

Our Children

God's Demonstration

Matthew 18:1-5

I must admit, I have looked forward to this series of messages for a long time. I am sure Bonita and I will not do it justice compared to what is in my mind and heart about the subject of Children.

In answer to one of the most profound questions ever asked, Jesus uses as his example, as his demonstration, a child. Here is how it went:

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." Matthew 18:1-5

I want to begin this series by introducing and for many of you reintroducing to you, Jack Spoener, who is our children's ministry coordinator.

Interview between Jack and Dan

1. Jack, tell us about children's ministry as it currently exists here at Tipp City, particularly about what is going on up there on Sunday morning?
2. Speak to us about the vision for children's ministry. Why is it so important?
3. OK, so what about this fall. What is coming up in the fall and how can some of us bigger kids connect and be a part of a ministry to our children?

Thanks Jack

Part of why I wanted Jack to come and share this right at the outset is so that all of us would have time to process, where we can contribute, where we can begin to speak into a life that will out-live us. Whether you are 90 or 19 this is a legitimate question. How are we speaking into the life of one who is younger than us.

Kids – we have to love them don't we?

When Kathy and I only had our first 2 daughters, Our second born had just learned to walk and run. I am sitting in the living room and I hear from the front yard. "Yip Pee Dee" over and over again. I walk to the front door. To see my 2 daughters buck naked, running back and forth in the yard with the youngest one Becky, holding her used diaper high in the air.

They are God's demonstration to us and yet they are born into a world that most of the time does not see their worth until they reach a certain age.

George Barna writes

I have been astonished to see how many church people resist a wholesale commitment to providing the best possible ministry to children. Most churches pour the bulk of their ministry resources into trying to affect the lives of adults and are then disappointed to find their return on investment so low.

The reason for the low yield is simple:

1. The fundamental thought, belief and behavior patterns in adults were formed many years ago and are too entrenched to change without a radical commitment to personal transformation, and for most adults such a commitment comes at too high a cost.

2. Because most adults received ministry leftovers when they were young, they became exactly what we made them: Well-intentioned, inadequately nurtured, minimally spiritually equipped secular people who dabble in religious thought and activity.

Studies show that nearly half of adults who attended church regularly as a child and now bring their children to church do not even know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, even after more than 25 years of constant church exposure and activity.

So the question was on the table, by those who were closest to Jesus, **"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"** And Jesus basically said here is the role model for the Kingdom – A Child. These quirky, exasperating, wonderful, never know what is going to come out of their mouth, incredible humans called children are the Kingdom Role Models.

Kingdom Role Models

And he said 3 very distinct things that we are to learn from them

1. Change & Become Like

"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3

So what do Children demonstrate to us that Jesus thinks we can Change and Become like them at. Let me name a few:

1. **They demonstrate total trust** – I watched one of young daughters upon coming up to a cashier to purchase something pull out all her money and lay it on the belt and then just look up and wait patiently as if you say, "Is that enough?" (So how is my trust levels lately, With isolationism having gained celebrity status in our society, how am I building relationship founded on trust in my life.)

2. **They demonstrate total commitment** – we all have seen young brothers or sisters who poke fun at each other but when the chips are down they demonstrate a ferious loyalty and

commitment to each other. (How about my commitment levels. Do those closest to me know that I will do what I say or are they justifiably unsure if they can count on me)

3. **They demonstrate total vulnerability** – meaning they are capable of or susceptible to being wounded or hurt. (How about my vulnerability to others. I was on a work sight as a high school student, and we needed some supplies, The boss turned to me, told me to take the company truck handed me his entire wallet and said, Take whatever, you need.”)

2. Humble Ourselves

*“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 18:4*

Here is what Humble is defined as: Not proud or arrogant; to lower one’s self importance. Partners In Hope ([Slide of Partners In Hope](#)) is an organization in Troy that is expanding into Tipp City. They have asked to partner with us. This partnership will be for people and families that are struggling financially in the Tipp City area, who are willing to enter an agreement. In essence, these are people who have been or are in the process of being humbled by life, and we are being asked to serve them. This is the type thing that is exactly what this verse is talking about.

3. Welcome Them

“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.” Matthew 18:5

This last statement is where Jesus calls the disciples to open their hearts to the endless possibilities that exist in the world of a child, and to enter into that world. This verse calls us to spend time with our children. For a child – TEAM is spelled MOM & DAD.

Yes, I like so many other kids played all the sports. I played the big 3, Football, Basketball, Baseball, Soccer, Volleyball, Golf, Tennis, Wrestling, Cross-Country and Track. But I did not know my Father. He took me to all those events, but I did not know his dreams, his fears, his vulnerabilities, his passions. Relatively few youngsters will be physically abandoned by their parents but millions will be traumatized by receiving their parents’ emotional leftovers.

So what is God’s expectation of us toward children

The Response God Expects From Us Toward Children

So few of us realize that the parable of the Lost sheep was said by Jesus, to wrap up is answer to this question that involved children

“See that you do not look down on 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? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, 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 be lost.” Matthew 18:10-14

In short, the response God expects from us toward children is a “Wild Abandonment”. He gives us this picture.

The man knew something was wrong, one was missing. And he virtually became single-minded in tracking down the one, and bringing them back to safety. He put all his resources to work in the effort.

Let me translate: If one of my children went missing, the rest of my family would be watching for my response. What they would see is a man in full wild abandonment. My job would not matter, my income would not matter, my home would not matter. The only thing that would matter is the safe return of that child.

When that happens, in the heart and minds of the rest of the family, they would know that if they ever came up missing Daddy would move heaven and earth to find them as well:

1. That would bring a sense of security into their hearts, that they are protected
2. It would also raise the value of every member of the family, they would automatically know that they are valuable

Without saying it, the world is always watching for the response of the church. When the church doesn't respond, the world takes that as a sign that everything they are doing to busy our children's lives must be OK and the moral and spiritual dimensions must not be that important.

But if the members of the church who are particularly called by God to raise up the standard to our children, if they come forth and fill our classrooms with adventurous teaching and take our children to discover God's wild and amazing creation. Then we will have done our jobs as adults.

- We will have changed and become like children again
- We will have humbled ourselves and not thought our agendas were so important
- We will have welcomed them and then we will be welcomed into the kingdom

- We will have led our children home

I want you to know that everything we officially do to make disciples of our children will run directly through our Children's Ministry Coordinator. I will work directly with him to make Sunday the best part of a kid's week. We want you to join us.

Let's Pray