

STORY

Jesus Teaches with Children - Matthew 18:1-6, 10; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 9:46-48) and Blesses Them - Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, help me to remember again the lessons that Your Son Jesus taught through children. Show me again how to be humble and trusting in my faith before You all the days of my life. And as I set out to teach the "little ones" in my care, help me to remember how very important they are to You. Do not let anything I say or do mislead them into sin, or worse, into doubting or unbelief. As you have assured us it would be so when the children are brought to You, bless them in their precious faith that they may trust You for Salvation and all else that they need. I depend on You for all my needs as I come to You in prayer. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Converted - "turned", spiritually, turned from being a child of Satan to a child of God.

Receive the Kingdom of heaven or God - the Holy Spirit places faith in the heart, making a person a member of God's kingdom.

OUTER AIM

Jesus taught His disciples to be child-like in faith.

INNER AIM

A child-like faith looks to Jesus for all things.

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 2, pp. 239-244)

On two separate occasions, Jesus brought His disciples down to earth with lessons about children. A number of times the disciples argued about who was or would be greatest of them. Sometimes they asked Jesus if they could sit as rulers on thrones with Jesus. Other times they wanted to imitate the rich and powerful. Visions of an earthly kingdom danced in their heads. But Jesus used a lesson with little children to teach them about greatness. Another time, Jesus' disciples did not want to bother Him with children. Sometimes children don't seem to be important to some people. They say things like, "He's just a child." But Jesus lets us know that children are very important to Him and can teach us something important about believing.

The first lesson: against pride

Luke 9:46

- ▶ These events happened shortly after the Transfiguration when Jesus had separated three of the disciples from the others to witness that event.
- ▶ Perhaps out of envy, Jesus' disciples started to argue as to who was greatest among them.

Matthew 18:1

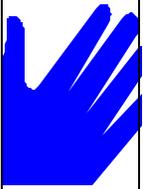
- ▶ They finally came to Jesus and voiced their question.

Luke 9:47

- ▶ Jesus, knew exactly what they were thinking and decided they needed a lesson in greatness. So He took a little child and set him before them.

Matthew 18:3

- ▶ Jesus wanted them to really think about what He had to say.



- ▶ Although the disciples confessed to believe in Jesus, their hearts still needed to be turned from their vain ambition and pride to the genuine humility of little children.
- ▶ Pride doesn't allow faith to confess how bad one's sins make one and how deserving a person is of punishment. Pride won't plead for mercy only on Christ's merits without any worthiness within. Pride would rather say, "I'm not as bad as other people. I've done a lot of good and deserve to be rewarded for it."
- ▶ You won't get anywhere in the kingdom of heaven where Christ rules with His Gospel if you have such pride.

Matthew 18:4

- ▶ A person whose faith and life is genuinely as humble as that of a little child will be lifted up before God in the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 9:48

- ▶ The proud are likely to despise the humble and the "little ones," namely children or people who are new to the Christian faith.
- ▶ But Jesus says that accepting them is the same as accepting Him and also God the Father.
- ▶ For in God's eyes, their humble faith in Him makes them great.

Matthew 18:6

- ▶ Then Jesus contrasts receiving them with causing them to sin.
- ▶ If in pride you turn away one of these little ones, or mislead them to sin in any way, you have done very serious harm.
- ▶ It would be better to lose your physical life, than to cause someone to lose his or her spiritual life by your misguiding them.

Matthew 18:10

- ▶ Jesus further warns, watch out how you treat these "little ones."
- ▶ Don't despise them for God has assigned angels to watch over them and report directly to Him all that happens with them. You don't want God to hear from them that you have looked down on or mistreated them, do you?

The second lesson: be innocently trusting of God

Mark 10:13

- ▶ Some parents, usually assumed to be their mothers, brought little children, Luke says infants, to Jesus for Him to bless them.
- ▶ According to the Jewish custom, parents often brought children to the rabbis and priests to be blessed.
- ▶ But the disciples rebuked them and tried to turn them away. Perhaps the disciples thought that these very small children and infants wouldn't be able to understand a blessing from Jesus. Or they didn't want to wear Jesus out after His long day of preaching.

v. 14

- ▶ Jesus became very angry, very indignant with his disciples when He saw them doing that.
- ▶ He told them to let the little children come to Him and don't forbid them.
- ▶ Why? Because infants also can and do believe, and their faith, which is dependent, without doubting, but simply accepting Jesus at His Word, exemplifies what all believers' faith should be like.
- ▶ From this we know also that infants and little children can be baptized, receiving from baptism the blessings of faith and forgiveness.
- ▶ It is wrong to prevent in any way children from receiving spiritual blessings from the Lord.

v. 15

- ▶ Jesus speaks very seriously to them. Without a faith like that of a little child, no person can have the Gospel rule their heart.

v. 16

- ▶ As further evidence of their importance, Jesus did gather them up in His arms, and personally gave them a blessing.
- ▶ Nothing implies their need for physical healing so we will assume that Jesus gave them spiritual blessings. For indeed, as infants they can believe and receive spiritual blessings.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, in the lesson today You are telling me how precious I am to You. You assure me that Your angels are watching over me. And that I too can receive the great blessings of forgiveness and Salvation that You have purchased for me. I ask Your blessing upon me today also. Help me to be and remain humble and trusting in You, now and as I grow older. Do not let me think that I don't need You for everything that is good for me. Let me never forget how important the "little ones" of life are to You. Thank You, oh Lord, for giving also to me all these many blessings and more besides. I trust in You, My Lord. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Briefly review the previous story as time allows. Make links to the new story when possible.

Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. When scripture records the story in more than one place, you may want to harmonize the accounts (including extra details found in each account). Let the students know where they can find the additional details in the Bible.

Discuss the story: While reviewing the major events of the story, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the story and show that they understand the story.

APPLICATIONS

1. These are important lessons that we can learn from little children. a) Jesus wants humility in us, not being proud and demanding the best positions. For "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." See Jam. 4:6-7; Luke 18:9-14. Discuss when children are humble and not proud. When does pride get in the way of faith? b) Jesus also wants our faith to be like that of infants. They trust completely without doubting and depend completely on others to provide their needs and care for them. So we need to do with our trust in God. We need to trust God completely when He speaks and guides us. We realize that we are entirely dependent upon Him for all our needs, both physical and spiritual. When people get older they begin to think that they can meet their own needs without Jesus or only depend on Him for certain things, but think they can do the rest on their own. This is foolishness, for in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Grace is a gift of God, not of works (Eph 2:8).
2. These lessons teach how important children are to God. God has even directed special angels to watch over the "little ones" of all ages. He wants to protect them and nurture them in their faith. When children have parents and families who recognize that and teach them about Jesus, God is blessing them indeed. Certainly it is important that children, even infants, be brought to be baptized and be nurtured with the Word. The latter story is used in the Baptismal Liturgy as testimony that Baptism indeed brings the

blessings of faith and forgiveness to infants and children as well. Discuss how the children can know that God loves them too, no matter what their age. Let them know they can pray to God, learn from Him, and be blessed by Jesus too.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Mark 10:14 - Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Psalms 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Middle any of the above and...

James 4:6-7 - But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Upper any of the above and...

2 Timothy 3:15 - And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalms 19:7 - The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

Psalms 19:8-10 - The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Psalms 19:12-14 - Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

HYMN CHOICES

"Dear Father, Who Has Made Us All" (TLH #299)

"Dearest Jesus, We are Here" (TLH #300)

"Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd" (TLH #627)

"Shepherd of Tender Youth" (TLH #628)