

# *Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*

*June 14, 2020*

*“Do Kids Get a Free Pass?”*

*Sunday school at 8:30, in-person Services at 9:15 & 10:45 with King's Kids (Video live-taped sermon online by Monday afternoon).*

*Communion is for those who are Members of the Body of Christ.*

## *NEWS*

Church camp at Little Bitterroot Lake, August 14-16.

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The Pharisees and Jesus were at odds over Bible interpretation. The legalists extrapolated rules, much as Christians do today. Jesus took sweeping principles and applied them as such.

What are the chances that Paul, writing to Titus, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, came up with 19 specific rules, or qualifications for the office of overseer? (Titus 1:5-9, I Timothy 3:1-7)

## **MATTHEW 19:10-12**

There are two ways to understand the Disciples question... The religious way and the realistic way.

Jesus confirmed by His answer that there were only two possibilities... Marriage or celibacy. (Mark 10:10-12, Luke 16:18, Matthew 5:31-32)

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*God Bless You!*

**MATTHEW 19:13-15**

Luke mentioned “Babies,” Mark adds that Jesus embraced the kids - it is ἐναγκαλίζομαι (ĕn-än-kä-lē-dzö-mī), meaning to take into one’s arms. (Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17, I Timothy 5:22)

Mark tells us that Jesus was “Indignant,” with His Disciples. Jesus has been describing the Kingdom of Heaven person and here was a wonderful picture of that.

They were without self-aggrandizing presumption and without self-aggrandizing false humility - they came in their powerlessness.

This story was the primary proof text for paedobaptism, from Greek παιδίον (pī-dē-ōn).

Jesus never said the small kids were in the Kingdom, He said, the Kingdom belongs to, or is obtained by, “Such as these.”

Mark and Luke add in conclusion, what Matthew reported in chapter 18, “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

The humbleness that casts personal pride away and allows a person to recognize their need for help, their inability to help themselves, and their willingness to allow Jesus to do it all for them.

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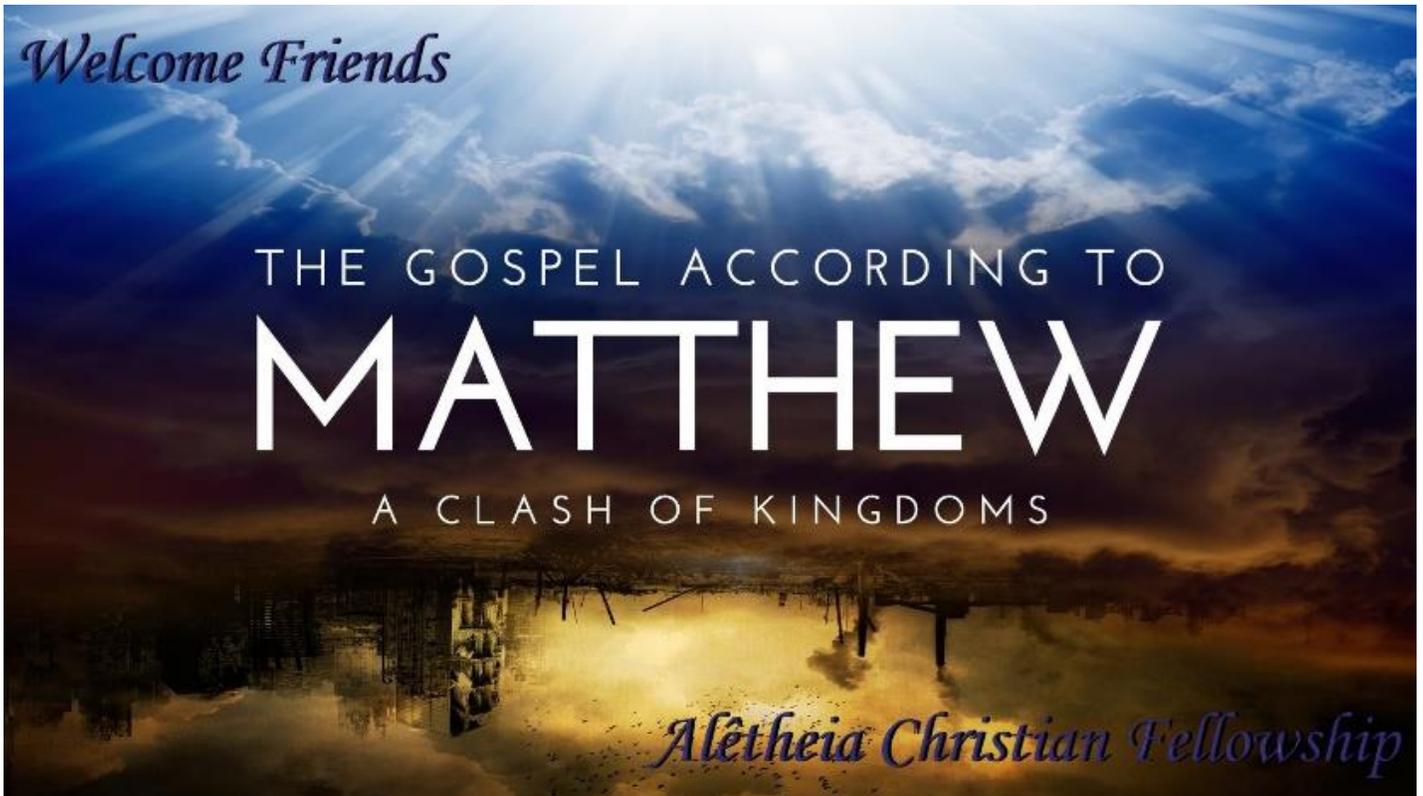


