

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

Little Children

Scenario:

It is a beautiful Sunday morning. The saints have assembled together to study and then to worship the Lord. The Bible study was wonderful and the engagement in discussion over the text being examined was edifying. The time comes for the saints to begin the worship service. Prior to that service, a brother is announcing who will be leading in that service. As the names are announced, a young child's name is mentioned as one that was to be leading a prayer. Did you hear that correctly? You walk back to the man that made the announcement and ask him what names he just mentioned in serving that day. The man that made the announcements confirms what you heard. The name of a six year old boy was mentioned. This young boy has not come to know sin. This young boy has not expressed any desire to begin the process of obedience to the Gospel. You question the authority for this boy to lead the saints in worship.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

The man you are now discussing this with says: "Jesus led when he was twelve. A king ruled Israel at eight years old. Jesus used little children even in teaching in Matthew 18:1-6 showing that until a child sins he or she is a member of the church."

A Later Statement Is Made:

As the disruption of your discussion causes the worship to cease. A member who hears your question says: "Little children are of God (I John 4:4) and this discussion is divisive. Children should have been serving all along. Some of us men have made this determination and we are going forward with it."

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- Any time we assemble together to study and/or worship God it is a good day. Though we don't live under the Law of Moses, the principle of **Psalms 122:1** applies with the body of Christ being the house of the Lord today (**I Timothy 3:15** and **Hebrews 3:1-6**).
- Studying together should always be edifying for various reasons (**Acts 20:32**, **Ephesians 4:15-16**, **Ephesians 4:29**, and **I Thessalonians 5:11-14**).
- Most seem to be aware of the authority to assemble for prayer, teaching, the Lord's Supper, singing, and giving (**Acts 12:5**, **Acts 20:7-11**, **I Corinthians 11:16-34**, **Colossians 3:16-17**, and **I Corinthians 16:1-4**).
- There is also authority for the church to assemble for reasons other than "worship" (i.e. **Matthew 18:15-17**, **Acts 14:24-28**, **Acts 15:1-35**, etc.).
- There is authority for one to lead in public worship (**I Corinthians 14:12-17**).
- It is good to confirm what you think you hear before taking further action (**Deuteronomy 13:12-15**, **Proverbs 18:13**, and **John 7:40-51**). The way this was

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

handled at the beginning, appears to be expedient. There was no disruption and thus things appear to be in order (**I Corinthians 14:40**).

- By considering that this young boy has not desired to begin the process of obedience to the Gospel is NOT to suggest he should. There is a point wherein someone who has never sinned needs to be immersed because the word of God instructs such and not doing so would make one a sinner. We see this even in Jesus (**Matthew 3:1-17**) who knew no sin (**II Corinthians 5:20-21** and **I Peter 2:21-22**). There are things required to obey the Gospel that make it very hard to imagine a six year old being capable of doing (**Matthew 13:19**, **Luke 9:57-62**, **Luke 14:25-33**, etc.).
- The question at hand is NOT whether or not a child is lost. A child is not, as many false teachers teach, born a sinner (**Deuteronomy 24:16**, **Ecclesiastes 7:29**, **Ezekiel 18:4**; **18:20**, and **Ezekiel 28:15**).
- To sin, one must make a decision to do wrong (**I John 3:4**) which means he or she must be capable of knowing they've sinned (**James 4:17**).
- Where this subject begins to lose people is that they focus only upon the fact that sin that separates a person from God and hinders prayers (**Isaiah 59:1-3**, **John 9:31**, and **I Peter 3:12**). Therefore, they reason that a sinless child has an open door of prayer to the Lord. THAT IS NOT THE ISSUE HERE EITHER.
- As this scenario continues forward...
- It is good to question [unless with impure motives; **Luke 20:20-26**], as we are commanded, to test (**Acts 17:10-11**, **Ephesians 5:10**, and **I Thessalonians 5:21**).
- The right direction to go is to question the authority for this. Like all questions, this needs to be a question of authority. The Scriptures reveal unto us every good work (**II Timothy 3:15-17**).
- Can we find clear Scriptural authority (**Luke 6:46**, **Luke 11:28**, **I Corinthians 4:6**, **Colossians 2:4-23**, and **Colossians 3:15-17**) to allow an innocent child to lead a congregation in some public aspect of worship?
- The first attempt at providing authority comes about. It is wrong though. Jesus didn't "lead" when He was twelve. The local church didn't exist until the first conversions in Acts 2. Jesus' own language states, while He was alive, that the church was in the future (**Matthew 16:13-18**). What Jesus did at twelve was hearing, asking, and answering at the temple (**Luke 2:41-52**).
- The second attempt comes by referencing an eight year old king. What does an Old Testament king, Josiah or Jehoiachin in the case (**II Chronicles 34:1** and **II Chronicles 36:9**), have to do with the public worship of the local body of Christ? Kings inherited the throne of their fathers (**I Chronicles 28:5**). This was true of Josiah (**II Kings 21:25-26**) and Jehoiachin (**II Kings 24:6**). Does this line of logic then imply that the children of Christians are automatically Christians by inheritance? Come on!!!!
- The third attempt of providing authority comes from an example of Jesus using a child. What is the overall point of **Matthew 18:1-6**? Is it not teaching the humility and innocence of a child and how such is what to be an observable trait of those whom choose to enter into the Lord's kingdom (**Matthew 19:13-15**, **Mark 10:13-16**, **Luke 18:16-17**, and **I Corinthians 14:20**). In fact, doesn't verses 4-6 take the point from the actual little child to the one who has believed in Christ?

