

Putting Away Childish Things

Jack and Trisha Frost

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (1 Corinthians 13:11)

I (Jack) don't know about you, but when I became an adult, it took far too many years for me to begin putting away childish things. I thought life was all about getting my needs met at another person's expense (lust). I was 44 years old before I even began to have a clue that creation was all about seeking to meet another's needs at my own expense (love).

When I was 10 years old, I related to life and relationships on the basis of my emotions and feelings and what made me feel secure, comforted, and in control. If I did not get my way, or if someone didn't play the game in the way I wanted, I would take my ball and go home. When I chose to continue to hang around, I would close my spirit and pout, trying to get my way by making others feel guilty through my negative attitude or demeaning tones or look.

At 20 years of age, my teenage thinking still only valued relationships for what they could do for me. I stayed agitated most of the time because I felt others should have done more for me to make me feel valued and accepted. I didn't notice that I did little to honor and value others. My judgmental and fault-finding thinking often influenced people to close their spirits and to reject me. Trying to obtain love, value, and acceptance through childish ways actually repelled people, and I lost the very thing for which I was searching.

At 30 years of age, I thought I had become a man. But just like when I was a child, I was still seeking to blame others when things did not go the way I wanted. It was difficult for me to see the need to change, but I could easily see the changes that others needed to make. My often correct observations of people's weaknesses justified my negative feelings and attitudes. My immaturity still only thought of what made me feel secure, comforted, and in control. I had not moved out of self-centeredness; thus, I was not prepared to be a healthy husband, father, or leader who handled life's relationships with love, compassion, and grace. Though I had a deep commitment to God, my childish ways left my leadership style as a sea captain, husband, father, and later a pastor, characterized by shame, fear, and control tactics.

At 40 years old, I hadn't changed much in my childish, manipulative leadership style, but outwardly I did look and act more spiritual. Yet inwardly, I was still a slave to self who lived to get my needs met at another's expense. I needed people to agree with my



opinions and philosophies for me to keep an open heart and not feel irritated with them. I grasped for position and to be seen and heard so that I could feel significant. I often felt that people were not fair and honored others more than me. It left me constantly struggling with buried resentments, fears of failure and rejection, despair, and relational problems. I did not have the emotional maturity necessary to healthily manage life's relationships and to be a mature leader.

After 20 years of being married to me, Trisha was not experiencing much greater maturity than I. Our childish thinking did not understand that it is love and intimacy that precedes lasting fruitfulness in marriage, ministry, and relationships. It is not our gifting, experience, theological attainments, and human effort.

November 1995 was the defining month when God began saving Trisha and me from our childish ways. His affectionate, fathering love radically broke through areas of hidden core pain in my soul, and later in Trisha's. Our eyes were opened to how far from spiritual maturity we had strayed. We began to understand, experience, and discern God's loving nature and grace, and received the revelation that this is what equips us to be healthy leaders and managers of life's relationships. (For details, see our testimony about this on our website, or read chapter one in our book, *Experiencing the Father's Embrace*.)

For the next few years, God began restoring the hearts of our children to us, and our marriage experienced greater intimacy than we had ever thought possible. Trust, openness, and unity increased in our peer and ministry relationships. Shiloh Place Ministries went from touching a few people in the South to our teams impacting nations with Father's healing love.

We are still daily given ample opportunity to see if we will either react with childish thinking toward each other and those who think differently than us, or if we will keep a soft and open heart and respond with value, grace, and honor (prizing people for the price they have paid). Choosing grace does not mean that we do not have healthy, Biblical boundaries and values for our family, workplace, and ministry. It means we will not run away into isolation by closing our spirits to others who do not think like us or agree with us, but we will seek to value them by trying to understand their opinions and feelings and look for the good (see Proverbs 18:1; 19:8).

Today, God is deeply dealing with His Church to put aside our insecure childish ways and to walk a path of deeper maturity. Why do you think we keep struggling with the same relationship problems over and over again? We are being given many opportunities to choose to put away childish things and to respond to each other with honor and respect. Until we do so, how can our marriages be healed and our hearts restored to our children? How can the world experience a revival that will transform our culture? Present immaturity in the Church has made us the butt of the world's jokes. If an outpouring of the Spirit came now, would childish thinking consume the blessings of God upon our own lusts and quench revival as has happened in the past?

Becoming Mature

There are not a lot of expectations for newborns and babies to keep within family values and boundaries. They pretty much do as they like, and mom and dad continue to give them everything they need and want. But as a child matures, the parents start expecting him to be accountable for his attitudes and actions. When the child refuses to

honor the parents' values, the parents stop giving the child everything he wants. Until the child is faithful with the little things, he will not be given more.

This is right where Trisha and I were in 1995. In John 1:12, God had given us the right to become children of God. When first saved, we started out with a right to be childish, and God's fatherly grace gave us about everything we wanted (except all the money we asked for). After years of consuming His blessings upon our own lusts, the time came when He told us to put away childish things and to grow up and take responsibility for healthy relationships. The problem was that we both waited for others to change first! So God led us to the back side of the desert, where dryness and our self-imposed pain finally caused us to start listening more clearly to Him (see Hosea 2:14-15).

