

Introduction

When our children were all young and traveling with us, we had lots of comments. Karen used to get asked, "Are all these yours? How do you do it?" She put together a tract to give out to women that asked her about her children. The comments I received about our large family were slightly different. One man offered to buy Karen and I a TV. Another man that worked in one of the locker rooms suggested that I was missing too many cuts. Others asked me if I knew what caused this. The senior pastor in the church that I served at for many years told me that my children were hindering my ministry, and that I needed to get a vasectomy. On another occasion a deacon at that same church also gave me the same advice. The common theme to all these questions was that children are a problem or a curse. No one in their right mind would want a lot of these rug rats. Only ignorant and foolish parents would have a lot of children, because informed people would not ruin their lives with all children. The attitudes in the world and the attitudes in the church were not much different.

In church services, when space is sometimes an issue, a common solution is to take the children out of the service to make more room for adults. In some churches, children are not allowed at all in the services, because they are thought to be a distraction. They do not want any distractions or hindrances to adults hearing the message, so they remove the children from their services. The message is clear: adults are the important people and the children are not very important, and if anything, they are a hindrance in worship to the most important people, the adults.

Not all churches are like this. One Wednesday night Karen and I had just sat down in our seats at our mid-week service, and the Holy Spirit said to me, "Go to Metro." Metro Life Church was another church in town. I did not know anything about the church, other than the name of the Senior Pastor. Karen and I had been at our church for 13 years and I was serving as an elder, so this was a big move. I cried for several months because of the move, but the Lord confirmed the move to me many ways. What happened at the next church was pretty amazing. Unlike the church we were at, where ministry was more important than relationships, children were welcome in the services. Families worshiped together. Mothers were highly esteemed. Karen blossomed in this new environment. She was like a rose that opened up, and it was beautiful to see. I did not realize how oppressed and belittled she had felt at our former church.

Our passage today, Mark 10:13-16, is about children, and it is a contrast in perspectives about children. We will look at the perspective of the world, and their attitude and actions. Second, we will look at Jesus' perspective, and His attitude and actions. Third, we will look at our perspective, our attitude and actions towards children.

Kingdom Perspective of Children

1. The Perspective of the Disciples (World)
2. The Perspective of Jesus
3. Our Perspective

(Mark 10:13-16) "And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. {14} But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. {15} Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*." {16} And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them."

1. The Perspective of the Disciples (World)

Our passage begins with people bringing children to Jesus so that He might touch them. It says, “they” were bringing children. I do not believe these are day care centers bringing children. These are not children’s ministries bringing the children. These are parents who are bringing their children to Jesus. These parents may have different reasons. Some may have had some sick children, and they heard that Jesus was healing people by laying hands on them. We saw in Mark 9:14-29 that a father had brought his only boy to Jesus to have a demon cast out of him. Jesus’ disciples were not able to do it, but Jesus cast the demon out and took him by the hand and raised him. Some parents may have just wanted Jesus to impart a blessing on their children. We see in verse 16 that Jesus took them in His arms and began blessing them. If you are a parent, one of the best things that you can do is bring your children to Jesus. Pray for the Lord to touch your children. Pray for the Lord to bless your children.

(Mark 10:13-16) “And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. {16} And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.”

As these parents were bringing their children to be touched by Jesus, the disciples rebuked them. The attitude of the disciples was that children were not as important as the adults. The attitude of the disciples was that Jesus had more important things to do than minister to children. They did not value children. There were adults out there that needed to hear what Jesus was saying. There were needy adults out there that had real needs.

The actions of the disciples followed their attitudes. Since children were not as important as adults, they needed to stop anyone from bringing children to Jesus. They needed to protect Jesus from unwanted interruptions, distractions, and less important ministry. So, the disciples rebuked the parents who were bringing their children to Jesus. The disciples did not just block or stop the parents from bringing their children, they rebuked the parents. I cannot imagine rebuking any parent for bringing their children to church to be touched by Jesus. I would commend them for bringing their children to church.

In Mark 9, Jesus had a talk with His disciples. They had been discussing who was the greatest. Jesus took a child and set the little boy before them and said to them, “whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent me.” Jesus had just got done teaching this lesson to the disciples and they were not receiving any of these little ones. They had not fully grasped what He had tried to teach them.

(Mark 9:36-37) “Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, {37} Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.””

