

Little and Loved – Jesus and the Children



Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16;
Luke 19:15-17



Today's Bassline explores one of the moments when Jesus showed his deep care and love for children. In a world where children were often overlooked and seen as unimportant, Jesus stopped everything to bless them and declared that they, too, belong in the Kingdom of God. Together we'll discover why three Gospel writers thought this story was worth repeating, what it teaches us about Jesus' heart, and how receiving God's Kingdom 'like a child' shapes the way we live.

You will need:

- Dice – one per team
- Flip chart or large sheet of paper and pens
- Paper and pens



Beat

Leader's notes:

The Beat activity today reminds the young people of the things they loved when they were children. Divide the group into smaller teams. Each team will need a dice. Write the following on a flip chart for the whole group to see.

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| 1. TV show | 3. Film | 5. Food |
| 2. Book | 4. Hobby | 6. Toy |

Each person takes a turn to throw the dice. Depending on the number they roll, they then share their favourite TV show / book / film / hobby / food or toy. It doesn't matter if they roll the same number twice, as they can think of another item for that category.

After they have played the game, come back together as a group and discuss if there were any similarities/differences in their responses.

Say:

Thinking about what we loved when we were little reminds us of what it feels like to be children. In Jesus' time, children weren't always valued or welcomed, so what he does in today's story is radical and countercultural.

 Bridge

Leader's notes:

Play one more round of the game, but this time the young people need to identify their *least* favourite example of the category they roll.

 Amplify

Say:

In our previous sessions we've often started with a children's video clip that possibly oversimplifies the story. Today we're going to do the opposite. We'll watch a children's clip that still speaks simply but gives the story real depth.

Watch:

The Kids Can Come Too: The Story of Jesus Welcoming the Children (Mark 10) (3:58)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhFJx20Cyzk>

Leader's notes:

As the group watches the clip, ask them to think about the following questions. You may want to write them on a flip chart. Discussion prompts are provided below.

– **What key ideas stood out?**

Jesus really wants children near him; he isn't too busy or annoyed by them. The disciples tried to block their access, but Jesus stopped them and said the Kingdom belongs to people like children.

– **How does this children's video go beyond the surface? What deeper truth does it include?**

It explains why the disciples turned the kids away and shows Jesus' anger when people treat children as unimportant. It also links the story to God's covenant love and teaches that God's Kingdom is for the humble and overlooked.

– **What points surprised you or felt challenging to young people or even adults?**

Phrases like 'Jesus was furious with his disciples' and 'the Kingdom is for nobodies, not somebodies' might feel jarring, but they help us rethink status and pride. The line 'Jesus is never too busy and you are never a bother' is also reassuring for people of any age.

Say:

This moment with Jesus and the children is so important that three of the four Gospels record it. Matthew, Mark and Luke all thought it was worth including. That tells us that it isn't just a sentimental story for parents to read to their children; it's central to understanding Jesus' heart and God's Kingdom.

Leader's notes:

Divide the group into three smaller groups. Allocate one of the following Bible passages to each group: Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17. Ask them to read their passage carefully and answer these questions:

- Who is bringing the children?
- Who tries to stop them?
- How does Jesus respond? (jot down any important words or phrases)
- What does Jesus say about the Kingdom of God?

Bring everyone back together and create a simple table on a flip chart to collate the group's findings. As you fill in the chart, discuss the similarities and differences between the translations.

Question	Matthew 19:13-15	Mark 10:13-16	Luke 18:15-17
Who is bringing the children?	People bring little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them.	People bring little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them.	People bring their babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them.
Who tries to stop them?	The disciples rebuked those bringing the children.	The disciples rebuked those bringing the children.	The disciples rebuked those bringing the babies.
How does Jesus respond?	Jesus says, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them' and places his hands on them.	Jesus was indignant (feeling or showing anger or annoyance at what is perceived as unfair treatment).	Jesus called the children to him.

