

My children will often ask me to spend time with them at a most inconvenient time for me

Carrying the groceries into the house in those stupid paper bags with handles made of tissue paper-

"Dad, can you give me a piggyback ride?" "Can't you see I'm busy!"

Barclay- "Jesus was on the way to the cross- and He knew it. Its cruel shadow could never have been far from His mind. It was at such a time that He had time for the children."

TITLE: **Christ, Kids, and the Kingdom of Heaven**

It is no coincidence that the section in which Jesus elevates the value of children is directly after His remarks on the value of marriage.

The best gift you can give your children is not a new iPhone, toys, allowance, but a healthy home

If you are raising children in a broken home, don't despair, give them the best of with what you have

Hagar, newly single mother, was told to name her son "Ishamel"= "God hears"

Every time she called his name it was a reminder 'The Lord has heard your affliction'

Mark 10:13-14a People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them,

In a passage revolving around children, it is the disciples who act childish

Marrk 9:36-37 He took a child, had him stand among them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"Whoever welcomes one little child such as this in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but him who sent me."

"he was indignant"- this is the only time this word is used for Jesus

Same word used in **10:41**

Notice the positive and negative command-**"let them... don't stop them"**

We have to understand the context to feel the weight of Jesus' words-

The ancient world rarely displayed the affection for children common in the modern west.

They were commonly seen as an inconvenience until they were of use (work, give to marriage for dowry)

Letter from a poor laborer to his pregnant wife in Alexandria,

"if it was a male child, let it live; if it was a female, cast it out."

-Papyrus Oxyrhynchus IV, No. 744, lines 9 f. (Dated June 17th, 1 B.C.)

In a society that saw children as an inconvenience Jesus sees them as image bearers

Scripture is clear: Every human being bears the image of God,
and therefore every human life possesses inherent value and dignity.

Let me say this plainly and unapologetically: children are image bearers from the moment of conception.

Christ Himself did not become human at birth, but at the virgin conception.

Our society is still guilty of doing what that first-century culture did:
overlooking the rights of children for the sake of adult convenience.

Abortion is the clearest and most tragic example of this.

It stands as one of the greatest tragedies of our day and one of the gravest sins of our nation.

I want to be clear; scripture does not support the taking of an innocent life;

Yet I want to be gentle; there will be some of you who have made that heartbreaking decision before

Christ's forgiveness, mercy, and grace, overwhelmingly outweigh your shame and regrets

This raises an important question that I want to address (intentional side quest)-

Do children who die go to heaven?

I want to provide 4 reasons why we can biblically and confidently say YES

1- Children bear no culpability due to inability

God will judge justly based on what people *know*, *do* and *approve* of evil- Children don't know, do, approve

- **Romans 1:18-23, 32** For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth**, ¹⁹ since what can be **known** about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being **understood** through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. ²¹ For though they **knew** God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their **thinking** became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² **Claiming to be wise**, they became fools ²³ and **exchanged** the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.... ³² Although they **know** God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only **do** them, but even **applaud** others who practice them.
- **Romans 2:14-16** So, when Gentiles, who do not by nature have the law, do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. **Their consciences confirm this**. Their competing thoughts either accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on the day when God judges what people have **kept secret**, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.

Little children have no knowledge of accountability- they lack the ability of moral discernment

- **Deuteronomy 1:39** Your children, who you said would be plunder, your sons **who don't yet know good from evil**, will enter there. I will give them the land, and they will take possession of it.
- **Isaiah 7:14-16** Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ By the time he **learns to reject what is bad and choose what is good**, he will be eating curds and honey. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows **to reject what is bad and choose what is good**, the land of the two kings you dread will be abandoned.

There is no specific 'age' of accountability, but better said (Mike Winger), 'state' of accountability

2- Original sin ≠ Committing sin

We are all born with a sin nature, but proclivity towards sin not the same as partaking in it

- **Romans 5:12-13** Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned. ¹³ In fact, sin was in the world before the law, **but sin is not charged to a person's account when there is no law**.

Even in our justice system, there are no law's against little children who don't yet have the ability of moral discernment

Original sin is why there is physical death (even of children),
but actually sinning is why there is spiritual death & judgment

- **Ephesians 2:1-3** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ²in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. ³We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.
- **2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
- **Revelation 20:12-13** I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. ¹³Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works.

3- David's comfort as a basis of hope for our comfort

- **2 Samuel 12:22-24a** He answered, "While the baby was alive, I fasted and wept because I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let him live.' ²³But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I'll go to him, but he will never return to me." ²⁴Then David comforted his wife...

4- What we know of the character of God leans towards Him receiving not rejecting little children

He is exact in justice, He is overwhelmingly abounding in goodness, compassion, grace & love

- **1 John 4:19** We love because he first loved us
If He loved those who previously chose sin, it's not a stretch that He loves those incapable of moral discernment
- **Psalms 145:8-9** The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in faithful love.
⁹The Lord is good to everyone; his compassion rests on all he has made.
- **Lamentations 3:32-33** Even if he causes suffering, he will show compassion according to the abundance of his faithful love. ³³For he does not enjoy bringing affliction or suffering on mankind.
- **2 Corinthians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

Spurgeon- "...many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too?... We cannot bring (them) back again...but you may follow! Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of yourself; the next step is faith, into Christ, and when you are there, you are fairly and safely on the way, and before long you shall be received at heaven's gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome you when you should land upon the eternal shores."