Then, Jesus told His disciples, “whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. The message was clear. Do not cause a little one to stumble, or this would not be profitable for you. Put yourself in the mind of these children who are being brought to Jesus. They are excited about seeing Jesus, but these big strong fishermen that are traveling with Jesus rebuked their parents for bringing them. The message was clear. God does not want you. God does not have time for you. You are not important to God. That would cause a child to stumble.

(Mark 9:42) “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”

Can you imagine a little child waiting in line to see Santa, and right before the child got to sit in Santa’s lap and get a present, some security guards come out and rebuke the parents and tell them that their children are not welcome to see Santa? The parents would be pretty upset. But, I believe the little children would be heart-broken and disappointed. That is the kind of message and impact the actions of the disciples would have had on the parents and children. Their actions could easily have caused them to stumble.

What are things that could cause a little one to stumble. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:21 that fathers should not exasperate their children. Making their children angry could cause them to stumble.

(Col 3:21) “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.”

When parents live in a sin, their sins often bring consequences on their children. In Exodus 20:5-6, we find that the sins of the father are passed down to the third and fourth generation. Parents need to repent of sins and live upright lives, as their sins can cause their children to stumble. In a similar way, hypocrisy turns people off. It was hypocrisy that turned me away from God.

(Ex 20:5-6) “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, {6} but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Favoritism is another area which can cause children and others to stumble. In Genesis 25:28, we find that Isaac loved Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob. The anger and heartaches that favoritism bring can cause little ones to stumble.

(Gen 25:28) “Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

Finally, there are lots of vices and troubles in the world. Mothers and fathers need to train up and instruct their children. Solomon wrote that a man will die for lack of instruction. Our children can stumble because we did not train and instruct them in the matters of life.

(Pr 5:23) “He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.”

When I was the General Manager of a golf club in Orlando, I would sometimes take my son, Bill, to the golf course. He loved to hit golf balls. He did not get in anyone’s way or cause problems. He did not interfere with me and the work that I was doing. It was pretty common for children to spend a day at the course. But, the owner of my course, told me that I was not allowed to bring my son to the golf course anymore. He did not want children there, and he did not want him hitting range balls for free. My son had a real interest in playing golf, and this could have been a real set-back for him. Fortunately, God put me back on the PGA Tour shortly after that, and I got to practice and play with my son. But, the owner’s actions toward my son could have been a stumbling block.

Many of you know that when I was a boy I was pretty foolish. The Iranians had a word for foolish boys like me, foozooleh. I was very foozooleh. I was probably doing something foolish one day at Sunday School and the pastor of the church called me a stupid ass. He was British, so an ass was the common term for donkey, so it was not as bad as it sounds. But, who would call a little boy a stupid donkey, even if he was not acting right. That remark drove me away from Christianity. That attitude and those words that were spoken convinced me that I wanted nothing to do with Christianity. It hardened my heart towards the things of God. The attitude and actions of the disciples probably had the same effect on these children.

2. The Perspective of Jesus

When my father heard what the pastor had said to me, he was livid. It was only last year that my mother told me of his response, as he never spoke to me about it. Well, that was also the response that Jesus had. "But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant." The NASB, ESV, and NIV use the word indignant. The KJV says that He was displeased. The Amplified Version says that He was indignant and pained. I looked up some synonyms of indignant, and here is what I found: irate, vexed, outraged, incensed, piqued, and furious. This infuriated Jesus to see what His disciples had just done. He was not just a little displeased, He was very displeased and indignant.

(Mark 10:14) "But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Why was Jesus so outraged over what the disciples had done? He was outraged because He saw that their attitude did not reflect God's attitude. In Isaiah 55:8, God tells us that His thoughts are not our thoughts. This was very evident in the difference between the disciples attitude and Jesus' attitude. The attitude of the disciples did not show how important each of these tender lives were to the Father. Their attitude was wrong, and the message they were sending to these children and their parents was not the right message. Their attitude and actions could cause one of these little ones to stumble, and He had just had that conversation with them about not causing a little one to stumble. So, He was outraged, and He corrected them on the spot. He told them, "Permit the children to come to Me." Second, He told them, "Do not hinder them." Third, He told them why they should let the children come and why they should not hinder them. He said, "for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

(Is 55:8-9) "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. {9} For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."

When I was on the PGA Tour we had money clips. We could gain access to any place at a tournament. We used our money clips to get in the gate. We used our money clips to get into the clubhouse. We used our money clips to get into the locker room. The money clip showed that we were part of the PGA Tour. We were members of the PGA Tour and we belonged. No one could hinder or prevent us from coming in or going. Jesus told His disciples that these children had PGA Tour badges. The kingdom belongs to them, and they should not stop them at the gate. They should not stop them from entering the clubhouse or locker room. These children had full access to the kingdom of God because it belonged to them.

