

Receive the Kingdom of God Like a Child

There is more to know about God's attributes than the academic knowledge that He is eternal, all powerful, all knowing, righteous, faithful, and loving, for example. An academic knowledge of God is helpful for reciting God's characteristics in a Bible study, on a test in a Bible university, or answering questions about God in seminary. But to understand our God and the benefits for every person, and especially believers, is a great comfort. There is a song that is titled, "You'll Never Walk Alone." It is a moving song. People respond to the song because we do not want to be left alone. While unbelievers fear being alone, believers can be comforted by the fact that God is eternal. Therefore, we know He will never leave us nor forsake us. Why? Because He will always exist!! Our God will not die and leave us all alone. Also, it is one thing to know that God is righteous and faithful. But when 1 John 1:9 promises that is the reason God will forgive our sins, it is a thrill. You see, God's promise to forgive is based on His character. Matthew 6:25-34 encourages us to not worry but trust God to meet our daily needs. The reason we are given is that it is His character to care even for the flowers and the birds. If he cares for them, He will care for us. In our study we will be reminded of another attribute of God. Our study is from Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17.

Children Brought to Jesus. The opening verse of our study is Luke 18:15. Immediately we are told that people were bringing their babies to Jesus so that He could touch them. The passage says,

And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.
Luke 18:15 (NASB)



It is common for parents to want their children to be touched by individuals they highly respect, such as a grandparent, a politician or some other famous person. Routinely, politicians want to leave the impression they are compassionate and caring. So they kiss babies. Some parents want doctors

to touch their babies if the little one is sick. Parents also want a highly respected pastor or religious person to lay hands on and pray for the babies so that they can receive a special blessing. That is true today as it has been down through time.

The Old Testament reveals that Jacob (Israel) blessed his descendants by laying hands on them and giving them a blessing (Genesis 48:14-18).

So on this occasion both Matthew 19:13 and Mark 10:13 indicate the parents wanted

Jesus to lay hands on and pray for their babies. Here are the two verses,

Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disci-

ples rebuked them. Matthew 19:13 (NASB)

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them.

Mark 10:13 (NASB)

The three gospels also record that those children who were brought to Jesus varied in age from newborns up to the age of about ten. For example, in Luke 18:15, the Greek word for “babies” is *brephos*. The word can refer to a newborn baby or a very small infant. Then in the gospel of Mark we are told that parents were *also* bringing their older children. Here is Mark 10:13,

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them.

Mark 10:13 (NASB)

The Greek word used here for “children” this time is “*paidion*.” It refers to children who are usually below the age of puberty. Matthew 19:13 also refers to *paidion*. Together Matthew, Mark, and Luke paint a picture of children below the age of puberty being brought to Jesus. This crowd of adults wanted their children to be given a blessing by Jesus.

That is the introduction to our study. Our study can be outlined as the Children Brought to Jesus (v. 15a), the Wrong View of Jesus (v. 15b), Children are Loved by Jesus (v. 16), and We Must Come in Humility to Christ (v. 17).

Wrong View of Jesus. We can imagine the excitement of these parents as they were “bringing” their babies to Jesus. The fact that they were bringing their children to Jesus reveals that they had high respect for Him. They must have anticipated a very special blessing for the child they loved. The Greek grammar indicates parents were repeatedly bringing babies. The picture painted for us is a constant stream of babies and children coming to Christ. This implies a very large group of parents and children.

We are also told in all three gospels that the disciples had a different attitude about these children than the parents. One would think the disciples would have rejoiced that these children were able to be blessed by Christ. But instead they rebuked the children for coming to Jesus (Matthew 19:13;

Mark 10:13; Luke 18:15). The Greek word for rebuke in all three gospels is *epitimaō*. The word refers to a strong rebuke or a strong disapproval. That is the disciples did not approve of the children being brought to Jesus. The question is, “Why did the disciples want to stop these children from coming to Jesus?” Yes, it is true that children can be demanding and consume a person’s time. Yes, children can be an inconvenience. In our present culture, some couples do not want children because they do not value children. They do not agree with God that children are a blessing. Psalm 127:3-5 says,

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD,

The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,

So are the children of one’s youth.

