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## Session 2: God's Heart for Children

Welcome to the second session of *Life on Life Sunday School Teachers' Training Curriculum*. Today's topic is God's heart for children. Let's start with asking you a question.

- How do you think God feels about children?

There are four Scripture passages which help us to understand God's heart for children. Kindly read along with me while I read the Bible, they are here. The first verse is from Deuteronomy 4:9.

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*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

Deuteronomy 4:9

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The next verse is from Psalm 8:2.

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*Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.*

Psalm 8:2

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The next verses are from Matthew 18:2–5.

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

Matthew 18:2–5

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The next verses are from Matthew 18:10–14.

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*See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?*

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*And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.*

Matthew 18:10–14

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- What did you discover about God's heart for children from these verses?

The Bible makes it very clear that God loves and values children. We also know that He often uses children to accomplish His will.

- What Bible stories do you know where God used children to accomplish His will?

Some examples include the story of Joseph from Genesis 37 and we read about Samuel in 1 Samuel 2. We read about David in 1 Samuel 17, and Naaman's servant girl in 2 Kings 5. And from the New Testament, the boy with the lunch in John 6 and Jesus in the temple from Luke 2.

Children are very important to God, and He often chooses to use children just as He might use an adult. But often we adults do not view them in the same way. Even in the church, we do not often value children the way we should. Here, Jesus gave us an example of how we ought to value children, and it should be a reminder to us even today.

You are probably familiar with the story in Mark 10:13–16. Let's read it together so we remember exactly what happened.

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*People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 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. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.*

Mark 10:13–16

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- What do we learn about the way Jesus responded to the children here?

In this passage, people, probably parents, brought their children to Jesus so that He could bless them. It was common for religious leaders to bless children. Usually, it was a brief prayer of blessing that did not take much time.

But before Jesus could respond, His disciples intervened. They rebuked those who had brought the children. The language used to describe this suggests that the disciples may have actually been unkind to the people, turning them away without any concern or sympathy.

We do not know exactly why the disciples did this, but it may have been an attempt to protect Jesus or His time. He may have been trying to rest and they did not want Him to be disturbed. Or they may have thought that His time was too valuable to spend with children.

Whatever the reason, we see that the disciples' actions made Jesus very angry. This is one of only two times that Scripture tells us that Jesus became angry. Do you remember the other time?

It was when Jesus was angry with the money changers in the temple, Matthew 21. What the disciples did brought the same response from Jesus as the money changers in the temple! That is very serious!

Jesus did three things to rebuke the disciples for their behaviour. He told them to let the children come. Then he said the same thing again, but this time in a different way. He told them not to keep the children from coming. Finally, He told them that the faith of a child is exactly the kind of faith that we should all have.

- How would you describe God's heart for children on the basis of what we have learned today?
  
- Has your view of children changed as a result of understanding God's heart for children? If so, how?
  
- What is one specific way you can reflect God's heart for children in your ministry?

In this session we learned that God loves and values each and every child. Children are very important to God, and He often uses them as He might use an adult. From the beginning to the end of God's Word, He speaks about the importance of the worth of children. Because children are important to God, children are important to us. Children have significance in God's plan and there are many Bible verses about children being a blessing. We can follow Jesus' example by showing a child that he/she has value in our eyes and the eyes of God. This is the end of our second session, thank you for joining us.

In Session 3, we will learn about spiritual formation in children and how we can lead them to Christ. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this great opportunity to learn about Your heart for children. Father, we pray for Your grace to reflect Your heart for children in our ministry. Father, we pray for thousands of children perishing among us. And we pray to reach out to them with your great love. In Jesus' name, amen.

- In the space below, write one new thing that you learned in this session.

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