

JESUS LOVES CHILDREN

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

: DISCIPLES SAVIOR FORGIVENESS CREATION OLD NEW BELONG

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Mark 10:13-16

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the children learn that Jesus loves all children and that he wants them to belong to him.

MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

This is an opportunity that's worth gold to you as an elementary teacher. Whether you have a group of two children or one of 20, you can be sure that everyone comes from different backgrounds and environments. Some will have heard the stories of Jesus in their homes, they will have seen figures or paintings of the Master embracing the children, others will have seen Christian movies or videos, and a few will have already accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. But there will be children who have not gone through any of these experiences.

There is no simpler message in the entire Bible than the one that you will teach this session. Jesus loves children. He loves them individually and collectively. He loves them in moments of joy as well as in times of sadness. He loves them when they make bad or good choices. He loves them unconditionally. They cannot escape his immense love.

Elementary students have tender hearts and can understand the concept that Jesus loves all children. Although for those who experience problems in their homes or at school, it will be more difficult to understand the idea that Jesus loves them individually in the same way that he loves other children. Through the Bible story and today's activities, you will lead the group through these concepts about Jesus' love for them as a group and individually. That's the way in which your students will have the desire to accept and give back God's love, and to understand that they belong to him.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

“Not now!” “I’m busy!” “Cannot you see what I’m talking about?” These are the expressions that children hear much of the time from adults. They are “interruptions” that walk. It is that they still have no sense of time or of occasions. They speak at inopportune times and say the wrong things. They also have the “ability” to embarrass their parents.

Trying to stop children from interrupting adult conversations did not end with the impatient words of the disciples 2,000 years ago. Throughout history, children were placed behind the crowds and told to shut up and wait. In practically all cultures, children occupy last place.

In biblical times, especially mothers often asked well-known rabbis to bless their children, especially when the child was about to complete their first year of life. These parents believed that the touch and blessing of Jesus would help their children. It is not surprising. They observed that Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and made the paralyzed walk.

Who knows what blessing those parents would seek! Maybe they wanted healing for their sick children. Maybe they were looking for something special for them to overcome the circumstances and diseases that killed the young in those days. Or maybe, Jesus’ blessing would guarantee a good and prosperous life for her little ones in the future.

Unfortunately, Jesus did not have time for the children. At least, that’s what his disciples thought, although the passage does not explain it. Maybe they thought, “Jesus has more important things to do. These children may not be ‘clean’ as rituals stipulate. There are many people (adults) that Jesus must attend to and help. Jesus is a very busy man ... children must wait.”

But the disciples were wrong. When Jesus saw that the disciples rejected the children, he was irritated. In the original (Greek) language, this term emphasizes a very strong degree of anger. The Lord was not a politician trying to fall in love with children. This was the Son of God outraged because his disciples despised them.

Immediately, Jesus stopped the action of the disciples and called the children to the front of the crowd. Not only did he give them his blessing, but he used them as the object of an important lesson. What a turn about! A few minutes earlier, those children had been pushed to the back of the crowd. Now, Jesus used them as an example of what adults should be in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

Children in our groups will often experience what it means to be treated as second-class citizens. Even if their parents are loving and patient, they will be forgotten by other adults. Our cultures are not so different from Jesus’ culture in those days, at least at this point. In this lesson, children will learn how important they are to God. They will know that, regardless of how others treat them, Jesus loves each of them individually in a very special way.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Ask the children to sit in a circle. Begin by passing an envelope with the important words to the child on your right, while playing music. When the music stops, the child with the envelope will take out a card and read the important word. If they read from the side where the word is, they can give clues to its meaning. And if they read the meaning, they can give clues about the word. For example: “FORGIVENESS”: start with “F” and end with “S”. That’s why Jesus died for us. When a someone figures it out, they can clap or shout, “Very good!”

In the case of the word “disciple”, you will have the opportunity to review the previous lesson and ask several questions prepared in advance.