How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;

They will not be ashamed . . . Psalm 127:5 (NASB)

But some couples view children as little people who prevent them from having fun. Some parents do not want to deal with the sinful behavior of children or the difficulties of training children. Some couples just do not like children.

The sad truth is such couples are too self-centered. They are also shortsighted and do not consider who will take care of them in their old age. They do not care that their parents did not consider them an inconvenience. They do not realize that raising children can help the parents become more mature as adults. They ignore God’s command to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28).

Jesus Loves Children. But it is clear the disciples did not think the children were important enough to be touched and prayed for by Jesus. Also, they did not understand how much Jesus valued children of all ages from *brephos* to *paidion*. The disciples’ low view of the children is revealed in their higher view of Jesus. Whatever the reason for their rebukes, they revealed that they had the wrong view of Jesus. Jesus looked beyond the immature bodies and minds of the children and saw their spirits. Jesus loved the children more than the disciples did.

Each of the gospels reveal that earlier Jesus had *already*

used children to teach the disciples that the one who humbles himself as a child is the greatest in the kingdom (Matthew 18:1-4; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48). He said this,

Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4 (NASB)

That previous event should have taught the disciples that Jesus did not have a low view of children. Instead, He greatly valued children. Children are the perfect example of the attitude that must exist before a person will submit to God and plead for forgiveness. Also, they are the perfect example of a true believer after being saved. Humility is the mark of a true Christian. You see, the disciples had the wrong view of Jesus even though they had been with Him for almost three years. They still did not understand Jesus loved children. Do you?

Frankly, I would not have wanted to have been a disciple. It would have been embarrassing when Jesus said the following to the disciples.

Permit the children to come to Me, do not hinder them . . . Luke 18:16 (NASB)

Imagine being commanded by Jesus to let the children come to Him. How could the disciples have been so wrong? They thought that Jesus would not want to give them any time, but He did. Imagine the embarrassment the disciples must have felt when others heard Jesus' command. Imagine the thoughts and emotions of the disciples. If I had been one of the disciples, I am confident that I would have relived this

event again and again. They had been with Jesus over three years, but they still did not understand Him. Jesus was not like them. In fact, Jesus is not like you or me! That is God's message in Psalm 50:21. He is not like us.

These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you . . . Psalm 50:21 (NASB)

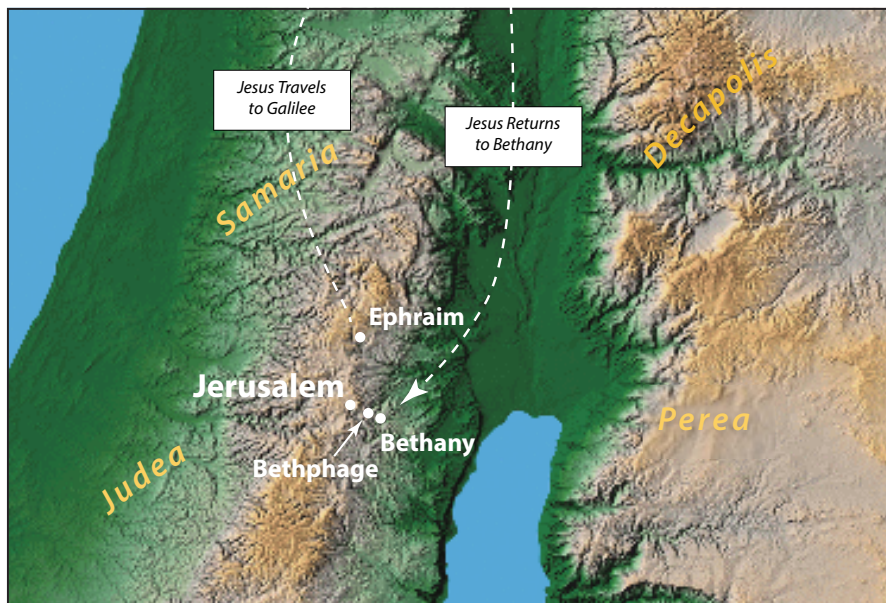
God does not lie and He does not repent (Numbers 23:19), but we do. God is eternal, but you and I will most likely die before we live to be one hundred years in age. Nor does God change (Malachi 3:6). God has always been. Jesus loves children,