What does Jesus say about the Kingdom of God?	‘The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.’	‘The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’	‘Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’
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Say:

When we place these accounts side by side, we notice new things. Mark shows Jesus’ anger when children are pushed away; and his is the only account that says Jesus ‘took the children in his arms’, a phrase unique to Mark. Luke points out that even babies, the very youngest and most vulnerable, were welcomed by Jesus, and adds his strong warning that we must receive God’s Kingdom like a little child. Matthew shows Jesus laying hands on and praying for the children. Each Gospel gives a slightly different window into Jesus’ heart.

Seeing them together helps us realise this isn’t just a sentimental moment: it’s a deliberate, repeated teaching. The early Church remembered this story three times over because Jesus wanted his followers to value children and childlikeness and to learn from their humility.


Ask:

What would change if we welcomed and valued children with the same passion as Jesus?

Sound Check
Say:

In Jesus’ day, children had very little worth or status. In the Roman world, they were often seen as unimportant until they could make a meaningful contribution, and some babies, especially girls or those considered weak, could even be abandoned and left to die. In Jewish society, children were loved by their families, but they still had no legal standing and were seen as needing to be taught and corrected rather than listened to. Jesus saw things differently. He saw children as a valuable part of his Kingdom, even when his disciples saw them as a distraction. That was radical then, and it still challenges us today. Children can still be overlooked, ignored, or treated as ‘less important’.

Ask:

- In what ways are children overlooked or ignored today?
- Why do you think that happens?
- How can we value children in our world today in the way Jesus asks us to?

Say:

It's easy to see this as a wider societal problem, but today we're going to focus on what we can do to value children as Jesus did. We're going to think about the individual difference each of us could make in the life of a child.

Leader's notes:

- Give each young person a piece of paper. Ask them to quietly picture a younger child they know from church, family or school.
- On one side, invite them to write or sketch what life might feel like for this child – what they love and enjoy, but also any worries or ways they might feel ignored or overlooked.
- On the other side, ask them to list ways they could make this child feel welcome, valued, or closer to Jesus. These could be simple acts of kindness: asking their opinion, listening to worries, encouraging them, or regularly praying for them.
- After a few minutes, ask the group to share ideas for supporting younger children. Keep in mind The Salvation Army's safeguarding practices when discussing suggestions. This is a good opportunity to model safe and wise support.

Say:

Jesus said the Kingdom belongs to children and to anyone who comes to him with the same childlike trust and humility. By valuing and including children, we live out the heart of God's Kingdom today.

Ask:

- How might really noticing and including younger children shape your own faith?
- What do you think Jesus would say if he saw the way we care for and support children in our church?

**Ask:**

If Jesus walked into our church today, what one piece of advice would he give the young people and adults about how to love and care for the children in our community?

 Selah**Say:**

Jesus said: 'Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Children come with open hands and simple trust. Jesus invites us to approach him the same way and to welcome others as he does.

Leader's notes:

We've just seen that Jesus not only welcomed children but also said we must come to him as they do. This prayer activity helps the group think about what that means for them personally.

- Give each person a piece of paper and ask them to fold it in half.
- On the first side, invite them to write or draw words or images that describe how they sometimes approach God in a 'grown-up' way. These may include feeling that they need to impress him, to have it all together, or to hide their weakness (words could be *fear, pressure, doubt, or performance*).
- On the second side, ask them to write or draw how they'd like to approach Jesus instead, like a child who knows they are welcomed and safe (words could be *trust, safe, curious, loved, open hands*).
- Encourage them to finish by turning their paper to the 'childlike' side and holding it in their hands as a silent prayer: a way of saying to Jesus, 'I want to come to you with trust and openness.'
- An optional song is provided to play during this prayer time.

Watch:

'Who You Say I Am' (Lyric Video) – Hillsong Worship (5:29)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcCIBp13n_4

Say:

Jesus, thank you for welcoming us just as we are. Teach us to come to you like children, trusting, honest, and dependent. Fill us with your grace so we can welcome others as you welcome us. Amen.

 Coda**Say:**

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from this session regarding the importance of children in the Kingdom of God?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.

