

## “Investing in Children is Part of Our Story”

### Community Group Questions

1. What have you learned recently from children?
2. Do you feel that sometimes you ignore or disregard children?
3. Do you feel you are good example to children that you interact with?
4. Do you ever teach children?

Do you remember being a child? Do you remember certain places were fun and other places were not so fun? I remember when I was a kid going to Smithville was like a nightmare for me.

Interestingly enough as a kid we also categorize adults, there are cool adults and not so cool adults. For me any adult that showed an interest in something I was doing or seemed to understand what it was like to be a kid seemed cool, but adults that paid no attention or seemed like they forgot what it was like to be a kid were not so cool.

But what I didn't realize when I was a child is that adults that showed some sort of interest in me and my life were the type of adults that were willing to invest in the next generation. I can say that because by the way they interacted with me showed they cared about what I did and what I did for the future. Ex. My Uncle Paul bought me an amp for my bass guitar.

As a church that is what we want to do...we want to invest in the next generation. In order to invest in the next generation we need to know how to interact with the next generation.

I believe what *Herbert Hoover the 31<sup>st</sup> president of the United States* said...*“Children are our most valuable resource”*

Today what I would like to do is spend some time looking at what Jesus says about our interaction with children. As a church we need to be consistently reminding ourselves of our investment in the next generation.

There are two main stories in which we see Jesus interact with children. In the first story found in Matthew 18:1-4 Jesus teaches us three things... the first is...

### **While interacting with children...**

#### **Look for what we can learn from them. Matthew 18:1-4**

This passage is interesting because the disciples were debating among themselves who was going to be greater in the kingdom of heaven, so they went to Jesus to have him settle their debate.

Think about this grown men arguing over who is better? Grown men don't do this anymore do they? Lets take sports, you guys don't really care who wins when you are watching a game? When the team you like wins...what do you say..."we won, we had a good game" when the team you like loses...what do you say..."they blew it, they are bums" .

The point is men have not changed much in 2000 years...we want to win and be the best and the disciples fell into a trap of thinking that we are going to feel the same way in heaven.

So Jesus settles their argument by bringing up a child for them to learn from. I think there are a few reasons Jesus used children as an example.

Children aren't sinless or perfect, they do have the characteristics that should be in every Christian's life:

#### **Children...**

**-are teachable-** in humility they want our help...how do I do this?

Do you need to be more teachable?

**-are simple in their desires**-they want love, stability, acceptance.

Are your wants simple?

**-have a desire to please**

Think about little children, their parents are their world. Sure they like rewards for doing good but we can make a generalization here and say children want to please their parents..."look what I did daddy or mommy" their reward is the encouragement and pleasure their parents take in them.

Do you have a desire to please your Heavenly Father?

**-dependent on their parents to meet their needs**

So what is Jesus really saying in verses 3-4? In order for a person to be saved they need to trust the GOSPEL and the gospel centers around reliance on Jesus, similar to the way a child relies on a parent.

Now that you trust in Jesus...do you depend on Him to meet your needs? Do you depend on Him in times of trouble?

As a church we have plenty of children that we can learn from. We have to remember they are the next generation and if we are going to continue to reach out to the next generation we have to learn what makes them tick, what they are thinking about and how to appeal to their needs. When we stop and take in interest in them and what they are doing and what they like...we learn from them.

The second thing Jesus teaches in this passage is to...

**Accept them. Matthew 18:5** Jesus equates our acceptance of children as acceptance of Him. I believe what Jesus is reminding us here is a person who says they follow Christ but is not accepting toward another child of His, is rejecting Him. This should convict any Christian that holds hatred in heart toward another Christian.

As a church this is where we have an amazing opportunity to accept kids for who they are...kids. We are not trying to make them mini-adults and it is only a short time that they will be children.

*Dr. Suess said "A person is a person no matter how small"*

How do we do this? Have programs geared toward children that are fun. VBS is coming this week.

We also need to be examples of solid Christians for them. Mentor them and take an interest in them.

The third thing Jesus teaches in this passage is to...

**Protect them. Matthew 18:6** Jesus gives a stern warning concerning anyone who might place a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in Him.

I think Jesus is not only talking about children in regards to age but he is also talking about God's children, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus is serious about protecting His children and our church should be as well. Our church does background checks for anyone over 18 that works with children and that is just common sense.

This passage is talking about the protection of purity of God's children, which is not leading anyone down the wrong path or causing them to sin.

*Someone once said..."Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression"*

How does this work out in church life? We are to be examples of how to follow the Lord. Children watch us and look to us for guidance and an example.

If we are a bad example we can lead them into sin. If they see adults that gossip, they will gossip, if they see adults that treat each other badly, they will treat each other badly. This is not just parents, it is any adult in our church. Children see and hear things that adults are doing and saying.

*Chuck Swindoll said "each day we make deposits in our children's memory banks"*

And the finally in Matthew 19:13-15 which is probably the most famous story about Jesus and children and it teaches us that we need to...

**Teach them about Jesus and His Word. Matthew 19:13-15**

Why do we teach children?

-Jesus said to

-Most people trust in Jesus when they are children. Recent Barna survey says that 83% of Americans became Christians before the age of 14

-It builds the kingdom of God. We are not only called to build the local church we are called to build the universal church. Kids and teenagers will become Christians here and move somewhere else and become part of a local church in their community.

-Our community cares about children. If we are being an effective church in our community we focus in on what our community cares about....and that is kids.

*Children are a part of the story of FRBC and if we practice these four teachings of Jesus there will be an eternal investment in the children of our community.*