

Loving the Little Ones — Weekly Christian ed lesson

Adapted from an article by JOELLE BRUMMIT-YALE in
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Scripture: Mark 10:13-16

Children have more agency and greater influence today than any other period in human history. Yet, they still remain vulnerable. They depend on adults to care for them, to provide their basic needs, and to keep them safe. It is exactly this vulnerability that draws Jesus to the children who seek his blessing. In this lesson, children will explore what it meant to be a young person in ancient Israel as well as the ways they can support vulnerable children in today's world.

Introduce

Begin the time with your children by asking them to imagine that they trade roles with their parents or caretakers for a week. They would do everything the adults normally do and the adults would become like children.

What would it be like to take care of all of the household responsibilities, go to work and care for the adults?

- What might make this fun? What would make this challenging?
- Would they rather take on the adult roles or continue being kids?

- Note that children need time to develop. Adults know it is important for children to grow up, so they provide what the kids need to ensure they can focus on being kids.

Prepare

Prepare to read Mark 10:13-16 aloud. (Note: the lectionary reading includes verses 2-12, but this lesson only explores the verses, 13-16, that speak particularly about children.)

- First, provide context for the passage. (If you explored [Mark 9:30-37 with the group a few weeks ago](#), you can recap the message of that text.) Explain that children were not seen the same way in Jesus' time as they are today.
- Children were the least important people in that culture. They had to be cared for and couldn't provide much help to their families. They had little protection, making them vulnerable.
- Encourage the children to keep this in mind as you read the Scripture.

Read

Read Mark 10:13-16 aloud.

- Ask the children to recount how the disciples reacted when parents brought their children to Jesus for a blessing. Why do you think the disciples responded this way?
- Then, look at Jesus' reaction. What did he say to the disciples?
- Note that Jesus encouraged children to approach him. He said, "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."
- Ask the children: what do you think Jesus' words mean for us?

Draw the children back to the earlier discussion about children in ancient Israel. Remind them that young people were especially vulnerable, meaning that they depended on adults for everything.

- Because children were the least important people in the society, adults didn't always focus on taking care of every need of every child.
- How does Jesus change the role of children through his words?
- Note that Jesus makes children important in the eyes of God. Because they are not valuable in the world, God makes sure they are the most valuable to God.

Wonder and Do

Continue the discussion by turning towards the world that your children live in. Explain while many of them may not be as vulnerable as all children were during Jesus' ministry on earth, kids do still rely on adults today to take care of their basic needs.

- Ask the children to imagine how their days would be different if adults did not provide them with food, shelter, clothing and other essentials.
- What would it be like to try to learn in school if they also needed to make sure their basic needs were being met?
- Share that there are children across the world who don't have adults to make sure they have all that they need to grow up. There are a number of reasons why the adults in their lives may not be able to fully care for them.
- However, because they are God's children, all of God's people are called on to care for them.

Explore

Together explore opportunities to learn about and care for vulnerable children. If you would like to focus your attention locally, consider reaching out to your local department of social services or child protection to see how the group can learn about the foster care system and support young people in foster care.

- You could also narrow the scope of your project by emphasizing a particular area of need such as food insecurity.
- If your children are interested in supporting children across the world, there are many opportunities to do so. Both [Church World Service](#) and the [International Rescue Committee](#) are leading efforts to care for Afghan children forced to flee their homeland.
- As you explore and commit to an action aimed at supporting children, continue to hold Jesus' words in Mark 10 up as a guide. Remind the children you are working with that they are showing God's love to those who are at the greatest risk in the world. This is what Jesus calls on his disciples to do in this text.



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