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Alêtheia ~ Matthew 19c ~ 061420  
“Do Kids Get a Free Pass?”



Last week we talked more about marriage, but what the sermon was really about, was correctly interpreting God’s Word... Interpreting it the way the Author does.



The Pharisees were religious legalists with an endless number of rules extrapolated from Scripture. What anyone who claims to know Jesus must recognize is that Jesus was so different in His approach to the Bible and what our Heavenly Father wants from us that the Pharisees hated Him... They despised Him so much they eventually murdered Him in the most brutal fashion and felt joy about it.

What was so different in their respective approaches? They made rules, while Jesus declared sweeping principles of Truth that were to be lived out in honesty, without guile, and without manipulation. Lived out in relationship, rather than religion. Lived out from the heart. Now, here's what I'm driving at... Is Jesus likely

to have made rules and regulations that He wants His Disciples to carefully follow?

Please think about what I'm saying. Did He give us 73 specific rules for how we are to love God, or did He simply confirm the Old Testament idea that we are to love God with all we have? Did Jesus give us the 14 consecutive hoops to jump through in order to become a Christian, or did He simply say, "Believe in Me"? Did Jesus articulate the 47 regulations on relating to other church members, or did He say, "Love one another"? Sweeping principles that we are to work out in our own lives with "Fear and trembling." So, again I ask you, what are the chances that Jesus intended us to develop policies from His Words about when a divorce is allowable and when it is not and when a person can remarry and when they cannot?

Now, while I'm on it... Was the Apostle Paul a legalist? Please recognize that Saul of Tarsus was as legalistic as a human could possibly be, but the guy that got knocked off of his horse on the road to Damascus?

What are the chances that Paul, writing to Titus, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, came up with 19 specific rules, or qualifications for the office of overseer? Isn't it more likely that God, through the

Apostle, was using 19 descriptors, to paint a picture of the type of man He's looking for? In principle?

We want to go down the list and evaluate a guy on all 19 and if, in our very humble opinion, he fails to live up to our interpretation of any one of those very specific qualifications, he's out. And if a church has such an overseer, it must be an evil church.

