



**Reaching Children with the Gospel
Lessons 1 & 2: Why Reaching Children is so Important**

Introduction: Misconceptions about Children's Ministry

People have a lot of misconceptions about children's ministry.

People view children's ministry as:

- A Secondary ministry
- A place to start for someone wanting to do more in the ministry
- A good ministry for the moms to help in
- A good ministry for the youth to get involved in
- A Christian babysitting club

Some say "that ministry isn't for me. I am called to a more important ministry."

Some people view bigger people are more important than little people.

The goal of this class is to change your wrong thinking about Children's ministry.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IS THE GREATEST AND ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MINISTRIES

WHY?

By the time a person is 13 years old the foundation of their life has been pretty much built.

When you minister to a child you are building the foundation of their life.

You get to share the Good News of the Gospel with them first
You are imparting the Word of God into children. You are introducing little humans to the love of Jesus.

YOU ARE IMPACTING THE WORLD - THE FUTURE.

Jesus has entrusted you with the responsibility to mold and shape world changers.... Missionaries... mayors.. presidents.. lawyers pastors.. teachers...prophets.. worship leaders.. evangelists.

IF YOU DO YOUR JOB CORRECTLY... you will affect cities and nations.... You will affect history

IF WE DO NOT DO OUR JOB then the public schools will teach them. Social media will shape them. Hollywood and the world of entertainment will mold them

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IS IMPORTANT.

Story: One night a pastor came home from his weekly Bible Study and said to his wife, "Honey tonight 1 1/2 people decided to live for Jesus." He said, "One was a business man and one was a young boy about 11 years old."

Why did he say 1 1/2? Who was the 1 and who was the 1/2?

Fact: One third of the Earth is children under 15 years of age

The Devil hates children.

They are made in God's image. Right from the beginning of a person's life - he will do everything he can to destroy the destiny God has for a child.

- 1 out of 2 children experience some sort of abuse- physical, sexual, or verbal
- 1 out of 5 children live their lives chronically hungry and with a food shortage

Why Reach Children with the Gospel?

85% of Christians say they accepted Christ and became a Christian between the ages of 4-14 years of age. (According to MARC ministries)

Barna Study Results

Another group study proved that children ages 5-13 have a 32% probability of accepting Christ verses teens ages 14-18 who have just a 4% probability. Adults over the age of 19 years have a 6% probability.

Barna also points out:

- That people who become Christian before their teen years are more likely to remain "absolutely committed" to Christianity than those who convert at an older age.
- What you believe at 13 years of age is pretty much what you are going to die believing.

- In his national survey of Pastors, church staff, and lay leaders, four out of five said they participated in a Children's church program for a number of years before turning 13.

It is clear from statistics like this and stories we hear that there is a great harvest of souls between the ages of 4-12 years old out there waiting for labors

Matthew 9:37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Matthew 9:38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

The world is like a harvest field full of people who are ready to hear the good news about Jesus. It is our job to tell them and bring in the harvest.

Children are Good Ground For God's Word

Mark 4 – a famous story about a farmer who planted seeds

The seeds he planted fell on 4 different types of soil

1. The wayside – The birds came and ate the seeds before they even had time to grow
2. Stony Ground – The seeds grew fast and then died fast.
3. Among the thorns – The seeds grew and so did the thorns. Eventually the thorns choked the plants and they died.
4. Good Ground – This ground was soft and cultivated. It has been turned over and prepared for planting by the farmer. It was ready to produce a harvest. The seeds planted in this ground grew strong and produced a great harvest.

Question: What soil best describes a child? The good ground.

Children are good ground for us to plant God's Word into. Their hearts are soft. God created them to learn and grow. He created them to ask questions and be curious.

Facts:

- On average, a 4-year-old child asks 437 questions a day
- 80% of a person's personality is formed before 6 years old
- Children laugh about 300 times a day whereas adults laugh about 17 times a day

Question: What happens when you do nothing to good ground? It gets hard and weeds grow.

As children grow into teens and then adults, their hearts (if left alone) become hardened and full of weeds and thorns. They are less likely to be reached with the Gospel message. They are less likely to live for Christ.

Who is the Greatest?

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Matthew 18:2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

Matthew 18:3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The disciples ask Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Message Translation "Who gets the highest rank in the kingdom of heaven?"

For the answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room

Jesus said that a child was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven – not an adult, not someone who works "hard" for Jesus, not one of the disciples, not a pastor, or missionary, or worship leader - A CHILD

Then Jesus said that a person cannot even enter the kingdom of heaven unless they are "converted and become as little children".

Jesus did not say that the children need to grow up and start acting like adults.