but that is not true of all adults. We are not like Christ, the Holy One. Jesus loves everyone, but we do not. We usually do not love those whom we do not value. That describes the disciples.

Next, Jesus commanded the disciples to not hinder

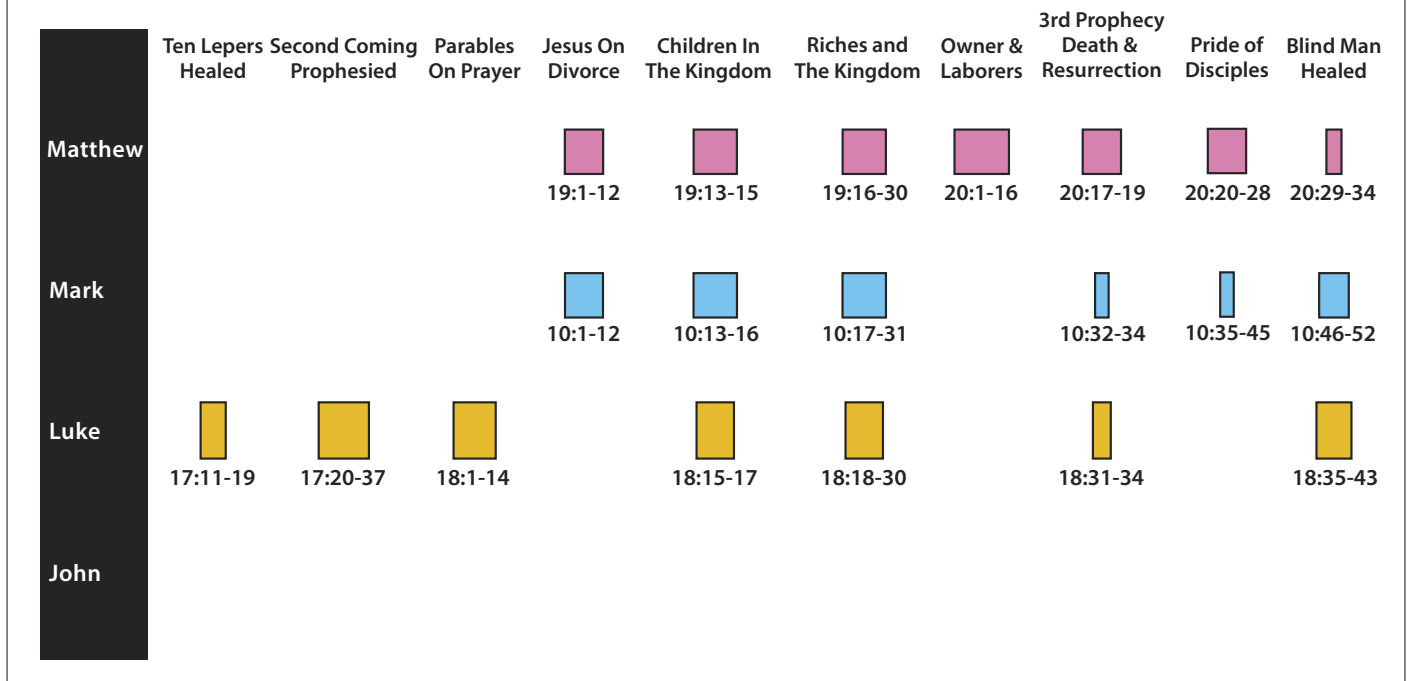
the children. Jesus has given two commands now to communicate His great desire that these children be allowed to come to Him. The first was positive, to permit, and the second command was negative, do not hinder. That reveals His seriousness. The Greek word for "hinder" literally means to "cut off." Jesus did not want the children to be cut off from Him.

