

“WHY ARE THE SMALLEST THE GREATEST?”

LUKE 18:15-17

WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CHILDREN?

THE QUESTION:



WHY DOES THAT QUESTION MATTER?

- 1 PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN HAVE OFTEN BEEN DIFFERENT THAN GOD'S.
- 2 YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CHILDREN IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF PERSONALITY BUT THEOLOGY.
- 3 THERE IS A RIGHT AND WRONG PERSPECTIVE.
- 4 LOOKING AT YOUR PERSPECTIVE IS A WAY OF EVALUATING HOW WELL YOU UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL.

WHY IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO TAKE THIS QUESTION SERIOUSLY:

1

We're influenced by our culture:

We've learned ways of thinking about children that can make it hard to see what the Bible truly teaches.

2

We're busy and don't feel like this matters:

We often have many other issues that "feel like they are more important" than thinking about our attitude toward children or engaging with biblical teaching on the matter. This can lead to neglecting a plan for children's spiritual growth

LOOKING AT LUKE 18:15-17,

WE SEE THE DISCIPLES DIDN'T TAKE THIS QUESTION SERIOUSLY EITHER...

THE SETTING:

PARENTS WERE CONSISTENTLY BRINGING THEIR CHILDREN TO JESUS FOR BLESSING.

Disciples' response:

They became tired of the constant flow of children, possibly seeing them as a distraction from what they thought was Jesus' more important mission of establishing a political kingdom. They begin rebuking these parents and hindering the children from coming to Jesus.

vs.

Jesus' response:

He called the disciples to him and commanded them, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them." This same story is reported in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Mark's account adds that Jesus became angry at the disciples' actions. Jesus' actions and commands demonstrate that children are significant to him.

JESUS' EXPLANATION:

- **"For to such belongs the kingdom of God..."**
 - He has consistently taught that God saves the unexpected – the poor, sinners, the humble – those who have nothing to offer and depend entirely on God's mercy.
 - Children, as takers who are helpless and have nothing to offer or earn, perfectly illustrate the kind of people who receive the Kingdom of God.
- **"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."**
 - Children have nothing to offer.

- God is not saving those who have kept the law because there is no one who truly has. He is saving those who know they have nothing to offer and are depending on Jesus alone for blessing.

SO WHAT?

JESUS' DEEP CONCERN FOR CHILDREN AND PEOPLE LIKE CHILDREN (THOSE WHO ARE DEPENDENT AND HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER) CHALLENGES OUR PRIORITIES AND REFLECTS THE VERY NATURE OF THE GOSPEL. **YOUR RESPONSE TO THESE INSIGNIFICANT ONES IS A REFLECTION OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL .**

*THEREFORE, YOU MUST **INTENTIONALLY PURSUE A LIFESTYLE AND CONTRIBUTE TO A CHURCH MARKED BY SACRIFICIAL CARE FOR ALL**, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO CAN ONLY TAKE, BELIEVING 'WHAT MATTERS TO JESUS SHOULD MATTER TO ME.'*



**TAKE ACTION.
THINK ABOUT IT!**

DOES YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CHILDREN REFLECT A GOSPEL-SHAPED PERSPECTIVE?

This means actively planning to help them know Jesus, taking their spiritual concerns seriously, engaging with them on their level, and being a good example .

ARE YOU HINDERING CHILDREN FROM JESUS IN THESE WAYS?

*- **Ignoring them/failing to plan:** Not making a clear, thoughtful strategy as a church or in families to bring children to Jesus .*

- **Not taking their spiritual concerns seriously:** Pushing them aside, never getting down to their level to engage in spiritual conversations, or listening to what they say about God .
- **Being a bad example (hypocrisy):** Living a double life where what is said at church about God and Jesus differs from how one lives at home, making it difficult for children to take the gospel seriously .



WHAT DOES YOUR WAY OF RELATING TO "TAKERS" (PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER) REVEAL ABOUT WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT GOD AND SALVATION?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:



THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR (LUKE 18:9-14) IMMEDIATELY PRECEDES THIS PASSAGE.

HOW DO BOTH STORIES TOGETHER EMPHASIZE THAT SALVATION IS BASED ON GOD'S MERCY RATHER THAN HUMAN MERIT?

HOW CAN WE, AS A CHURCH, ENSURE THAT MINISTRY TO CHILDREN RECEIVES THE SAME LEVEL OF GIFTING, ATTENTION, AND PRIORITY AS OTHER MINISTRIES?

WHAT SPECIFIC PLANS OR SACRIFICES CAN WE MAKE TO FOSTER CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH BOTH AT CHURCH AND IN OUR FAMILIES?

HOW DOES THE WORLDLY WISDOM OF DIVIDING PEOPLE BASED ON WHAT THEY CAN "OFFER" (LIKE IN THE DISCIPLES' VIEW OF CHILDREN) MANIFEST IN OUR CULTURE TODAY, AND HOW CAN WE RESIST IT?



WHAT IS YOUR TAKEAWAY?
