

Wil Owens

Let the Children Come; Matt 19:13-15 (II)

GPBC

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Introduction – Last week we concentrated our time on the implication that parents were bringing their children to Jesus. They planned, scheduled, organized and brought their children to Jesus. They took the time and made the effort to invest in the spiritual well-being of their children. We don't even know their names, but their determination and heart for their children is an extraordinary example for us as parents today. Childrens ministry begins in the home with mom and dad. Their spiritual care is to be our foremost concern. So in keeping with their example we listed 5 practical ways and 5 personal ways that we too can be bringing our children to Jesus. None of us are perfect parents and it will take time and priority to bring our children to Jesus, but nothing could be more important and whatever it takes will be worth more than anything. The text doesn't end with the parents' responsibility. There is more here for us to learn when it comes to our children.

I. The Disciples Hindered

- a. Now you wouldn't expect this, but it happened anyway. The disciples actually discouraged the parents. I imagine the disciples were thinking, "Jesus is too busy to be bothered with these children. They'll make all kinds of noise, they won't pay attention, they'll be climbing all over him. He doesn't need this distraction."
- b. They probably thought they were doing Jesus a favor. Surely He would be better off having a few moments to rest from His strenuous ministry than being surrounded by these children. They actually went so far as to rebuke the parents.
 - i. The first lesson here for us as parents is to not allow anyone or anything to keep us from doing what is in the best interest of our children's spiritual care.
 - ii. And for all of us believers the lesson would be, don't make the mistake these disciples made. Don't assume that children are a bother or distraction, but understand there is a ministry to children for us as adults and for us as a church.
- c. Jesus corrected the disciples when He said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them."

- d. As believing adults and the church how do we follow Jesus' instruction to let the children come to Him and not hinder them?
- e. Now if we go back just one chapter to 18:5-6 we are reminded just how serious it is to be a hindrance to anyone coming to Christ. This passage is addressing believers as little ones but it surely would apply to children, whether or not they have made a profession of faith.
- f. I take "let the little children come to Me" to mean that we as adult believers and the church should be making a way for children to come, opening opportunities, providing easy access to Christ. I take "do not hinder them" to mean don't be an obstacle and remove obstacles that would deter or discourage or even keep children from Christ. Here are 5 practical ways we as adults and the church How can we make way for children to easily find and know and love Jesus?
 - i. By what we teach them.
 1. We have many planned opportunities to teach children and students here in our church – SS, Pond Kids, Awana's, VBS, student discipleship – teachers I know you are volunteers and your time is already stretched thin, but you have no idea the eternal impact you have.
 2. Prepare your lesson well, devote yourself to conveying biblical truth and gospel hope in a winsome way to your young listeners. It can be frustrating at times and sometimes you wonder if anyone heard anything you said. But you can be sure they are watching and they are listening. Give them the words of life and lift up Christ. Give it your all.
 3. To this day I have never forgotten my high school SS teacher. He opened the Bible Sunday after Sunday and taught the things of God with passion. When he spoke of Christ, he spoke as if he knew Him and loved Him. His walk with God and zeal for teaching students made a mark on my life that remains to this day.
 - ii. By our example to them.
 1. Children will see no greater example of adults in love with Jesus than mom and dad, but when they come to church and see a whole group of adults that are in love with Jesus, it makes the path wide for them to trust and

follow Christ. They see that following Jesus is not just a mom and dad thing. These other grown ups at church, they live out their faith, they sacrifice, they rejoice in the Lord, they live holy lives, and they worship God with a passion.

2. When we affirm biblical truth in our teaching and example biblical faith in our living, we reinforce what children are being taught in the home.
 3. Growing up in church my best friend's dad was a tremendous example to me. When he would stand up in church and pray there was no doubt he was speaking directly to God. The adults that helped out in our youth ministry, they lived out the faith at home. I know. I was there in their homes and saw it. These believing adults were instrumental in my growth and walk in the Lord.
- iii. By encouraging and resourcing parents to disciple their children.
1. Instead of rebuking parents like the disciples, let us encourage parents, pray with them for their children, provide resources to disciple their children. Come alongside one another for the good of our children.
- iv. By taking the time to disciple and mentor and invest in children.
1. Find that child or student that you connect with and make the most of it.
 2. Find that single parent and come alongside them.
 3. Find that child or student that's left out and spiritually adopt them. Get involved in the lives right here, right around you. For their spiritual good. Let them see that church is not just a Sunday activity but Christ is life!
- v. By rejoicing and celebrating and welcoming children into the life of the church – let us not in any way communicate that children are a bother but rather a ministry

II. Jesus Taught

- a. Jesus says “for” so His next words explain why we are to let the little children come to Him and not hinder them – for to such belongs the

kingdom of heaven. There's the connection to the passage we read earlier in 18. Children are a visible, living illustration of gospel faith. Baptism illustrates new birth. Communion illustrates the substitutionary death of Christ. Marriage illustrates the gospel. Children illustrate true faith of true believers. So don't keep them away, let them come. Let them be present. Give them a place to belong. They show us what true faith looks like.

- b. We call this childlike faith. Meaning children have the ability to wholeheartedly trust with no question, hesitation, or equivocation. That's why we have to teach our children to not take candy from strangers or never get in a vehicle with a stranger because children are so trusting.
 - i. I admit I've had a little fun with this when our children were little. I would trick them often. They used to say, "Really?" Now they say, "Dad!"
- c. Childlike faith means to wholeheartedly trust God with no question, hesitation, or equivocation. No matter if circumstance or feeling seem to be contrary to God's Word, if God has spoken, we believe Him.
- d. That's the kind of faith Abraham had – Gen 15:1-6
- e. That's the kind of faith the disciples had – Matt 4:18-22
- f. Little children illustrate true saving faith.

III. The Parents Received

- a. That's exactly what the parents desired Jesus to do and they didn't let anyone stop them and their effort reaped great reward for Jesus personally blessed their children.

Conclusion – There is a principle for parenthood in Prov 22:6 – train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. That's not an absolute promise, but it is a true, biblical principle for wise godly living. When our children reach adulthood and are on their own, it's between them and the Lord which way they will go and what they will believe. But if they choose to not believe, let it not be because we were an obstacle to their faith and did not do all we could to make the path to Christ an easy access. If we do all we can to let the children come to Christ and in no way hinder them, far more will love Him and follow Him than will deny Him! Let the little children come!