How do we know when God is telling us that it is time to put away childish things and take responsibility to become the message of His love to our family and others? When He stops answering our prayers! You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasure (James 4:3). It took us quite a few years of despair, anxiety, and frustrations to figure that out.

After trying it our way for 40-plus years, we finally decided to look at the path of maturity God designed for us. Take a look and see if you can pinpoint where you are on God's path, and then see if you can find the next step of responsibility and accountability God wants you to embrace. You may first want to read these following verses that speak of God's mission for you: 1 Corinthians 13:1-11; 1 John 2:9-14; Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 4:7-21; and John 13:34-35.

Children

- they live to get their needs met at the expense of others
- they relate to life upon the basis of emotions and feelings
- they seek the easy road and the place of comfort
- they value people for what people can do for them
- they have difficulty seeing a need for change
- they think others are the source of their discomfort
- they are not interested in meeting others' needs
- they want position, authority, and power
- they have not moved from self-centeredness to a Father-centered lifestyle

Mature Sons & Daughters

- they begin to see life and relationships from Father's point of view
- they become a junior partner with the Father
- they are learning to dwell in the fruit of the Spirit in relationships
- they are learning to be subject to another's mission and not just their own
- they begin to be entrusted with Father's resources and authority
- they begin overcoming the evil one and start being a strength to their authorities

they are learning to walk in patience, honor, and selfless love and service to others

Husbandship (Men & Women)

they have become healthy managers of life's relationships, beginning at home

they seek to be free from resentment, unforgiveness, competition, and judgmentalism

they have learned to exercise authority with love, compassion, grace, and honor

they have learned to honor all men and walk in mutual submission to one another

they have experienced great testing that helped prepare their heart for healthy leadership

Spiritual Fathers & Mothers

they understand, discern, and experience Father's nature and grace

they have become leaders who are concerned about others' needs and maturity

they are able to discern flesh from spirit and law from grace

they represent Father's compassion, love, and grace to other people

they seek to heal, restore, nurture, equip, and release others to be carriers of God's love

It is difficult to become healthy leaders of our homes, work places, or ministries until we have been faithful as sons and daughters who have matured into husbandship - healthy managers of life's relationships. To become leaders without following this natural progression of maturity can result in our leading from a foundation of insecurity and childish motivations. The day for leading from position, gifting, and anointing (often child-leaders) is fading away and a new wave of leadership is emerging. They are leading from lives of humility and brokenness that are rooted and grounded in experiential love and grace.

Transition into Maturity

Trisha and I have made a decision: maturity at all costs. The following are some of the patterns we seek to establish in order to transition into greater maturity. None of these are to be an act performed, but attitudes of the heart in which we daily seek to walk.

- 1) Confession and repentance for independence and childish ways. This means acknowledging and apologizing to others for the frequent times when we place self-will above others' needs for value, respect, honor, and grace. (See Psalm 51; 139:23-24)
- 2) Forgiveness toward the faults, weaknesses, and differences we see in our families, friends, and leaders. Spiritual maturity is measured by our ability to handle the faults and weaknesses we see in others. (See Matthew 18:21-35; Romans 15:1)
- 3) Practicing the ministry of restitution. God forgives us as soon as we ask when we misrepresent His love to others. But if someone else has wronged us, and they are 98% at fault and our attitudes or actions are 2% at fault, we are 100% responsible to go to them and make right the 2% where we were wrong. (See Matthew 5:22-25)

- 4) Receiving spiritual fathers and mothers so that we begin taking on their godly characteristics. This is an issue of humility that begins displacing our childish pride and self-reliance. (See 1 Peter 5:5-7; Hebrews 13:17-18)
- 5) Being faithful with another person's vision. If something is important to our leaders, we seek to make it important to us. (See Luke 16:12)
- 6) Being committed to a lifestyle of receiving admonition and being in accountability. If we find ourselves running from positive confrontation, we realize that there is still something in us that has not grown beyond childishness. (See Ephesians 4:15-16; Hebrews 12:7-9)
- 7) Leading from a position of humility, not strength. When we lead from a position of strength (gifting, position, or self-reliance), it is difficult to impart God's grace and compassion. But when we lead as servants who seek to empty ourselves of the desire to be seen or to be right, then we become the message of God's love to our families and to others. (See Hebrews 5:7-8; Philippians 2:5-9)

What if Trisha and I had been willing to apply these patterns and die to our childish pride and rebellion ten years earlier? How much pain could we have spared each other and our children? How much anxiety and stress could we have avoided thus leading to greater peace and health? How many more marriages and ministries could we have helped? How many more people could we have led to Christ? What if we chose to remain in our childish ways? Would we still be married? Where would our children be? Who would have helped the many of you who have been ministered to by Shiloh Place ministry teams?

God is seeking to break the Church out of the confines and limitations of our childishness and entrust us with our inheritance of His love and power. He is longing to turn the keys of His storehouses over to us during this desperate time in world history in order for the nations to experience God's love through us! It is time we seek to measure the cost to the lost and wounded of our unwillingness to mature. Will you choose to embrace your maturity in the coming year? It is your destiny to mature to become the message of God's love to the next person you meet!

In Father's love,

Jack & Trisha Frost

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