

Lesson 1: God's Heart for Children

Suggested Supplies (for all lessons): Paper, pen or pencil, and a Bible

Objective: You will explore what God's Word says about children and understand how He views them.

How does God see children?

Before we take a closer look at our curriculum, let's first talk about children, how God sees them, and how we can best teach them in our church.

We'll start by looking at God's Word and seeing what God says about children. If you are working with others, get in small groups, look up each passage and read it aloud as a group. Then discuss what it says about God's heart for children and write a brief response.

Scripture passages are: Deuteronomy 4:9; Psalm 8:2; Matthew 10:40–42; Matthew 18:10–14.

These are just a few of the things God's Word says about children. **The Bible makes it very clear that God loves and values children.** We also know that He not only loves and values children, but He often uses children to accomplish His will.

- Can you think of stories from the Bible where God used children to accomplish His will?

Here are some passages to consider:

Joseph (Genesis 37)

Samuel (1 Samuel 2)

David (1 Samuel 17)

The boy with the lunch (John 6)

Naaman's servant girl (2 Kings 5)

Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2)

Children are very important to God and He often chooses to use them just as He might use an adult. But often we adults don't view them the same way. Often, even in the church, we don't value children the way we should.

Jesus gave us an example of how we ought to value children and it should be a warning to us even today.

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

What do we see here? Jesus apparently was in a house when people (probably parents) brought their children to Him so that He could bless them. It was common for religious leaders to be asked to bless children. Usually, it was a brief prayer of blessing which really didn't take very long.

Before Jesus could respond, His disciples intervened, and we are told that they rebuked those who had brought the children. The language used to describe this suggests that the disciples were actually mean to the people, turning them away without any concern or sympathy that their request was being denied.

We don't know exactly why the disciples did this, but it may have been their attempt at protecting Jesus. He may have been trying to rest and they didn't want Him disturbed. Or they may have thought that His time was too valuable and that children weren't important enough for Him to give them time.

Whatever the reason, we see that the disciples' actions made Jesus very angry. This is one of only two times that the Scripture tells us that He got angry.

- Do you remember the other time?

Jesus got angry at the money changers in the temple (Matthew 21).

So, what the disciples did brought the same response from Jesus as the money changers in the temple! That's pretty serious!

Jesus did three things to rebuke the disciples for their behavior:

He told them **“DO let the children come”** (a positive)

He told them **“DO NOT forbid children from coming”** (a negative)

He told them that **the faith of a child is exactly the kind of faith that we all should have.**

- **How would you describe the faith of a child?**

And then Jesus showed the disciples (and us!) how to serve children. Remember that He was asked to simply bless the children, which meant lay a hand on them and pray over them.

But He did more. Scripture says that He took them up in His arms. Can you imagine that? He loves children!

And then He prayed over them. In the original language, this means He poured Himself out in praying for them. He didn't just say a quick blessing, He prayed a deep, passionate prayer over them.

Why? Because He loved and valued them so much.

Jesus gives us an amazing example of how to serve children.

He valued them. He defended them. He gave His time for them. He did more for them than He was asked. He poured Himself out for them. I know all of you here love and value children, and are giving yourselves for them. I also know that there may be people around us that act like the disciples toward children. But it's nice to know that Jesus loved them so much and was willing to serve them, isn't it?

Now, based on everything we've looked at—Scripture, children of the Bible and Jesus' example toward children,

- **How would you describe God's heart for children?**

Take about 3 minutes to answer that question, and then, on your own, write a one sentence answer. It's important to remember that God loves and values children.