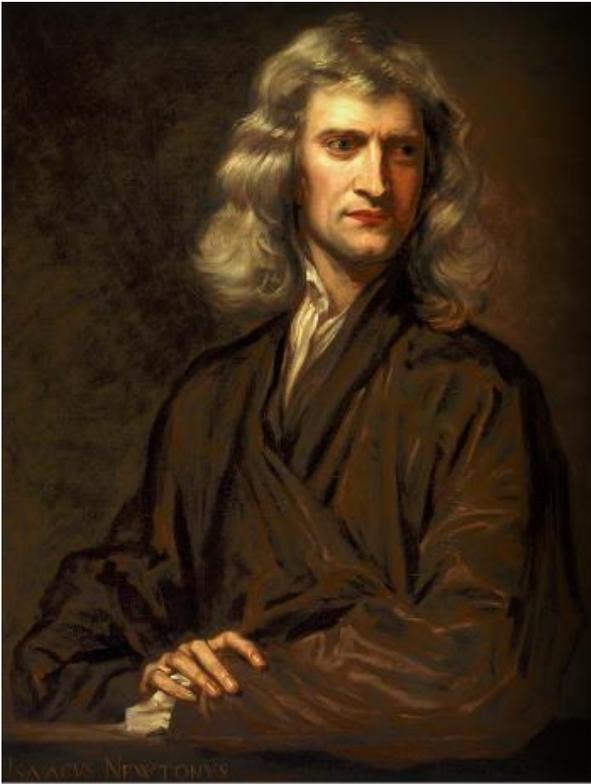


What if God were actually being consistent in His Word? What if this list is not an all-inclusive list to be used as a litmus test to judge every area of a man's life, past and present? Why are there only 15 qualifications on the list in I Timothy 3:2-7? Why are

there different items on each list? Which list should we use? You say combine them, but where did God say that? Perhaps Overseers on Crete needed to be vetted more than overseers elsewhere.

So, my friends, why would we take the words of Jesus and Paul and turn them into specific rules? As I said last week, it's easier, it's what we're used to, it's human. Can you see that when we do that, we are acting just like the Pharisees who beat and imprisoned Paul and murdered our Lord and Savior?

Back to Matthew. Jesus finished interpreting the Scripture for the Pharisees and the crowd and for His Disciples as well. His conclusion? Marriage is supposed to be a lifelong sacred covenant. So, do your very best to honor it as such - that's the point.



I consider my greatest  
accomplishment to be  
lifelong celibacy

~ Sir Isaac Newton

Matthew 19:10-12, 10The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” 11But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. 12“For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”

This may make you uncomfortable - but let me just reiterate that Jesus was never even hinting at the idea of a surgical solution... Another way His Words have been misused over the centuries. Jesus was simply

saying that men are celibate for a number of reasons including a choice to remain that way in order to focus on something else.

There are two ways to understand the Disciples question... The religious way and the realistic way. The religious way is that they recognize the amount of devotion it would take to be good husbands and so it would be better for them not to marry so they could be fully focused on the ministry. A celibate priesthood. The guys are revered saints and so they are accepting a life of ascetic denial. The Apostle Paul talked about that very thing in I Corinthians chapter 7.

To do marriage right, it takes a lot of devotion as Jesus just taught, so the religious view is the guys were being incredibly noble and spiritually mature... Or maybe, they were just being men. The realistic view is the natural view, probably what you thought of when you heard me read these verses.

If the marital relationship is that serious, it would be better not to go down that road in the first place. Get hitched to the wrong wife and you're stuck... Mess it up with your wife and God will be very grumpy. Why take the chance?

Either way, the most important feature is Jesus' response.

**Matthew 19:11&12, <sup>11</sup>But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. <sup>12</sup>"For there are EUNUCHS who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made EUNUCHS by men; and there are also EUNUCHS who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it."**

Jesus talked in terms of being a eunuch. Eunuchs were considered to be completely celibate - no sexual intercourse of any kind and no real interest in anything related. If you're not sure about what I'm saying... Think of the difference between a stallion and a gelding, or a bull and a steer.

The general point? Jesus confirms by His answer that any sexual intercourse outside of the marriage between one man and one woman is unacceptable... As far as He was concerned there were two

possibilities... Marriage or celibacy. There was no other legitimate condition.

**Matthew 19:11&12, <sup>11</sup>But He said to them, "NOT ALL MEN CAN ACCEPT THIS STATEMENT, BUT ONLY THOSE TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN GIVEN. <sup>12</sup>"For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. HE WHO IS ABLE TO ACCEPT THIS, LET HIM ACCEPT IT."**

That's why He started and ended His comments with an admission that this was not an easy Truth to deal with. Verse 11 may mean that God has called people to celibacy, or, far more likely, it may simply mean that this was a Biblical Truth that men had a difficult time accepting.

That's, more likely because of the way verse 12 ends. Accepting it probably means just what it says... A man needs enough faith to live in only one of the two camps without faltering.

One scholar put it this way, “Only those who have been able to engage with the kingdom of heaven through the presence of Jesus will be able to do so.” Human men may find it impossible - but Holy Spirit filled men? Whether, as a specific calling, or again, far more likely, as a general principle ... Either way, the obedience to faithfully living a monogamous, or a celibate, lifestyle requires submission to the Lord.