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

Aren't the little one's, in whom the application is made, therefore believers? Who are believers (**John 8:30-32, Acts 5:12-14, Acts 8:12-39, Acts 18:8, Acts 19:11-20, Romans 10:1-17, etc.**)?

- With the logic presented in this argumentation, would **I Peter 2:1-2** authorize infants to lay before the congregation and goo-goo lead us in worship?
- NOW, LET'S REALLY CONSIDER SOME MORE THINGS.
- Twisting Scriptures to provide authority is soul-damning (**II Peter 3:15-18**).
- Praying, either publicly or privately, requires knowledge for that prayer to be proper (**Luke 11:1, James 4:3, and I John 5:13-14**).
- A person leading has to be capable of LEADING in such a way that all can understand, be capable of concurring with, and being edified (see again; **I Corinthians 14:14-17**). Does a six year old go from his Tonka truck (toy truck) to the head of the assembly with these capabilities?? Proper worship and service to God requires understanding. Fruitless, empty [vain] worship is sinful (**Matthew 15:7-9**).
- Think HARD about this point. In a context about spiritual gifts, Paul made a distinction about mature and immature thinking/speaking (**I Corinthians 13:11**). He went on to teach in that context, from which we've already drawn a point, about the need for collective worship to be lead in such a way that both the speaker and hearer could understand even when spiritual gifts were being employed (**I Corinthians 14:1-33**). Can one honestly read that and conclude a young child can properly lead (see: **I Corinthians 14:20**)? Why can't they drive cars, vote, get jobs, etc. then???? Why can the world see it and this individuals cannot? Who would elect a six year old to be a city counsel member, mayor, or president? Who would allow a six year old boy to babysit his younger siblings? Where is reason here?
- Years ago this congregation ceased allowing an older brother lead in services because of his Alzheimer's. We have other brethren, men who are Christians and have plenty of knowledge, that have voluntarily stopped leading for various reasons. WHY? It's not about age or even purity. It IS about the ability to LEAD.
- Isn't it the truth that members of the local church are those whom were once lost and then converted to Christ (**Acts 2:36-47 and I Corinthians 1:2**)?
- None of this is meant to suggest that children ought to be excluded from presence during the work or worship of God's people (**Deuteronomy 31:12 and Matthew 14:13-21**). However, you cannot find a hint of authority for them to lead in such instances. That makes it sinful if practiced (**Galatians 1:6-10 and Revelation 22:18-19**).
- WAIT! Hit the brakes. The "worship service" has ceased and another point is made. Someone else speaks up.... They argue from **I John 4:4**.
- It is right to stop worship here and maybe should have been before now. Something in question cannot continue forward. We cannot proceed with worship if we are not united (**Romans 15:5-7 and I Corinthians 11:16-19**).
- Are the "little children" addressed in **I John 4:4** actual children in the flesh or are they those whom are the obedient children of God (**John 13:31-38, Galatians 4:8-20, I John 2:1-28, I John 3:1-18, and I John 5:21**)? Any honest person, capable of understanding, can read the Scriptures and see the truth on this.

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

- Division is present (**I Corinthians 1:10**). The same mindset and rule is not being applied (**Philippians 2:2** and **Philippians 3:16**).
- Where do “the men” get the authority to make decisions without the entire body being involved (**Acts 15:22**) and the the Lord giving His approval (**Colossians 1:18**) through the Scriptures (**Luke 6:43-46**)?
- Man cannot decide what is and what is not appropriate worship (**Mark 7:1-13**).
- This has to be stopped (**I Timothy 1:3-7** and **Titus 1:10-14**).
- Those in error need to learn, confess, and repent (**Proverbs 28:13**, **Luke 13:1-5**, and **Acts 8:13-24**).
- The congregation needs to work at being unified (**Ephesians 4:1-6**) until it’s accomplished or the error is purged (**I Corinthians 5:6-7** and **I Timothy 6:3-5**).
- This may even already be a **Romans 16:17-18** situation or might quickly become such.
- There can be NO fellowship with those in error (**II Corinthians 6:14-7:1**, **Ephesians 5:6-11**, and **II John 1:6-11**).
- Lest someone err in thinking of this as a **Matthew 18:15-17** problem; it is not. It is not a matter between two individuals. It is a public matter of division and false doctrine.