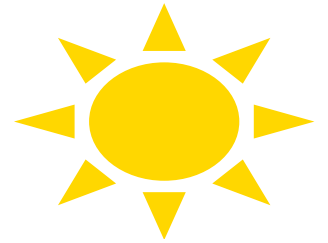


Let the Children Come



by Pastor David Flowers

Faith Like a Child—Portrait of a Disciple

- Disciples of Jesus are humble, teachable, and moldable; they're not “know-it-alls” but learners of the Lord's way
- Disciples listen and ask questions, seeking to understand; their posture is open, inquisitive, and amicable
- Disciples are always growing as they learn to flesh out and imitate what Christ has done, and follow where he leads
- Disciples aren't afraid to imagine God doing the impossible; they envision great things and then act them out
- Disciples are filled with wonder and faith, trusting Jesus for everything; they're enthusiastic & eager for things to come

Let the Children Come

What does Jesus say about children?

1. Remove the obstacles from their path.
2. Allow them to join the Kingdom community.
3. Raise them up and train them as disciples.

Matthew 18:1-5 NIV

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³ And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Matthew 18:6 NIV

⁶ “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

N. T. Wright, **Matthew for Everyone** (pg.29)

“So Jesus issues a stark warning, with typical exaggeration. If this seems violent or extreme, perhaps it’s because we, too, have undervalued the ‘little ones’ Jesus is talking about—children in particular, of course, but also all those who are powerless, vulnerable, at risk in our world.

Exploitation of such people is inevitable, granted the way the world now is. But those who indulge in it are given this warning, far sterner than anything that Jesus ever says about what we think of as ‘big’ sins such as murder, adultery, and theft. They matter, but causing one of the little ones to ‘stumble’ or ‘trip up’ matters even more.

Harsh words to address a harsh reality. Learning about God’s kingdom means facing the real evils of the world and realizing that God hates them far more than we do.”

Matthew 19:13-14 NLT

¹³ One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.¹⁴ But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven [God] belongs to those who are like these children.”

The Context of Matthew 19:13-14

- In Matthew 19:1-12, Jesus is confronted with the issue of divorce (When is it allowed by the Law?)
- The Pharisees' test of Jesus was to get him to pick sides in a debate, become "the decider" of Law (Deut. 24)
- The religious are concerned about what rights a man has to break up a marriage, and ultimately a family
- Jesus jumps over the Law of Moses and points to God's original design for marriage—a man & woman for life!
- Immediately following this episode, children enter the picture, and Jesus challenges the cultural view of children as property and persons to be overlooked

Matthew 21:14-16 NLT

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children in the Temple shouting, “Praise God for the Son of David.”

But the leaders were indignant. ¹⁶ They asked Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”

“Yes,” Jesus replied. “Haven’t you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, ‘You have taught children and infants to give you praise.’”

Proverbs 22:6

“Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.” **NRSV**

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even
when they are old they will not turn from it.” **NIV**

“Teach a child how to follow the right way;
even when he is old, he will stay on course.” **(VOICE)**

“Point your kids in the right direction—
when they’re old they won’t be lost.” **MSG**

Let the Children Come

Welcoming children means...

- Parents/guardians are creating “faith-full” homes; guiding their physical and spiritual development
- The church includes them in the community and *assists* families in disciple-making and faith-building
- Adults are protecting them from those who would abuse them (e.g. culture, systems, predators, etc.)
- We’re honest and transparent with them as we grow together in God’s patient love, grace, and forgiveness
- We stay committed to telling them God’s story, which has become our story, that they might join in it too

Psalm 78:1-4 (VOICE)

¹ O my people, listen to me! Hear my instruction; soak up every word of what I am about to tell you.

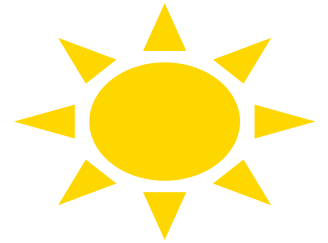
² I will open my mouth in parables;
I will speak of ancient mysteries—

³ Things that we have heard about, things that we have known, things which our ancestors declared to us *again and again*. ⁴ We will not keep these things secret from their children; rather, we will tell the coming generation all about the praise that is due to the Eternal One. *We will tell them* all about His strength, *power*, and wonders.

Psalm 78:6-7 (VOICE)

⁶ He gave His *holy* law to Jacob, His teaching to the people of Israel, which He instructed our fathers to pass down to their children ⁶ so that the coming generation would know them *by heart*, even the children who are not yet born, so that they might *one day* stand up and teach them to their children, ⁷ *tell them* to put their confidence *and hope* in God, and never forget the *wondrous* things He has done.

Let the Children Come



Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org