If, when the music stops, the child does not know that word or its meaning, continue with the music until the envelope falls into the hands of another child. No one should laugh or make fun of those who do not know the Important Words. Play and repetition will help them learn.

TEACH THE LESSON

Children find a friend

One day, Jesus was teaching many people. Some had brought their children. The Master spent a lot of time teaching while on earth. The crowds followed him. The parents who listened wanted their children to know Jesus. They wanted him to touch them and sit them on his lap. The parents wanted Jesus to pray for their children.

The people knew that the Lord was special. Perhaps they had seen him heal the sick and wanted that “special touch” on their children. But the disciples did not like this. They frowned at the dads and moms. “Stop, do not do that!” they told them.

It is possible that the disciples thought that Jesus was too busy to give children time and attention. Maybe they thought that the little ones were not important. But Jesus looked up, saw the disciples and listened to what they were saying. Jesus was not happy with what his disciples had done. That's why he got very irritated and said, "Let the children come to me, do not take them out of my presence!"

He wanted to see them. He was happy that they visited him. Jesus loved children, and today he loves each one of you in particular, as well as all the little ones in the world. Jesus told them, "God loves children. The Kingdom of God belongs to people who are like a child."

The Master knew that God cares about all people, not just adults. He loves all children. Then Jesus looked at a little child and said to the adults, "You must be like a child, otherwise you will not be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven." Jesus wanted everyone to understand that they needed to reach out to God with trust and obedience like a child does.

The little ones came to where Jesus was. He lifted them up, hugged them, talked with them and blessed them. "God loves you," Jesus said to each one. "You are very special to God." He helped those people understand that God loves children as much as adults. Children are special to the Father. Jesus wants children to be his followers too.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Tell the children: "There is no simpler message in the entire Bible than the one we learned in this session. Jesus loves children. He loves you individually and collectively. He loves you in moments of joy as well as in times of sadness. He loves you when you make bad or good choices. He loves you unconditionally. We cannot escape his immense love. God wants us to accept and give back his love, and to understand that we belong to him."

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Repeat the memory verse several times with the group. Before the beginning of the session, write on a piece of cardboard or on the board words that are skipped from the memory verse. For example: "Therefore, if ____ is in _____," etc. Leave blank spaces for the children to complete with the corresponding words, which will be written on pieces of cardboard and hidden in different places in the room. Children should look up the words, find them, run to the blackboard and place them in the correct places, until the verse is complete. (These will be noisy times, warn teachers near your room.) You can make two sets of cards with the text to divide the whole group in two. The competition will be very fun for the children.

Say: "This verse is wonderful. It means that Jesus loves you very much and that if you ask him, he can change your life. He helps you and can be your Savior. Jesus can cleanse you and forgive your sins.

Jesus loves me

Give the group Student Activity Sheet #217 with the pictures of Jesus with a child in his arms. Provide colored pencils, markers or crayons. Also, cut colored cards into squares a little larger than the pictures (about 3 cm more on each side). Then, trim the edges in a decorative way. Make two marks on the top of the cards so they can be pierced. Give each child two pieces of thread or yarn to pass through the holes in the squares. Ask the children how they feel about knowing that Jesus loves them. Encourage them to share the pictures with others so they can tell them that Jesus loves them too.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Discuss with the children the fact that Jesus loves all children, not only those who have heard many times about him, or those who come to church every week, or those who memorize Bible verses. Ask them if they know other children that nobody wants at school or in the neighborhood. Be careful: do not let them say the name of the child that nobody loves. The purpose of the question is to get the children in your group to pray for those less fortunate, either because they are different, have no money, or act rudely. Ask the children to pray silently. Then you pray for those "difficult" children (without repeating names), then pray for your group, that your students will love children who are not loved.

Encourage

Say goodbye to the children with appropriate affection and tell them that Jesus loves them and you love them too.

Invite

Encourage the children to return for the next session by telling them something interesting about it. Remind the children that Jesus loves their friends too, and we can help them know Jesus in this group.