

## “Become like a child ”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

**Read Matthew 18:1-6**

If you can, watch the YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/uBRcOAxYK24>

Children can often see things differently and surprise us with their responses, reactions and expectations. Jesus existed in a culture that tended to push children into the background, but he refused to conform with these stereotypes. He placed a child centre stage and invited those who would seek to understand what it meant to be a disciple to learn from what a child might teach them. Discipleship is not about status or being the “greatest” in God’s Kingdom, but learning to become like a child. You are invited to put yourself in that crowd, imagine yourself watching as Jesus brings the child into the centre and invites you to make them the example to follow. As you hold that picture in your mind, what might God say to you? Three things you might consider:

**What does it mean to trust like a child?** For many of us our world has been turned upside down. There is much uncertainty and loss and struggle. What is our adult instinct in circumstances like that? Often it is to question, probe and challenge. Where is all this leading? Whose fault is it? When is it going to end? We can easily transport this attitude into our faith – what is God saying? What is God doing? Why isn’t God changing things? There is a place for asking questions like these, so that we can grow in our understanding of God, But the place to start is from a place of trust – we enter like a child. And when there seem to be no answers, what we can learn from a child is that God has said the one thing we truly need to hear – you can trust me!

**What does it mean to accept like a child?** Coming to God as a child is to come to God in relationship, not with ideas of status or wanting to know what benefits might come our way. Jesus says “take that lowly place and you will be the greatest.” If we want to receive from God, we do not come with our own agendas – just ready to accept. Things are difficult for many at the moment – might we find it easier to simply accept our present circumstances and not allow ourselves to be torn apart by the inevitable frustrations, disappointments and concerns that our society is constantly echoing. Might God offer us the image of a child as a simple invitation to let go, to let our trust lead to acceptance and to not allow ourselves to be overcome by worry?

**How do we share our vulnerability?** There are not many places in the Gospels where we hear words of clear and strong condemnation on the lips of Jesus, but he is very clear about how we respond to the vulnerability of “little ones”. But children can be vulnerable, and Jesus also presents this reality in a far more positive frame – “welcome children as you would welcome me.” How might this speak to us about how we function as a Christian community? We might be feeling particularly vulnerable and fragile – and God says “that’s OK – there’s room and there’s welcome in my Kingdom for those who are feeling fragile.” But he also invites us to think outwards – who else might be feeling vulnerable and fragile – and how can we be those who extend welcome and support to them. How can we be a community of “welcomers” and “the welcomed”?

### PRAYER

Gracious God, who in Jesus extended arms of welcome to the weakest and most vulnerable in society, help me to come to you in all my weakness and fragility. Help me to trust you, whether or not I can make sense of what is happening around me; help me to accept the reality of present circumstances, believing in your love and goodness through it all. Help us to be welcoming to all who are struggling in these times, and to be assured that you welcome and accept us in the midst of our own struggles. So may we each discover and celebrate more of what it means to be your children. AMEN