touches on the refining process God takes us through as we grow in spiritual maturity, comparing it to the purification of silver. The pastor is honest about the temptation to stop in the middle of that journey, especially when walking closely with God can feel isolating from the world around us. He encourages believers to keep pressing forward, to feed their Spirit rather than their flesh, and to trust that God, as a perfect heavenly Father, is always ready to receive us back with open arms, just as the Father in the parable of the prodigal son ran toward His returning child.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to you right now as your children, not with all the answers or with perfect records, but simply as we are. We ask that you open our hearts and minds during this time together. Help us to set aside pride, distraction, and anything else that would keep us from hearing what you want to speak to us today. Give us the humility of a little child and the faith to trust that you are good, that you are near, and that you are for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing you loved about being a kid that you wish you could still experience as an adult?

Key Verses

- Matthew 18:1-5
- Luke 15:11-24
- 1 John 3:1-2

Questions

- The pastor described how children run back to their parents even after getting in trouble, without feeling like the relationship is permanently broken. How does that picture challenge the way you typically respond to God after you mess up?
- Jesus says in Matthew 18 that we must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. What do you think it looks like practically to have that kind of childlike faith as an adult?
- The pastor talked about how he tends to pull away from God when He feels ashamed, even over smaller things like not praying or reading His Bible enough. Can you relate to that pattern? What usually triggers it for you?
- In the parable of the prodigal son, the Father ran toward his son before the son even finished His speech of apology. What does that tell us about how God responds when we return to Him?
- The pastor described a vision of swimming to the middle of a lake and then turning back because it felt too lonely and too far from familiar people. Have you ever felt that kind of pull to retreat from a deeper walk with God? What caused it?
- The sermon compared spiritual growth to the refining of silver, where the process gets more precise and less dramatic the further along you go. How have you seen that kind of refining work in your own life over time?
- The pastor said that the devil is not always trying to pull us into full-blown sin. Sometimes he is just trying to get us to sit on the fence and settle where we are. How do you recognize when you have drifted into that in-between place spiritually?
- The sermon emphasized feeding the Spirit over feeding the flesh as a daily decision. What are some practical habits or choices that help you feed your Spirit, and what are some things that tend to feed your flesh instead?

Life Application

This week, identify one area where you have been pulling away from God out of shame, fear, or comfort. Make a deliberate choice to run toward him instead of away from him. That might look like returning to a prayer habit you dropped, being honest with God about something you have been avoiding, or simply spending time in His Word each day. Treat it the way a child would: come to your Father without overthinking it, trusting that He is glad you came back.

Key Takeaways

- God calls us to come to Him with the simple, trusting faith of a little child, free from shame and full of confidence that He will receive us.
- Pulling away from God when we feel ashamed or have fallen short only keeps us stuck. The right response is always to run back to him, just as a child returns to a loving parent.
- Spiritual growth is a refining process, and it requires us to stay close to God and keep pressing forward, even when the journey feels lonely or uncomfortable.
- The enemy does not always try to pull us into outright sin. Often he is satisfied just getting us to settle on the fence, where we are no longer growing closer to God.
- Which dog we feed, the flesh or the Spirit, determines which one grows stronger. Every day is a choice about who we are going to follow and what we are going to pursue.

Ending Prayer

Father, thank you for this time together and for the reminder that you are not a God who pushes us away when we fall short. You are a Father who runs toward us. We ask that you give each person in this group the courage to stop hiding and to keep swimming toward you, even when it feels lonely or uncertain. Refine us, Lord. Purify what needs to be purified, and give us the childlike faith to trust that you are good and that you are working in our lives. Help us to feed our spirits this week and to choose you over the pull of the flesh. We love you and we trust you. In Jesus' name, amen.