

LET THE CHILDREN COME

A mom asked her son on the way home from church what they had talked about in Sunday School that day. He son told her that they had talked about the creation story and how God had taken a rib from Adam and made a wife for him. After lunch the mom found her son doubled over in pain. She asked him what was wrong and her son said; "Mom, my side hurts. I think I'm having a wife."

Kids can sometimes say the weirdest things. Today is Mother's Day, and I want to talk about the importance of being a parent. Mother's make a huge impact on the lives of their kids. I think we often forget the tremendous responsibility and also impact of raising kids.

Mark 10:13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

From this story I see 3 things:

1. LET Them Come (vs. 13-14)

Some parents wanted to bring their kids to Jesus to have him touch them. Isn't that a great desire? Don't you want the same thing for your kids? All of us as parents should want to get our kids to Jesus. We want them to see the truth and receive Jesus as savior. We should all be modeling that desire.

The problem is that there are many barriers to kids getting to Jesus. Sometimes those barriers can even come from within the church. In this passage the disciples felt that Jesus had better things to be doing with His time than hanging around with children. Unfortunately, there are times in the church when we do not place the priority on children's ministry that we should.

It says here that Jesus was INDIGNANT when he saw this. The word is AGANAKTEO which means in much pain or very grieved. In other words, He was angry! I am so happy that we have a church that honors and values children and seeks to remove obstacles to their getting to Jesus. In a few months we are going to be having summer camps again. Camps are hard on our building. We always have problems with the washrooms. We come in and our beautiful sanctuary has been transformed to a jungle or farm or wild west setting. It is inconvenient. So why do we do it?

Why is it so important for kids to get to Jesus? That is when most of us make the decision to follow Christ. As parents we only have our children for a limited number of years in which to make an impact on their lives. Statistics show that kids who do not receive Jesus before they leave High School probably never will (8 out of 10). After university this is even more true (9 out of 10).

One author wrote that kids are like wet cement. When cement is still wet, it will take the shape of the form into which it is poured. Once it dries and becomes hard, it can take a jack hammer to break it up and all you will have left is broken pieces. It will never be the same again. Our children are wet cement. However, they are molded when they are small into the pattern that they will follow. That's why it is imperative that parents become the foremost teacher. Once those children have settled their hearts, souls, and minds, changing that preset is MAJOR DESTRUCTION! And who will be there to pick up the fractured pieces of our kids?

A preacher wanted to show off his garden to a man who wouldn't let his children come to church. When asked why the man had said that he wanted to wait until his kids were old enough to decide for themselves if they wanted to go to church or not. When they walked into the pastor's garden, it was full of weeds, which were choking out his squash, beans & other vegetables. The man said: "This is a pitiful excuse for a garden!" To which the preacher replied: "I just wanted to wait until all the plants had a chance to decide for themselves what they wanted to do!"

Children's ministry for us as a church is a priority, and getting your kids to Jesus when they are still young should also be a priority.

A little old lady was amazed at how nice the young man from next door was. Every day he would help her gather things from her car or help her in her yard. One day the old lady finally asked the young man, "son, how did you become such a fine young man". The young man replied, "well, when I was a boy, I had a drug problem". The old lady was shocked, "I can't believe that". The young man replied, "it's true. My parents drug me to church on Sunday morning, drug me to church on Sunday night and drug me to youth group on Wednesday night"

Letting the children come means that we get out of the way. As I said, that often means inconvenience.

More than 40 years ago there was a church in Sarnia with a youth group that was playing sardines. That is the game where one person hides and everyone else tries to find them. This one kid thought it would be a good idea to hide up under the organ bench in the sanctuary. As other kids found him and they tried to hide he fell and broke one of the foot pedals on the church's VERY big and very expensive organ. I know this story because I was the kid!

Dr. Tony Evans talks about a major league baseball superstar's recollection of his boyhood home. He, his friends, and his father played baseball quite often in their backyard. As a result, the grass had really taken a beating. It didn't look good anymore, unless you were a child looking for a nice place to play ball. One day, as the kids and the father were playing and having a great time, the boy's mother leaned out one of the windows and called, "Can't you guys find somewhere else to play? You're killing the grass." The man looked at his wife and answered, "Honey, we aren't raising grass; we're raising kids."

Ministry to children will cost us but it is worth it! Parents – get your children to Jesus no matter what it takes. Don't let anything come before that. Not even school. Don't be so concerned with their getting an A on their math test that they grow up unequipped to face life's ultimate test. Don't be so concerned with athletics. You don't want them to win the big game at the expense of losing out on what is truly meaningful in life. Don't get in the way of children coming to Jesus. Let them come.

2. LEARN From Them (vs. 15)

Jesus said that the kingdom of God belongs to SUCH AS THESE. Then he says;

Mark 10:15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

God does not want us to BE children but be LIKE them. It is not the age but the attitude He is talking about. Kids see the world differently. They often speak with a refreshing honesty. I heard of one pastor who, during a family service, invited the kids who were in church to write down any comments or questions they had. He read them out to the congregation the following week;

Dear Pastor, I would like to go to heaven someday because I know my brother won't be there - Stephen. Age 8

Dear Pastor, I think a lot more people would come to our church if we moved it to Disney World - Loreen. Age 9.

Dear Pastor, please say a prayer for our baseball team. We really need God's help. Either that or a new pitcher. Thank you - Alexander. Age 10

Dear Pastor, are there any devils still on earth? I think there may be one in my class - Carla. Age 10

Dear Pastor, I liked your sermon last Sunday. Especially when it was finished - Ralph, Age 11

Children remind us of what childlike faith and childlike dependence is all about. Max Lucado was out walking with his daughter. He asked if she knew where she was going and she said no. He asked if that scared her and she said "of course not - you are with me".