Jesus told the adults to be like children.

What does that mean? The word "converted means, "to be twisted, turned, or cultivated"

That reminds me of the previous story we read about the farmer who planted the seeds in the different soils. Remember the good ground. The good ground was "turned, twisted, cultivated" by the farmer.

We can conclude three things:

1. Children are good ground. A child's heart is already soft and cultivated-ready to receive the Kingdom of God. When God's Word is planted in the heart of a child it will grow and produce a harvest.
2. Jesus was telling his disciples that in order for an adult to enter the Kingdom of God they must first be changed into good ground. It takes a lot more work to "harvest" adults. Their hearts are hard. So, their heart needs to be turned, twisted

and cultivated.” Adults take more work than kids. Adults need to be cultivated and softened before they will receive God’s Word.

It takes a lot more work to reach adults.

It is much easier to build a child than to repair an adult

3. If we want to be good “harvesters’ for the kingdom and bring in the biggest harvest of souls then we need to plant the Word of God into Good GROUND. We need to plant the Word of God into the hearts of children.

Children and the Church

Many churches view children as a lot of work so they would rather they stay away until they are older and can pay their tithes

Some churches believe children cannot really get saved until they are adults.

Many churches do not believe that God can use children as powerfully as He uses adult church members.

Approximately one third of the average church is children. However, the average church only spends approximately 3% of its budget on children’s ministry.

Most Pastors have no idea what is happening in their children’s ministry, and they don’t take time to get to know the children in his church.

A pastor is not only the pastor of the adults. He is the pastor of the entire church, including the children.

God loves children! He has a plan for them and wants to use them as much as any other member of the church.

Children are a gift from God

Psalm 127:3 -Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

NLT - Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him

CEV -Children are a blessing and a gift from the LORD.

TPT -Children are God's love-gift; they are heaven's generous reward.

Children are gifts sent from heaven to earth.

Why would anyone want to do anything to destroy or kill a gift from God?

Children are a "heritage" from God, a way of preserving the family into the next generation.

Our children are our legacy

God has a plan for every child no matter how that child came into being. They are created in God's image. He has a destiny for their life.

Jesus Response to Children

Mark 10:13 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

Mark 10:14 But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

Mark 10:16 And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

This chapter starts out by telling us that multitudes gathered around Jesus and he was teaching them.

In verse 13 it says that people started bringing children to Jesus. Right in the middle of his sermon.

Now we all know that children are disruptive.

The disciples tried to be good ushers. They told the people to stop.

Let's look at Jesus' reaction to the whole situation

Verse 14 - But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Jesus was displeased, angry, irritated, moved with indignation.

Jesus then said - ***Don't stop the children from coming to me! Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom.***

Verse 16 – Jesus then took the children in his arms-He embraced them – he lovingly took the time to bless each one of them.

IN THE MIDST OF JESUS BUSY DAY AND HIS BUSY PREACHING SCHEDULE **HE STOPPED FOR THE CHILDREN** AND SHOWED THEM LOVE. AT THAT MOMENT NOTHING WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO JESUS THAN THE CHILDREN.

What our Response to children should be

Mark 9: 37 Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.

(CEV) "When you welcome even a child because of me, you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me."

(GW) "Whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

(MSG) "Whoever embraces one of these children as I do embraces me, and far more than me--God who sent me."

What does this statement mean?

When you welcome even a child because of me, you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me.

Children God Used in The Bible

David

- He was a young boy when Samuel anointed him as King.
- He was the least likely out of all Jesse's sons to be anointed king.
- He was the youngest of 8 brothers.
- Even his own dad did not see the potential inside of him.
- The Bible says, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."
- David was also young when he killed Goliath. God calls us when we are young.

Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego

- They were kidnapped at a young age and taken to a different country to serve under a king who did not worship their God.
- They were probably between the ages of 11 and 14.
- That king – Nebuchadnezzar was smart. He knew how important it was to "convert" the ways and thinking of young people. He commanded his leaders to

go after “young boys in whom there was no blemish, possessing knowledge, and who were gifted”. He would put them through a 3-year training program and then they would serve him.

- These three young boys stood out from everyone else.
- They kept their faith in God even in the midst of death. They did not forget their early God-centered upbringing.

Naman’s servant girl

- She was separated from her family – different country, culture, religion but she had the strength inside of her to keep her faith and be bold with her master about her faith in the God of Elisha.
- She teaches us about obedience to God and boldness.