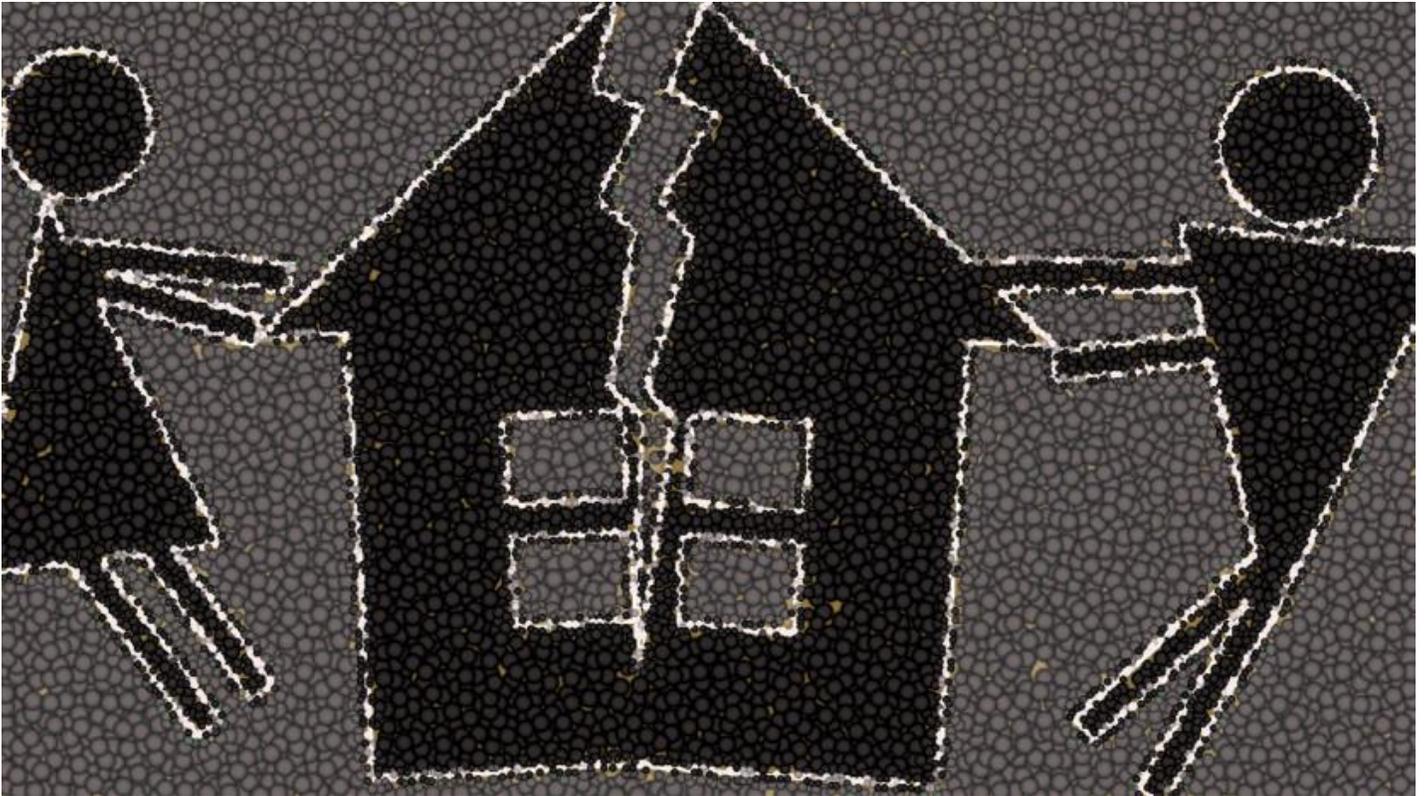
When we take the entirety of this narrative from verse 3 through 12, we easily see that God’s desire is that whatever path you’re on... Be completely faithful. Whether as a husband to your wife, or in a celibate lifestyle. Again, not rules, but sweeping principles that we apply in love.

This passage is all about men, because the basis of the question the Pharisees asked to start the whole thing, was all about men.

We are wrong to apply this to wives. To say that this gives a wife the right to divorce her husband if he commits adultery... Is far beyond the scope of these verses. Again, this is not supposed to be a “Loophole” passage for either men or women.