Jesus said the kingdom of God belonged to them. As I reflected about the kingdom of God and children, I came up with a number of areas where we see the children of God included in kingdom activities. Here are some of those areas.

The first area that I see children included is in worship. Worship is not just the praise and worship time. We call our services, worship services, because the whole service is worship, not just the praise time. In Acts 20:9, Paul was in Troas, and he was preaching late into the night. There was a young man named Eutychus there sitting on the window sill, and he fell asleep during the message, and he fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. Paul prayed for him and God brought him back from the dead. My point is not the miracle, but that he was there in the worship service.

(Acts 20:9) “And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.”

Paul’s letters to the churches included specific instructions to children. His letters would be read in the churches, and some of his comments were specifically to children. In Colossians 3:18-21, he addresses families. In Colossians 3:20, he said, “Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.” In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he also addressed the children, so it was clear that the children were hearing these instructions along with the adults when the letters were being read. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he quotes from Exodus 20:12, where one of the Ten Commandments was specifically addressed to children.

(Col 3:20) “Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.”

(Eph 6:1-3) “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. {2} HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), {3} SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.”

(Ex 20:12) “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.”

So, God spoke to children in His word. That is not the only area, they are also included in our songs of praise and worship. In Psalms 148:12-13, God exhorts the young men, virgins, old men, and children to all praise and exalt the name of the Lord. Children were to worship the Lord with the rest of the family. They were included in worship. In Psalm 96:7-8, God encourages families to ascribe glory and strength to Him. He exhorts families to bring an offering and come into His courts.

(Psalm 148:12-13) “Both young men and virgins; Old men and children. {13} Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven.”

(Psalm 96:7-8) “Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. {8} Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; bring an offering and come into His courts.”

Children were also included in the prayer times. In Joel 2:15-16, God called for a time of fasting and prayer, and he included children. He said, “Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Notice that the children were ordered to gather with the rest of the family. They were not excluded from this time of prayer and fasting.

(Joel 2:15-16) “Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, {16} gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.”

When Abraham and Sarah sent away Hagar and Ishmael, she began crying out to God. In Genesis 21:17, we read that “God heard the lad crying...for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.” It was the cries of the child that the Father responded to. We should never discount or prevent our children from praying. We should encourage them to pray for it may be their prayers that God responds to.

(Gen 21:15-17) “When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. {16} Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. {17} God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.”

A little later, Joel prophesied about the Holy Spirit being poured out on all mankind. He said, “and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Children were included in the preaching, praying, praises, and in prophesying. Many people were taught that children are to be seen, not heard. However, our children can minister in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, just like adults, and they can prophesy. We need to encourage them to prophesy. Paul said that we should earnestly desire spiritual gifts, and especially prophecy. That exhortation goes to children also. We not only want to see our children, but we want to hear them prophesying.

(Joel 2:28) “It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.”

(1 Cor 14:1) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.”

In 1 Samuel 3:10-14, it was little Samuel that God spoke to about the judgment that He was going to bring about. In Jeremiah 1, God started speaking Jeremiah when he was but a youth. Our children can learn to hear God’s voice and become little prophets and prophetesses. Philip the evangelist had four daughters that were prophetesses. We need many more little prophets and prophetesses. God has promised to pour out His Spirit on them and declared that they will prophesy.

(1 Sam 3:10-14) “Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening." {11} The LORD said to

Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. {12} In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. {13} For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. {14} Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

(Jer 1:5-7) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." {6} Then I said, "Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, Because I am a youth." {7} But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak."

(Acts 21:8-9) "On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. {9} Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses."

Malachi also prophesied about children in this outpouring in the last days. He said that God was going to restore the hearts of the father to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. We should be praying for this to happen, and this is a sign that we should be monitoring.

(Mal 4:5-6) "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. {6} He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Children were included in the message that Peter preached at Pentecost. Peter is talking about salvation and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. He summarized several prophecies from Isaiah about this promise being for them and their children. (See Isaiah 44:3 and 54:13.)

(Acts 2:38-39) "Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. {39} For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

This fits right in with the next thing that Jesus said to them. "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." The kingdom belongs to children and we have to enter the kingdom just like a child. Jesus just turned the tables on the disciples. They thought that children should learn from their parents, and they should. But Jesus was telling them that adults need to consider the humility and faith of children. Adults need to learn from the children. Children have soft, tender, humble hearts that believe easily.