This has a very practical application for every adult, both the unbeliever and believer. Jesus still does not want us to cut off children from Him. Those adults who think it is best for children to grow up in a religious free society have deceived themselves. No such society exists. That belief is a religion too! Such a society is run by anti-god advocates, and the result is an anti-god philosophy. The United States is proof



Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Perea - Winter of A.D. 33



of that statement. The nation has not been transformed from a God-fearing nation to a religion neutral nation, but to an anti-God nation. Some well-intentioned and many unbelievers have cut off children from Jesus Christ. The Bible under many circumstances has been removed from the public square. God has been pronounced dead. The media is hostile to Christ, and the public school systems distort the facts about Christ. The historical facts and the contents of the Bible are twisted and distorted. As 2 Thessalonians 2:3 states, the apostasy is already occurring. It is occurring at a fast pace. "Jesus is being cut off." The commands to "permit" and "do not hinder" are not only being ignored, but the enemies of Christ are aggressively doing it.

Kingdom of God Belongs to Children. Then Jesus said,

... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.
[Luke 18:16 \(NASB\)](#)

This statement from Christ seems to have two meanings. The first meaning may be that many more babies have died

and entered heaven than adults have. Historical records report that the mortality rate of babies has been very high. It is reported by Our World Data that fifty percent of all babies since about 300 B.C. have died by puberty. Here is their report,

Many researchers have independently studied mortality rates for children in the past: in different societies, locations, and historical periods. The average across a large number of historical studies suggests that in the past around one-quarter of infants died in their first year of life and around half of all children died before they reached the end of puberty.¹

Statista also reports,

The child mortality rate in the United States, for children under the age of five, was 462.9 deaths per thousand births in 1800. This means that for every

1. Max Roser. "Mortality in the past – around half died as children." Our World Data. June 11, 2019.

thousand babies born in 1800, over 46 percent did not make it to their fifth birthday. Over the course of the next 220 years, this number has dropped drastically, and the rate has dropped to its lowest point ever in 2020 where it is just seven deaths per thousand births.²

This last report ignores the millions of babies that have been aborted and were never born. So, what is the eternal destiny of the unborn and the children who die before the age of accountability? The answer is that they went to heaven.

Now how do we know that children go to heaven before they reach the age of accountability? The answer is found in 2 Samuel 12:15-23. There we are told that God took the life of the newborn baby of King David and Bathsheba. This occurred as punishment on King David because he committed adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrated events so that her husband died. After the child died, David said this,

But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me. 2 Samuel 12:23 (NASB)

That is, the child died and went to heaven. Later, David was going to be able to see his child. Consequently, this principle reveals that heaven will be populated with many people who died before physical birth and after birth. Truly, “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

The second reason for this statement is given in the next verse. It explains under what conditions a person enters the kingdom of heaven.

Must Receive as a Little Child. In verse 17 Jesus said,

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all. Luke 18:17 (NASB)

Notice that He said, a person must receive the kingdom of God like a child would. So, what are the attitudes of children?

While the attitudes of children vary from culture to culture, they usually share several common attitudes. First, they are completely dependent upon their parents. As a result, they are trusting. Also, children are typically humble and as a result they are submissive, until they reach puberty. Other Scriptures teach us that a person will never believe in Christ if they are proud. For example, the beatitudes describe the characteristics of one who believes in God.