Mark 10:14b-15 because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Many have pointed out that Jesus here is telling us to take on certain childlike traits:

kindness, forgiving, loving, sweet, innocent, pure, etc.-

But I think that misses the point Jesus is making.

For all the honorable qualities of childlikeness, children are still many times, childish-
selfish, angry, demanding, thankless, short tempered, etc. –

So, what is Jesus getting at?

He's referring to salvation, and I think at least 2 things children get right-

Children are helpless yet hopeful

They cannot help themselves in the most basic of necessities (food, clothing, shelter, health), yet they are confident that their parents will help (they don't even think about it)

We need a childlike dependence on God

Children are eager to receive gifts

Adults tend to want to earn what they get (as is the case in the very next passage), But children are excited and overjoyed at the sight of a wrapped box with a bow

We need a childlike delight at receiving from God

Main Point- (lengthy but I'll provide a shorter one also)

The kingdom of God belongs to those who know they are helpless, and who come with empty hands having nothing of merit with which to bargain with, and who understand that if it were not a gift of extravagant grace, they would have no claim over even a single doorhandle of the palaces of heaven.

Illustration- A dad challenges kids to get to the top of the stairs without touching the ground for a reward
They try, and try, and fail repeatedly
until one, the smallest, asks "dad, will you carry me up the stairs?"

Shorter main point: **We have no claim but grace**

"Lord, will you carry me?"

Mark 10:16 After taking them in his arms, he laid his hands on them and blessed them.

Children are important to us because they are important to Jesus

Action Steps:

- **Bless the children in your home**
tell them you are blessing them & pray over them, give them a gift and watch and learn
- **Bless the children in our church**
VBS, wayKIDS volunteer/ Donations
- **Bless the children in our community**
Pregnancy Help Center of Manteca, Agape Villages, LoveINC

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

This passage doesn't just tell us something about children, it reveals to us something about God.

The Lord is fatherly in His care towards us

Psalm 103:13-14 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. ¹⁴For he knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust.

Some of you came in tired from trying to earn what can only be received.

Some of you came in feeling unworthy, carrying shame, drowning in regret.

Jesus says the kingdom does not belong to the strong & high achievers, but to the childlike.

The invitation is simple: stop striving, stop bargaining, stop pretending you've got it together.
Come like a child....and let your Father carry you.

BULPEN-

Childlike not childish

Isaiah 40:29-31 He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall,

³¹but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength;

they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.

Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

John 14:1-6 “Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. ⁴You know the way to where I am going.” ⁵“Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

By contrast the opposite will shut you out- reliance on merits, self-goodness, works, accolades, accomplishments, anything short of surrender

JC Ryle- *“The great head of the church found time to take special notice of children”*

William L. Lane- *“The ground of Jesus’ surprising statement is not to be found in any subjective quality possessed by the children, but rather in their objective humbleness and in the startling character of the grace of God who wills to give the Kingdom to those who have no claim upon Him.”*

V15 some have argued that it ought to be interpreted as ‘one must receive the kingdom the same way one receives a child’, which would then make the rebuke of v13 sharper.

On children going to heaven:

Daniel Akin- *“Anyone who is saved is saved because of the grace of God, the saving work of Jesus Christ, and the undeserved and unmerited regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Like all who have ever lived, except for Jesus, infants need to be saved. Only Jesus can take away their sin, and if they are saved, it is because of His sovereign grace and abounding mercy. Abraham said, ‘Won’t the judge of all the earth do what is just?’ (Genesis 18:25). For those incapable of willful acts of sin, we can rest assured God will, indeed, do right. Precious little ones are the objects of His saving mercy and grace.”*

Spurgeon- *“If infants are to be saved, it is not because of any natural innocence. They must enter Heaven by the very same way that we do; they must be received in the name of Christ...”*

Spurgeon- *“...many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too?... Mother, unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise. Father, ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes that once looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which had scarcely learned to call you father, ere they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice, saying to you this morning, “Father, must we be for ever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass?”... As you are at present, you cannot hope for that; for your way is sinful, you have forgotten Christ, you have not repented of sin, you have loved the wages of iniquity...If thou wilt think of these matters, perhaps the*

heart will begin to move, and the eyes may begin to flow, and then may the Holy Spirit put before thine eyes the cross of the Saviour...if thou wilt turn thine eye to him thou shalt live...

We cannot bring him back again...but you may follow!" Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of thyself; the next step is faith, into Christ, and when thou art there, thou art fairly and safely on thy way, and ere long thou shalt be received at heaven's gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome thee when thou shouldst laud upon the eternal shores."

*Short was my life, the longer is my rest;
God takes those soonest whom he loveth best,
Who's born today, and dies tomorrow,
Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.
Other diseases often come to grieve us,
Death strikes but once, and that stroke doth relieve us.*