(Mark 10:15) "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

After addressing His disciples, Jesus took the children in His arms. He embraced them. He held them. He accepted them. He welcomed them. His actions were in complete contrast to what the disciples had tried to do.

(Mark 10:16) “And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.”

Then, Jesus began to bless the children by laying His hands on them. If you recall at the end of Israel’s life, he brought Joseph and his sons before him and he placed his hands on them and blessed them. Israel crossed his hands so that his right hand was on Ephraim, the younger one, and his left hand on Manasseh, the older one. Joseph tried to stop his father, because he wanted the right-hand blessing to be upon his first-born. The point I wanted to make is that when a father blessed his children, he laid his hands on them and then blessed them. This was common knowledge to the Jews, but is not common knowledge or practice in our culture.

(Gen 48:8-15) “When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" {9} Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them... {13} Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. {14} But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. {15} He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,”

There are lots of things that are done through the laying on of hands. We lay hands on leaders when we ordain them. We give authority and power to people through the laying on of hands. Very often, the gift of the Holy Spirit came through the laying on of hands. Spiritual gifts were imparted through the laying on of hands. Paul told Timothy “to kindle afresh the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” As we look at laying hands on our children, we need to think of more than blessing them. We can impart gifts to them, just like Paul did for Timothy. We can impart prophecy, teaching, or other gifts to our children.

(2 Tim 1:6) “For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

3. Our Perspective

We have seen the perspective of the world, and we have seen the perspective of Jesus. I want us to take a look at our perspective. Here are some questions for us to consider.

- Do we see children as a gift of the Lord? Psalm 127:3 says that children are a gift of the Lord.

(Psalm 127:3-5) “Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. {4} Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. {5} How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate.”

- Do we see children as a reward and a blessing? Psalm 127 says that the fruit of the womb is a reward, and that the man whose quiver is full is blessed. Do we see children as an expense or a blessing?

- Do we include children in kingdom activities? Do we treat children as valued members in the kingdom? Do we get down to their level and ask them questions? Do we take an interest in them when they come to our services? Do we encourage them to pray and participate in our prayer times? Do we encourage them to participate in our worship? Do we include principles, examples, and illustrations in our messages that are specifically for children? Karen has been about encouraging me to include children in my messages?

(Joel 2:28) “It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.”

- Are we training up our children in the ways of the Lord? These are our future leaders in the church. Are we teaching them God’s word? Deuteronomy 6:7 tells fathers to diligently teach their children. Two of my sons attend some of the leadership training that I am doing. That pleases me because we need the next generation to take the helm.

(Deut 6:7) “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”

- Are we preparing our children for the things that they will face in these last days? The children today are facing many challenges that we did not face as a child. In Psalm 78, the fathers did not teach their children and prepare them. Unfortunately, in the difficult times, they turned their backs in battle because they had not been prepared. Are we preparing our children for the difficult times in the days ahead?

Conclusion and Applications

Many churches do not include children in their services. At the Connection Church of Albuquerque, we believe that children are an important part of the kingdom of God. We believe that the kingdom of God belongs to such as them. We want to encourage children to come to Jesus. We want to reach out to them and speak with them. We want them to feel important and honored, because that is the way that Jesus feels. We want children to be touched and blessed by Jesus. We want our children to participate in our prayer times. We want children to participate in our songs of praise and worship. We want children to hear the word of God preached. We want our children to ask questions and learn about the kingdom. We want our children to move in prophetic ministry. We want our children empowered to do kingdom ministry.

I want to end with a prayer for our children.

Introduction (Mark 10:13-16)

1. **The Perspective of the Disciples** (World)(Mark 10:13-16, 9:14-29, 36-37, 42, Col 3:21, Gen 25:28, Ex 20:5-6, Pr 5:23)

2. **The Perspective of Jesus** (Mark 10:14-16, Acts 20:9, Col 3:20, Eph 6:1-3, Ex 20:12, Ps 148:12-13, 96:7-8, Joel 2:15-16, 2:28, 1 Cor 14:1, Mal 4:5-6, Acts 2:38-39, Mark 10:15-16, Gen 48:8-15, 2 Tim 1:6, 1 Sam 3:10-14, Acts 21:8-9, Jer 1:5-7)

3. **Our Perspective** (Ps 127:3-5, Deut 6:7, Ps 78-5-9)

Conclusion and Applications