Jesus Blesses the Children



Scripture Reference: Mark 10:13-16

Suggested Theme: Jesus values and loves every child. We can believe this and treat other children with love.

Memory Verse: “Then Jesus took the children in his arms. He put his hands on them and blessed them.” Mark 10:16, ICB

Story Overview:

When parents brought their small children to Jesus to be blessed by Him, the disciples tried to hold them back. Jesus told the disciples to let the children come to Him.

Background Study:

> “Some people brought their small children to Jesus so he could touch them. But his followers told the people to stop bringing their children to him. When Jesus saw this, he was displeased. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them. The kingdom of God belongs to people who are like these little children. I tell you the truth. You must accept the kingdom of God as a little child accepts things, or you will never enter it.’ Then Jesus took the children in his arms. He put his hands on them and blessed them.” Mark 10:13-16, ICB

You can read other accounts of this story in Matthew 19:13-15 and Luke 18:15-17. This is one of those stories that children love because it is about children!

Jesus must not have been harsh and grave. These are not attributes that make children feel welcome. He probably did not appear silly or weak either. This would not have made the parents trust Him and seek His blessing. Besides what we can learn from His actions, we do not know much about Jesus’ demeanour. He definitely had strong emotions. He was indignant when the disciples tried to keep the children away. He was not afraid to rebuke them. This controlled strength, genuine attitude, and openness drew people to Jesus.

Parents want what is best for their children. They had seen Jesus do wonderful things. He had healed people and brought comfort to even the lowest people in society. It was the custom for parents to bring their children to a rabbi or synagogue leader before their first birthday. In this story, the children were very young. Luke says they were babies (Luke 18:15), and all three passages refer to them as “little.” They were old enough to be “called to Him.”

Matthew and Mark both record this story immediately following Jesus’ discussion on divorce. It was appropriate for these parents and children to come to Him now. If women were mistreated and lacked

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power in the society of the time, then children were even more so. Their innocence and sense of humility and hope were attributes that Jesus wanted His disciples to notice.

Jesus wants His followers to be like children. In Matthew 18:2-6 He drew a child onto His knee and told the listeners that they should be like the child. In that instance, He was referring to a child's humility and lowly status. A child does not think about earning, deserving, or even paying for blessings. He/she simply hopes and accepts with joy. Unfortunately, as the child ages, he begins to mimic adults and have more of a "market mentality" concerning gifts and emotions. The idea becomes, "I'll do something for you (or feel good towards you) if it benefits me."

In that same passage, Jesus makes it clear how we should treat children. By treating children well, we are treating Jesus well. Giving children opportunities to sin (by neglecting them or withholding the care they need) is strongly condemned by Jesus (Matthew 18:5-6).

Jesus' words concerning children were extremely important and contrasted with the practices of pagans of the day. It was common practice in both Greece and Rome to abandon unwanted children by the road to let them die. Later, early Christians were known for taking in these orphans.

Another passage where Jesus speaks about adults being like children is 1 Peter 2:2-3. We should crave pure spiritual milk like a baby craves milk.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring a doll to the gathering today and talk to the children about how we care for a baby. Talk about how much babies and children need affection and love. Discuss child safety and the foods babies and children need and like. A young mother might be willing to bring her baby along and talk about how she cares for her baby. Perhaps she could show the contents of her nappy bag and explain the use of each item. "Babies need special care. In today's story, we are going to learn what Jesus said about babies and children."

The Story:

One day, after Jesus had been teaching people about God, some parents started bringing their babies and little children to Jesus.

"Jesus," one of them asked, "you are such a good teacher. Will you please place your hand on my child's head and give her a blessing?"

Jesus was very happy to bless the little children. He loved children.

However, the disciples saw all of the parents and children around Jesus, and they thought they were bothering Him. They knew that Jesus must have been very tired from teaching all the adults. Surely He wouldn't want to spend time with all of these children! So the disciples began telling the parents and children to go away and leave Jesus alone.

Jesus saw what the disciples were doing, but He did not like it. That just wasn't fair to the children! Jesus told the disciples to stop sending the children away, and to "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them."

The disciples saw that Jesus was displeased, so they let the children and parents come to Jesus. Maybe they were surprised that Jesus loved the children so much. Maybe they thought He only wanted to spend time with adults like them.

After Jesus let the children come to him, He told the disciples something very important. "See these little children? See how they love me? The kingdom of heaven is made for people who have hearts like little children."

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The disciples learned that God's kingdom was made for people like children, and that they could learn from children. Now they knew that Jesus thought children were very important.

It is not up to the disciples to decide who should be in the kingdom of God. The king gets to decide what kind of people deserve to be in the kingdom. If Jesus loved and accepted children and people who have the hearts of children, then so would they.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-073-jesus-children/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- What did the parents want Jesus to give their children? (A blessing)
- What did the disciples do when parents brought their children to Jesus? (They tried to keep the children away)
- When Jesus saw the disciples keeping the children away, what did He say? ("Let the little children come to me")
- What did Jesus say about children and God's kingdom? (The kingdom of God is for people who are like children)
- What did the disciples learn from this event?
- What did the children in the story learn from this?
- What did you learn about Jesus from this story?
- What did you learn about God from this story?

Reflection:

- How old do you think the children were?
- How many children do you think there were in this story?

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- What part of the story did you find most interesting?
- How do you think the parents and children felt when the disciples kept them from Jesus?
- How do you think the parents and children felt when Jesus told the children to come to him?
- If you were one of the children, what would you have done when Jesus said, “Let the children come to me”?
- Jesus says people must become like children to enter the kingdom of God. How do you think adults could be more like kids? How should they not be like kids?
- Jesus loved children. Are there any other children you especially love to be with or play with?
- What question would you ask God about this story?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- 1,2,3 Jesus Loves Me
- Hello Hello Song
- Jesus Loves the Little Children
- Jesus Loves Me
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- L-O-V-E Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Make arrangements with the teacher in a younger group and let the children visit today (or next week). Perhaps the children could act out today’s story for them or teach them a song.
- Discuss how Children learn at different age levels.
- Collect the names and addresses of children who live in other places and send them cards.
- A nice bulletin board idea is to place a picture of Jesus in the centre of the board and then put children’s pictures all around. These could be pictures from magazines or even photos of the children in your group.

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You could entitle the board “Who does Jesus Love” or “Jesus Loves the Children.”

- Help the children plan a picnic, party or other activity for younger children in the congregation. If your group of children is old enough, then they might arrange a free babysitting night so that parents of young children can have a night out.
- Encourage the children to sit by a family with small children in worship today. They should only do this if they can be a good example for the child. Parents will not want another child to be a distraction.
- If your congregation has a crèche or childcare during worship, then children could sign up to help on one Sunday.
- Research characteristics of children younger than the children in your group and discuss them. Children love to know how much they have grown and are often eager to help younger children.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Help the children collect items to take to the local hospital for the children there. You could make parcels and decorate them. Some ideas might be colouring sheets and crayons, puzzles, books, hand or finger puppets, etc. If you put food or lollies in the parcels, then be sure to label them. Some children in hospitals have strict diets.
- Help the children make parcels similar to the ones above to hand to younger children in your congregation.
- Help the children make paper doll chains of children and decorate them to look like children. (see links below for instructions)

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Colouring page at christiananswers.net
- Craft: Paper Doll Chain version 1
- Craft: Paper Doll Chain version 2
- A collection of activities for “Jesus Loves the Little Children” (Sermon 4 kids)
- A collection of activities for “All the Children of the World” (Sermon 4 kids)

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Date
2026/11/10

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