Samuel

- He was about 3-4 years old when he went to live in the temple.
 - His life was dedicated to God’s service.
 - The Bible says “Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child . . .”
 - He heard God’s audible voice when he was only about 12 years old.
 - He was a miracle child
 - Samuel was the last judge. After Samuel the nation was lead by kings
 - Samuel anointed the first 2 kings of Israel - Saul and David
 - Samuel was the first prophet in the nation of Israel (someone who speaks on behalf of God)
 - Samuel was a priest -he was from the tribe of Levi which qualified him to service in the temple (He wore priestly garments from the time he was young - 1 Samuel 2:18)
 - Samuel was a Nazarite - He was set apart. He was dedicated to the Lord for life
 - Psalm 99:6 - Samuel was remembered for his prayers
 - Samuel is one of the 8 people listed in the Bible that God calls by name
- Hannah, Samuel’s mother, made a vow to God that if He gave her a son she would give Him back to God - to serve Him. That is why Samuel went to live in the Temple when he was 3-4 years old.

1 Samuel 1:11 Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will **give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD** all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

Environment in the Temple

- We don't really understand the sacrifice that Hannah was making.
- Sacrificing a son would be hard in the best of situation
- The spiritual situation in Israel at this time was bad
 - Eli lived with his sons in the temple
 - Eli’s sons were sleeping with women
 - Eli wasn’t following the ordinances of God

He was completely out of touch with God

Hannah kept her focus on God - She gave her son to God and said -

1 Samuel 1:28 Therefore I **also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD.** "So they worshiped the LORD there.

Josiah

- He became king when he was only 8 years old.
- "His heart was tender and he humbled himself before God."
- The Bible says, "He did what was right in the sight of the Lord."

Esther

- She was an orphaned girl who was likely in her teen years.
- She became queen and God used her to save the Jewish people...the lineage of Jesus

Jeremiah

- was chosen by God though he was "only a child" (Jeremiah 1)

Mary

- The mother of Jesus was only about 12-13 years old when she found out she was going to give birth to the Son of God.
- Although she was frightened and had a lot of questions, she said, "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." (Luke 1:38)

God wants to pour out His Holy Spirit your Children

Acts 2:17 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.

Acts 2:18 AND ON MY MENSERVANTS AND ON MY MAIDSERVANTS I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS; AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY.

God says, "***I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.***"

"Flesh" means every kind of people

The first group mentioned in this prophecy is son and daughters – children.

God wants to use your sons and daughters. He wants to pour out His spirit on them as much as he wants to pour it out on you.

Acts 2:39 This promise belongs to you and to your children and to everyone who is far away. It belongs to everyone who worships the Lord our God.

But God considers children important, and He wants to use them and pour out His Spirit on them just like He does every other member of the Body of Christ.

The way to change a nation is through its children

We can change the direction of a nation by reaching its children.

Every major movement in history has grasped the need to target the next generation to advance its agenda and secure its legacy.

Political movements like Nazism and communism trained children with the goal of carrying out their agenda beyond the lifetimes of their founders.

Vladimir Lenin (founder of the Russian Communist Party) knew the power of reaching children. He said, "Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted."

Hitler (responsible for the Jewish Holocaust) said, "if you can get a child when he is 7 and you'll have him forever."

During the rule of the Nazi Party over Germany, every young person was involved in the Hitler Youth or its associated organizations for girls. The Hitler Youth extended not only through Germany but also across many of the occupied territories in the Nazi "Reich," or realm. The purpose of the Hitler Youth was to ensure that young people would adhere to the principles of Nazism in the future.

World religions have done the same with the systematic indoctrination of their young.

The Taliban and other radical Muslim groups (terrorist group in Pakistan and Afghanistan) place a great emphasis on recruiting children. They set up Madrassa where street children can go to sleep and eat and be education. Children can go to a Madrassa as young as 6 years of age. However, they do not study math and science. They study how to kill people, how to use a gun, and how to build a bomb. They are taught that they will receive the greatest rewards for giving their life to kill non-believers. There are 40, 000 Madrassa's in Pakistan

Nebuchadnezzar- In his conquest for Israel, he poured his efforts into shaping the future by seeking to influence young boys like Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. They were only between the ages of 11-15 when they were kidnapped and put into the Kings training school.

However, the Christian evangelical movement is one of the few that has allowed children to remain a secondary focus instead of a primary focus. This has be our GREAT OMISSION in the Great Commission.

If You Love Jesus...

John 21:15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

After Jesus rose from the dead, He had breakfast with some of the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias.

He was giving the disciples some last-minute instructions.

Feed = BOSKO in Greek which means to make available

Lambs = refers to a young lamb

This word is used in the first question Jesus asked Peter.

Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will make the Gospel available to the young ones."

IF YOU LOVE **HIM**, YOU WILL MAKE THE GOSPEL AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN.