

What is the role of the church in extending God's invitation to all? What are some things that might be barriers to the vulnerable or poor of our community in feeling welcome at New Life? Is there something we can do individually to make all people feel welcome?

*16 And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.
- Mark 10:16 NIV*

Jesus' embracing and blessing of the children is a perfect picture of God's desire for His children to come to Him and be blessed. Rather than trying to earn our way into the Kingdom or merit God's favor through what we've done or what we offer Him, we need to come to the Father like a child who crawls up into His lap so that God can bless us and care for us.

As you close out this study in a time of prayer, come to God as His beloved child. His arms are open to embrace you and His Heart desires to bless you. Let you Abba Father surround you with His love and acceptance so that you overflow with His love for others.

WRAP-UP

At this point in Jesus' ministry, the disciples had seen firsthand how He welcomed and cared for all people, yet in this passage from Mark, they fall short by rebuking those bringing children to Him. Their response reflects cultural norms rather than God's heart, revealing that they still misunderstood Jesus' teaching about servanthood and welcoming the least. Jesus, indignant at their actions, reaffirms the value of the least and the last and emphasizes that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who receive it with childlike humility and dependence. This moment challenges both the disciples and us to examine how we might still let cultural values shape our actions more than the character of Christ, and to consider how we can extend God's open invitation with love, humility, and a servant's heart.

MEMORY VERSE

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

Challenge –

This Sunday, look around for anyone who needs to be welcome and valued at church and then be a blessing in their life by letting them know you are glad they came.

Included in the Kingdom of God Gospel of Mark Ch. 10 - Week 2

INTRODUCTION

At this point in Jesus' ministry the disciples have had ample opportunity to observe what Jesus taught and how He treated those who came to Him. As followers of Jesus, they should begin to reflect God's character as they are being shaped more into His image. But in today's passage they fall short. Their response to the children being brought to Jesus is more a reflection of the culture around them than that of the Father. But even as we observe this encounter, we must ask ourselves, are we doing the same thing?

Ice Breaker

Can you remember one thing that happened to you that let you know you were no longer being viewed as a child but were now being treated as an adult? (e.g. moving from the kids table to the adult table at holiday meals, or being included in an important family decision)

Key Passages

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on 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 Truly I tell you, 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, placed his hands on them and blessed them. - Mark 10:13-16 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Welcome the Children

Our key passage was not the first time Jesus had instructed the disciples concerning little children.

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." 36 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." - Mark 9:35-37 NIV

If you have children, you probably remember having to re-teach a lesson several times before they “get it”. Jesus had the same problem with his disciples. Some truths had to be repeated over and over before they seemed to “get it”. This is one of those lessons. After they argued about who would be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus tells them that to be great you must be a servant to all. Then He uses a child to illustrate His point. He tells them they must receive, accept or welcome little children and in so doing they welcome Jesus and God the Father.

The idea of being “the very last” and “servant of all” was illustrated by a little child because in Jesus’ day, children had little value or honor. Our concept of children has generally changed. Most of us view children as precious and valuable now. But who in our current culture would you say is seen as being the least or last? What are some ways we might serve such people?

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism -Acts 10:34 (NIV)

A servant heart should be a natural result of following Jesus. As we see in Peter’s statement above, God shows no favoritism. We are called to love God and to love others as Jesus demonstrated, no matter who they are. God cares for those who often are overlooked or rejected by society and so should we.

2. Heart of the Father

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant.

- Mark 10:13-14a NIV

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

- Micah 6:8 NIV

Based on the disciples’ reaction to the children being brought to Jesus it doesn’t seem that they understood what Jesus had tried to teach them about welcoming children.

Why do you think Jesus was indignant to the disciples’ rebuke of the children? Micah summarizes what God requires of us. In what ways did the disciples response fail to do what was required of them?

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

– Romans 12:2 NIV

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

- James 1:27 NIV

It is difficult not to be shaped by the culture that surrounds us. Paul knew this and warned the Roman church against it. In the culture surrounding Jesus, the top of the social hierarchy was the Jewish male, and at the bottom were women and children, especially widows and orphans.

James understood God’s heart and how it contradicted the world’s view. How did the disciples’ response reflect the cultural norm rather than the Father’s heart?

God’s Kingdom is upside down compared to our world. In rebuking those bringing children, the disciples misrepresented God before the people. Paul’s solution to counteract the pressure to conform to the world is to renew your mind.

Where do you find the greatest pressure to conform to the world’s values? What are some of the ways we renew our mind to enable us to do God’s will?

3. An Open Invitation

14b 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 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." - Mark 10:14b-15 NIV

In Mark 10:14 Jesus tells the disciples what to do (let them come), what not to do (don’t hinder them), and explains why. Jesus doesn’t say, “because the Kingdom belongs to the children”, but to “such as these” (Gr. *toioutos*), and if we don’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child, we won’t enter it. The implication is that the Kingdom of God is open to anyone who recognizes that they have nothing to offer and depends on God’s grace and mercy alone for acceptance into His Kingdom.