Mark's account adds a note about wives. After saying, a man who "Divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her," Jesus goes on to say, what's good for the gander, is good for the goose... "And if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery." Nowhere does it say that either is justified in divorcing...

Luke's account adds another wrinkle recording Jesus saying, "He who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." We saw another facet back in Matthew chapter 5, where Jesus said a man divorcing his wife made her commit adultery. (Mark 10:10-12, Luke 16:18, Matthew 5:31&32).



Again, what is clear when it is all taken together is that divorce is not what God wants and when we do divorce it creates a mess.

Sin begets sin and sin grows - it's a problem. But, without condoning, or in any way mitigating that fact, God is in the mercy business... His grace is sufficient for us all... There is no such thing as a sin that is unforgivable, except the sin of refusing the forgiveness that the Holy Spirit points us to.

There are other passages that would indicate that the principles of honoring marriage and being faithful in marriage, or in celibacy would apply to women as well.

As a sweeping Biblical principle established by God in the first Book of the Bible and confirmed by Jesus, here and elsewhere, the ideal for sexual relations is only within the framework of a proper Biblical marriage. Otherwise, sexual abstinence.

If we did things God's way... There would be no STD's, no unwanted babies, no abortion, no rape, no incest, no promiscuity, no broken families, and no psychological damage due to such things.



Matthew 19:13-15, 13Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. 14But Jesus

said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” 15 After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

There wouldn't be all the things I mentioned before, but there would be children... It makes good contextual sense to talk about children next.

This account is told in all three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17). Synoptic means seeing together and refers to how those three Gospels are similar, with the Gospel of John being much more theological.

In relating this incident, the other Gospels add a bit of extra detail that Matthew, as typical, left out. Luke mentions “Babies” as well as “Children.” Mark adds that Jesus actually embraced the children - it is the word ἐναγκαλίζομαι (ĕn-än-kä-lē-dzö-mī), meaning to take into one's arms - to hold, or cradle in the crook of your arms.

All three Gospels use the diminutive form of the word child, Greek παιδίον (pī-dē-ōn), rather than παῖς (pīs), meaning that these were very young children. From all

of that, we can imagine that many small kids, whom we would call preschoolers, toddlers, and infants, were being brought by their parents to Jesus for His blessing and that Jesus was tenderly, comfortingly, doing just that.

Specifically, Jesus was praying to the Father, a blessing upon the kids... This is not a commissioning, nor is it for healing. Biblically, we see physical touch involved in all those cases. Here, Jesus prayed for the children while reassuringly making physical contact with them.

We often downplay the physical aspect of prayer... Part of the problem stems from I Timothy 5:22NASB, Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

That refers to commissioning someone into a role of church leadership, not to a prayer of blessing, or prayer for healing. Touch is powerful.

Jesus was welcoming the ankle-biters. His Disciples, on the other hand, immediately felt that the whole thing was way beneath Jesus' dignity. In their minds Jesus

was much too important to be bothered by such things. How dare anyone presume on the Lord's time with a bunch of whining, crying, snot-nosed, munchkins? Outrageous! So, they took it upon themselves to rebuke the children.

We rarely see that anymore, but there was a time, even in America, when any adult was completely comfortable rebuking any kid, for anything. We can easily imagine that the Disciples rebuke was accompanied by shooing, even dragging the kids away and giving their parents an earful as well.



Why did the Disciples react that way? The more elite, untouchable, mysterious, elevated, that Jesus is, the more they, as His disciples, as His personal entourage, His posse, are likewise elevated.

They are important by association... You will see the phenomenon with any famous, or powerful person... The people closely associated, act like they are famous, or powerful themselves... The bigger the superstar status of their boss - the bigger their own status.

I spoke at a concert some years ago. Because I was going to go on stage and was therefore associated with the main star of the evening, I had several people, who wouldn't have given me the time of day normally, want to hug me and have their picture taken with me... All because they wanted to elevate their own status.

Mark tells us that Jesus was "Indignant," with His Disciples for their attitude and actions. In verse 14, Matthew wrote, "But Jesus said." That seems fairly benign to us, it probably doesn't even register when we read it in English. The wording is abrupt - technically, it is adversative. Sort of like, Jesus, contrary to the

Disciples, said... Essentially, “Leave the little kids alone and stop hindering them from interacting with me!”

