

Subject: *Kids Matter to God*

Scripture: *Matthew 18:1-14*

John Maxwell tells of his visit to a quaint little European town where he asked one of the locals: “Sir, can you tell me if any great men have ever been born here?” The gentleman answered: “No, only babies.” All babies have potential for greatness. All babies have potential for good or bad. Some babies will grow up to serve the Devil and some will grow up to serve the Lord. And everything that happens in the life of a child, whether good or bad, matters to God.

JESUS PRESENTED AN EXAMPLE (vs. 1-4)

He set a little child in their midst as a model of conversion. What are the qualities of a person who is converted to Christ and bound for heaven?

- Children are humble

Kids are dependent and trusting. They are unassuming. ***James 4:6*** *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* Kids have needs and they are willing to admit it.

- Children are reachable

Statistics show that around 75% of Christians are saved before the age of 14. Children are much easier to reach for Christ than adults. Why? Because they are open to God and the Bible. Like the parable Jesus told about the sower, the seed, and the soil. The difference was in the soil. Older hearts tend to be hard while young hearts are still tender, good ground. All kids are born with an awareness of God. Atheists are not born, they have to be taught that nonsense. In an atheist home the family sat down to supper one night and their young son said, “Let me ask you something Dad, does God know that we don’t believe in Him?”

- Children are teachable

The best time to teach children is when they are young. ***2 Timothy 3:15*** *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Some people say you should let a child decide for himself what he or she is going to believe. That’s not what the Bible says. ***Proverbs 22:6*** *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Training goes beyond teaching. To train a child you have to teach him and show him what’s right. You may teach football in the locker room, but you train players on the football field. Training involves seeing, hearing, and doing.

God laid out a plan for His people and it focused on the family and the parents’ responsibility to train their children in the ways of God. ***Deuteronomy 6:6-7*** ⁶ *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: ⁷ And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

Kids are reachable and teachable because they are curious. ***Exodus 12:25-27*** ²⁵ *And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. ²⁶ And it shall come to pass, when your children*

shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? ²⁷ That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. God told His people whenever they observed the annual Passover their children would ask: "What's this all about?" We have the same opportunity today when our kids ask us about baptism and the Lord's Supper.

JESUS ISSUED A WARNING (vs. 5-10)

- Receive a child as if you are receiving Christ

Kids are precious and they are special. We sometimes say they are the church of tomorrow. No, they are the church of today.

- Don't offend a child or be a stumbling block

Kids are vulnerable. They can easily be misled and discouraged. In every child's life we can be a stepping stone or a stumbling block. Jesus warned us in very strong words. He said it would be better to have a millstone tied to our neck and be drowned in the sea than to be a stumbling block to a child. Jesus referred to a method of capital punishment used by the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. A millstone was a huge circular stone about two feet in diameter used to grind grain. The word used here is a stone so large it was turned by a donkey. The contrast with Jesus' warnings in verses 8-9 is interesting. He says if what you do causes you to stumble, you're better off maimed. But if what you do causes a child to stumble, you're better off dead. Look at the warning in verse 10. Don't despise or look down on a child. Angels stand at attention to get their orders in caring for children. That ought to remind us how important kids are to God.

How can we cause a child to stumble? When we set a bad example. Kids are looking to us so we must be a good example. We must do everything we can to help them know God and serve Him faithfully. When we make bad decisions and set wrong priorities. We make decisions to put other things ahead of Christ and the church. When we neglect spiritual training. We hear about child predators. Do you know who the number one child predator is? Satan. We must protect our kids by teaching them God's Word. **Psalms 119:11** *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* When we frustrate children by unreasonable attitudes or demands. **Ephesians 6:4** *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

JESUS REVEALED A MISSION (vs. 11-14)

- Children can and must be saved

Jesus came on a mission to seek and save the lost. Children are lost and they need to be saved. I don't know what the age of accountability is, but I know what the Bible teaches about a child's sin nature. **Psalms 51:5** *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* We are sinners by birth, by nature, and by choice. You don't have to teach a child to do wrong; you have to teach him to do right. We're like sheep, prone to wander. We must teach them the truth about sin, about God, about the Gospel, about faith and repentance, and we should encourage them to receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

To the critics and skeptics who say that a child may not know what he is doing and it may not be real, I say God knows what he is doing and He knows if it's real. Some may say that a child won't be able to remember what happened when he gets older. Maybe not, but God will remember. Some may question, if a child is saved at an early age won't he need to reaffirm his faith at a later time? To that I say, yes, he needs to reaffirm his faith everyday. Biblical assurance of salvation doesn't come from a past decision or praying a prayer. It comes from examining our life in the light of God's Word.

Kids matter to God and they should matter to us.