



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### Putting Away Childish Things

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by Dr. Matt Hook

#### 1 Corinthians 13:9-11

based on “Putting Away Childish Things” by Dr. David Seamands

I know I’m a pastor, but it’s not like God just drops huge spiritual insights on me all the time. Last year, though, God gave me a spiritual insight that sort of blew me away. And I want to live throughout this year. I couldn’t figure out why I was in this cycle. I don’t even like conflict! I’m a terrible arguer! And yet I was caught up in arguing and conflict a lot. You may remember Karen Carpenter singing “We go on—hurting each other, gotta stop hurting each other, making each other cry, hurting each other, without ever knowing why...” And I didn’t know why. And God showed me: when the people I care about are under-reacting, blowing off what’s important to me; or when they are over-reacting, to me or to one another, (like my kids might), sometime last year God gave me this insight: They’re not out to “get me.” They are simply operating out of their woundedness. Jesus called me to be patient and kind in my love. And when the people around me make that difficult, maybe it’s because there’s a part of their past when they were little that I don’t know about: one in which they were wounded, that is still living in them in the present.

Can’t you see it? When I discovered that, it was like God gave me eyes to see that person’s wounded, hidden child. And my love for them was restored; even in when tempers and situations weren’t yet! Even when they were driving me crazy, I wanted to help free them. I wanted to see them restored. I wanted them to be able to put those old hurts, those damaged emotions away. I want to help each of us *do away with childish things*. Now, before we get started, I have to tell you: in the midst of an argument with your wife, in the heat of the moment, I don’t recommend telling them the only reason they’re acting this way or saying that is because they’re operating out of their woundedness. She just won’t dig it. It just doesn’t go over very big right then. 😊

*“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child. When I became an adult, I did away with childish things.”* 1 Corinthians 13:9-11.

Sometimes my wife Leigh jokes with people it’s like she’s got 5 children, meaning Hunter, Jillianne, Graham, Joy,...and me. I used to think that as you became an adult, your childish ways gradually would fall away and new adult patterns would take their place. But it’s not true. Childish things don’t simply fall away by themselves like dead leaves off a tree. We have to put them away. The Greek word is *katargeo* them, and be “finished with childish things.” It even means to destroy them. This sermon series is based on that challenge. And a large part of the thinking comes from a book, *Putting Away Childish Things* by Dr. David Seamands.

Somewhere, sometime, you were a child. And although you don't remember all the details, the child and teenager you once were is still important to you today, because it continues to exist within you. The hidden child of your past is very much alive and affects everything that you do, for good or bad.

William Wordsworth was right—he wrote “The child is father of the man.” We simply can't cut ourselves off from our own history. Each of us is a complex web, woven with a million strands, some of which go back to being made in the image of Adam and Eve, and some which go back even further, to being made in the image of God. But many of the most important threads in the complex design of who you are were introduced in your childhood, especially as you related to your family.

Today we idolize childhood as a good thing. For good or bad, you can't cut yourself off from your own history. Many of your most important pathways began in your childhood.

When it's good, it's good. But when it's bad, it'd really bad. In some people, the child thrives as a bawling, brawling, sprawling character. In other people, the inner child is so timid, fearful, and defeated that no matter how much you want to, you just can't force yourself to make friends, speak up, or handle responsibility. Many of us struggle with both. And it's important to know this part of yourself. NOT so that you can find excuses, but so you can be free! And grow into the person God created you to be!

Our childish views of ourselves, and God, and love and marriage, prayer, and ourselves defeat us. By beginning to name this, we see how much we are operating out of our woundedness, and how much our childish patterns and thoughts inhibit our mature spiritual growth. We can become MORE responsible and more mature in our walks. As we each discover our “inner child,” we can *katargeo* him or her: break the pattern and render them inoperative, so that you and I will be free to grow up in Christ in every way, especially into the perfect love which is our inheritance when we put our faith in Him

As you look at yourself, HEADS UP: If you are an OVER-reactor, or an UNDER-reactor, check and see if it's not your current situation you're reacting to, but the hidden child in you that's reacting in a childish way to some long-past event or relationship: operating out of your woundedness. And thus we're not reacting or growing in maturity, but out of some old habit or pattern. IF YOU'RE A PERSON WHO responds to situations WAY out of proportion to the event, you'd better suspect the little child within you is acting up.

The place where some of you may see the CHILDISH ways most is in the intimacies of marriage. We're going to look in a few weeks at our childish views of love and marriage. But I want to point out a big mistake we make: We think 2 people marry. We say “*The two shall become one,*” which is fine. But the trouble is that 4 people marry, and sometimes things can get pretty crowded around the house! ☺ There are the 2 adults, and there are the 2 children of the past. And marriage works well when the 2 adults are running things. But at home, where we relax, and even get casual, we let ourselves go and those childish children of the past slip in and run the home. Then things get interesting—especially in areas of money, affection, sex, and discipline of children!

The great tragedy is that it keeps us from being free. Life's hard enough when you're fully equipped, mature, and growing! But following our childish ways binds us to our past, and chains us to our childhood reactions. We're not free to love or bring newness to our homes and into our relationships with people. We never really act, we just react.

God must have known this, because He led the Apostle Paul to set his words about putting away childish things at the very heart of the great love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. This perfect love, which leads to maturity, casts out fear and brings creativity and newness. But you can't find this kind of love until there is *katargeo*, until the childish junk is dealt with and put away.

Now, because Scripture shows us that "*Jesus is the same yesterday, today, yes and forever,*" Hebrews 13:8. He is beyond time, and can help us deal with our pasts, presents, and our futures. And His Holy Spirit will work in this area of your life if you give Him a chance, if you break down your pride and face yourself honestly. That's the good news today: God wants to help you break the childish behavior which continually defeats you. It's not easy. And it doesn't mean you're bad. There are terrific Christ-followers who are defeated in the everyday areas of their lives. It hurts them. And it hurts their witness.

God doesn't want us to continue in defeat. He wants to give you and me healing and wholeness, cleansing and victory. By the power of His Holy Spirit, He wants us to put away childish things and grow up in Him in every way!

This week, ask God for a 6<sup>th</sup> sense: an awareness of your reactions: are they to today, or are they from a childish past incident or pattern? Let us right here, right now, make a PACT: Put Away Childish Things. Next Sunday, I'm going to ask you how you did.

Imagine what would happen in our homes and in our relationships if we begin to live free of childish ways? Imagine the flashes of understanding as you see yourself and your loved ones with God's love as you see them operating out of their woundedness, and loving them through it? Won't you look at and live 1 Corinthians 13 with me this week, and begin to see God free you up for life today?

This year, 2008, is an election year. And it is very important for us to be fully engaged in our political process. But what do you think will change your community more? The election of a new president, or a strong body of Christ followers who have put away childish ways in order to live today: freely sharing the powerful amazing perfect love of Christ with our closest relations? There's plenty of life to be lived today without having to live out all the junk you've already been through! Let's make 2008 the year we elect—to grow up in the faith, freed from childish ways we've clung to for so long.

Let us pray: Blessed Holy Spirit, we open ourselves to You. From now on, we will not hide like little children behind the furniture of our hearts, but we will come out into the open that You may show us ourselves. O Lord, shine Your light and reveal to us our woundedness. Free us from the chains which bind us to childish, immature ways. Prepare our hearts for wholeness and fullness in Your Spirit. Amen.