Every one of the beatitudes describes a humble person. The first beatitude is found in Matthew 5:3. It says,

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom. Matthew 5:3 (NASB)

The Greek word for “poor” actually means “beggar.” That is, one who is a beggar in spirit will enter the kingdom of God. The sixth and seventh beatitudes are,

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Matthew 5:8-9 (NASB)

Notice that only the pure in heart see God. Only peacemakers will be called the sons of God. Proud people are not concerned about obeying God’s commands because they do not desire to be pure in heart or holy. Proud people do not yield themselves to other people in pursuit of peace. The beatitudes describe the character of those who are believing in Christ.

Only humble people come to Christ. Only humble people will sacrifice themselves for Christ. Matthew 13:44-46 tells us that those who enter the kingdom of God are those who joyfully give up everything they have in order to enter the kingdom. Sadly, some people claim to be believers, but they have deceived themselves. They refuse to submit to God. Instead, they want God to give to them. They pray and expect God to give to them. If He does not, then they find some fault with God. A woman once declared that she did not like to hear that God punishes people because they sin. The proud consider themselves to be good people. They disagree with God’s view about themselves.

In order to become a believer, we must come to God in

2. Aaron O’Neill. “Child mortality in the United States 1800-2020.” Statista. Mar 19, 2021.

humility. Then as they grow spiritually, humility will become the mark of a mature believer. Romans 10:9-10 clearly reveals that humility is necessary at the moment of salvation. It says,

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. Romans 10:9-10 (NASB)

Remember that Jesus said, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.” Jesus used the little children to once again teach that proud people will not enter the kingdom of God. Proud people will not repent of their sins. Proud people will never submit to Christ. Proud people are not like children.

Most of our English Bibles do not accurately translate the Greek text of Luke 18:17. The New American Standard Bible has the best translation. When Jesus said, “Will not enter it at all,” the Greek text tells us that Jesus used a double negative. The actual Greek states that Jesus said, “Will not not enter into it.” Jesus emphatically emphasized that humility accompanies saving faith. That is, without humility a person will never repent of his sins, and he will never submit to Christ. Jesus used the children to illustrate His point.

Jesus Received the Children. Then Mark 10:16 says Jesus picked up the children, laid hands on them, and blessed them.

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

This action reveals that Jesus was serious about not hindering the children from coming to Him. This verse also reveals these were indeed small children. He was able to take them in His arms. Isn't that a good illustration of what happens at the moment someone responds with saving faith? Because we believe in Jesus, we come to Him. We come repenting of our sins and submitting to Him. Then Jesus receives us and blesses us in so many ways. We become new spiritual creatures

(2 Corinthians 5:17), a new creation (Galatians 6:15), new self (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). We are declared to be righteous by faith (Romans 5:1; 8:30). We are glorified (Romans 8:30). We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). We have a place in heaven reserved for us (1 Peter 1:4), and we are living in this grace (Romans 5:2). In summary, we have been adopted by God the Father and placed in His family (Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:5).

It must have been encouraging for the parents to watch Jesus bless their children, and how much more for the children to be blessed by God! Then Jesus left from that place.

Conclusion. So, are you going to heaven? Jesus has told us that unless you and I come in humility as a child we will “not not” enter the kingdom of God. The evidence of that humility is that you are repentant of your sins and are submitting to Christ. Listen to Jesus. The first verse is about repentance and the last two verses again illustrate that saving faith submits to Christ.

I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Luke 13:5 (NASB)

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Matthew 16:25-26 (NASB)

James 2:19 warns us the demons also believe in Jesus, but they are not going to heaven. They are proud and will never repent and submit to Christ. Here is the verse,

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. James 2:19 (NASB)

God urges you to repent of your sins and submit to Christ. God promises to give you eternal life in heaven as a free gift, and He urges you to believe in Christ. If you are not a believer, He is calling you.

Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold,
now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION” 2 Corinthians
6:2 (NASB)

If you are a believer, if you name the name of Christ, He calls
you to pursue righteousness and submit to Him completely.