Children remind us of what it is to look at the world with wide eyed wonder. They remind us of who we used to be before the world beat us up and made us cold and apathetic. I love working with kids because they are so open and honest with you. You always know where you stand. Simple childlike faith is so refreshing in the world today.

A teacher was speaking to the Sunday school about all the things money can't buy. "It can't buy laughter and it can't buy love" she told them. Trying to emphasize the point she said, "What would you do if I offered you \$1,000 not to love your mother and father?" Stunned silence ensued. Finally, a small voice said, "How much would you give me not to love my big sister?"

Let them come and learn from them.

3. LOVE Them Completely (vs. 16)

Look at what it says at the end of this verse that we read;

Mark 10:16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

What a great model for us in how to love our kids. What does love mean? A group of professionals posed this question to a group of 4 to 8-year-olds: "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So, my grandfather does it for her now even though he has arthritis too. That's love." Rebecca - age 8

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." Karl - age 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs." Chrissy - age 6

"Love is when my Mommy makes coffee for my Daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny - age 7

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt and then he wears it every day." Noelle - age 7

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well." Tommy - age 6

"I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones." Lauren - age 4

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot because people forget." Jessica - age 8

That us so true, people forget. How do you learn to love a child? You do what Jesus did:

a. He Took – love means spending time with your kids

Jesus took time to spend with children. He made it a priority. Parents, are you spending enough time with your kids? I heard someone once say “it isn’t the quantity of time but the quality of time”. I say it is both. Is time with your kids a priority? Do you as a family do something special together every week? Do you make it a habit of eating together as a family? Do you attend church as a family?

We have a great kid’s program, but you will notice that a couple of times during the year we will have a family service. The reason is not just to give the Sunday School teachers a day off. I sometimes get worried that there might be new people who come to the service that morning expecting a kid’s program but then they find we are not offering one that week. So why do we do it? Because we want families to attend church together so kids get to experience ‘big church’ with their parents.

When I was growing up, I learned to attend church with my parents. There was something very healthy about that. Kids need to learn to sit in church. Of course, we do not have the same expectations for the very young ones which is why we still offer the Nursery. We want children to feel like they are an essential part of everything we do, including the worship services. He took.

b. He Touched – love means touching your kids

Jesus could have just waved and spoken to the children from a distance but he didn’t. It says He put His hands on them. Do you make it a habit of physically touching your kids? There have been lots of studies done about the importance of physical touch especially early in childhood development. Babies that are not held do not do as well as babies who are held often.

A little four-year-old girl became frightened late one night during a thunderstorm. After one particularly loud clap of thunder, she jumped up from her bed, ran down the hall, and burst into her parents’ room. Jumping right in the middle of the bed, she sought her parents’ arms for comfort and assurance. "Don’t worry, Honey," her father said, trying to calm her fears. "Jesus will protect you." The little girl snuggled closer to her father and said, "I know that, Daddy, but right now I need someone with skin on!" Jesus took and He touched.

c. He Blessed – love means speaking truth into your kids

When it says that Jesus blessed them it means that He spoke love into their hearts. When was the last time someone really blessed you by speaking an encouraging word into your life? When was the last time you blessed your child by speaking love into their hearts? As a parent, is the only time you speak to your children to discipline them? That must be balanced by affirmation and affection.

Prov 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

This is one of the most misunderstood verse in the Bible. Many people think that it is a promise but it is not really.

Many people think that means that if you raise your child in a Christian home and try to instill in them good godly ways, then when they grow up, they may go through a period of rebellion but eventually they will come back to the Lord. That is not really what the verse is trying to say. God does not promise us that in the Bible because your kids have a free will. Even kids raised in the best of Christian homes can choose to walk away.

What it says is that we should train up our children "IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO" it means "according to their own natural bent or personality". It means train up your children according to their own giftedness, abilities, and talents. In other words, if your child is good at athletics, steer them toward athletics. If they're good musically, steer them toward music whether you are or care about it or not. If they're good with numbers then steer them toward numbers. Don't try to make them you. Let them be them, but in all these things steer them towards Jesus.

Speak love and encouragement to your kids.

Helen was a junior high math teacher. One Friday the lesson wasn't going well and the class was bickering, so Helen wondered what she could do to encourage her kids. She made out a sheet of paper for every kid in the class and handed them out. Each kid was asked to write down on that paper the nicest thing they could think about that person, and then pass the paper to the next kid. She collected the papers and the next day handed them out. Everyone was so surprised at all the nice things others had said about them, that the bickering stopped.

Several years later Helen was being picked up at the airport by her parents. As they drove home, they asked if she remembered Mark Eklund? She said yes - how is he. They said he was killed in Vietnam, and his parents had called and asked if she could attend his funeral.

Helen went to the funeral, and to the funeral dinner out on the farm. His parents pulled out Mark's wallet and took out an old piece of paper that had been taped, folded and refolded many times. They asked if she remembered it. It was that paper she had given out to the class in Junior high. They said Mark had it on him when he died and they just wanted to thank her. They said, "as you can see Mark treasured it very much." Other classmates chimed in saying they also had kept the letter. Chuck had his in the top drawer of his desk at home. John's wife said, "John asked me to put his in our wedding album. Marilyn said hers was in her diary. Vicki reached into her pocketbook and took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. She said she kept it with her all the time. "I guess we all saved our lists" Vicki concluded. Helen said when she got home that night she cried. She never imagined the power of encouragement, and its long-lasting effects in the lives of those kids.

Jesus took, He touched and He blessed. Parents, get your kids to Jesus. Learn from them and love them completely. Grandparents, you can do the same, or anyone that has the opportunity to impact a young life. Thank you mom for all you do, but for all of today - take the opportunity to bless a child today.