It’s two separate but linked commands: “Allow the little children to come to Me,” and, “Stop forbidding them from doing so,” Two commands with one rationale supporting them both... That justification? “Because, these little friends, these miniature dudes and dudettes, are providing a perfect picture of what I’ve been talking about all this time.”

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus has been describing the Kingdom of Heaven person. Here was a wonderful image of that. These small little friends came without any pretense of their own worthiness to be blessed and, on the other hand, without the slightest embarrassment about receiving that which they did not earn or deserve.



They were without self-aggrandizing presumption and without self-aggrandizing false demureness or false self-deprecation - they just innocently and most importantly in their powerlessness came.

There was no personal strength, or authority to demand or even encourage Jesus' blessing, but there was also no self-conscious resistance to Him blessing them.

Many of us seek help because we are prideful enough to think we deserve it, and at other times many of us don't want the help offered because we're too prideful to seem needy... Little kids don't have either problem.

This is the entire reason this particular story is told three times in the Bible. The children in that moment provided another object lesson for what is necessary to be Saved and be a Kingdom of Heaven person...

I'm going to give you what is the most important point that is usually overlooked in just a moment, but I want to set it up with another example of how we misuse God's Word.



For many centuries, this story has been used as the primary proof text for (PEE) pedobaptism. That means infant baptism. The problem with the word is it's from the word in out text... Greek παιδίον (pī-dē-ōn)

meaning small child from παῖς (pāis), meaning a child of any age. Do we follow the Greek and say PIE, the British in saying PAY, the Americans in saying PEE, or what people who confuse it with the Latin for foot do and say PEH?

Let's go with the all-American PEE-DOUGH-BAPTISM, as in, pediatrician. This story was so important to infant baptism, that these verses, typically from Mark's account, were used as part of the liturgy recited during the infant baptism ceremony.

The Catholic Church along with the big Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli all used this as a basis for their arguments against, and eventual persecution of, the Anabaptists. Both the Catholic Church and the mainstream or "Magisterial" Protestants executed Christians who had abandoned pedobaptism in favor of credobaptism - which is to say, "Believer's baptism."

The primary point for the Pedobaptists was that Jesus said do not hinder the babies and small children from coming to Me. When it was pointed out that Jesus embraced them and prayed for them, but never baptized them... The Pedobaptists claimed it was an

argument from silence. They pointed out that it doesn't explicitly say that He didn't baptize them.

Well, that's a terrible argument, so they moved on to say that the whole point of the passages is that no one can come to Jesus with any worth of their own as illustrated... It truly is precisely the unassuming powerlessness of children that makes them Savable... And so, by their nature, they are saved - at least the ones lucky enough to be born to parents who have them baptized.

Biblically though, baptism is associated with the faith to be baptized... A choice to join or we could say an acceptance of acceptance. Pedobaptists say that faith is given by God to an individual, not manufactured by them, and so who can say that an infant does not have the requisite faith.



What's the most important point that is overlooked and the thing that will help settle the question at least as far as this story goes? Jesus never said the small kids were in the Kingdom, He said, the Kingdom belongs to or is obtained by "Such as these." Not actual physical children, but as we saw before to people who intentionally, deliberately, purposefully, as an act of will recognize their true childlike, inability to claim anything, and lack of compunction about accepting everything.

Both are the result of actively suppressing pride. It's all about what Jesus said last chapter, "Whoever makes themselves utterly powerless, like a small child or infant, that person will fully enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Today, scholars, theologians, and well-informed Christians, have abandoned this story as an argument supporting Pedobaptism and removed it from the liturgy. As one scholar put it, “It is exegetically certain that Matthew 19:13-15 does not provide a basis for infant baptism.” He went on to say that “The history of interpretation illustrates how little a biblical text can accomplish against the weight of tradition and liturgy, even in the Protestant churches,” where the Bible is supposed to be the final Word.

The other difference is both Mark and Luke mention Jesus saying in conclusion, “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

Matthew leaves that comment out, because He’s already mentioned Jesus saying that very thing at the beginning of the last chapter as I already mentioned... So, once again, it is to make oneself “Like a child,” not to be a child. We talked extensively about what that means when we were in chapter 18, and again today. Let me just reiterate... It isn’t humbleness the way we typically think of it - it’s more specific than that.

It is precisely the humbleness that casts personal pride away and allows a person to recognize their utter need for help, their inability to help themselves and their unabashed willingness to allow Jesus to do it all for them. That's what is necessary to truly accept the Grace of God.