

Receiving Children in Jesus' Name

by Zac Poonen

To receive children in Jesus' name is to value them as gifts from God and seek to bring them up in the fear of God, modeling godly behavior and teaching them to love Him.

Duration: 21:05

Scripture: Matthew 18:3

Topics: "Child Dedication", "Humility Before God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of dedicating children to God, drawing inspiration from Jesus' example of being brought to the temple as a child. It discusses two ways of receiving Christ into our homes: through apostles or by emulating the humility and dependence of little children. The message highlights the significance of valuing and nurturing children in a godly manner, warning against causing them to stumble or despising them, as it grieves God's heart.

Transcript

The dedication of children is not something commanded in scripture. Like many other things, we don't necessarily look for a specific command, but we follow the example of Jesus, who when he was a little child was brought to the temple to be dedicated to God. So it's a good practice, even though it's not commanded specifically.

There are two ways of receiving Christ into our homes. Now, Jesus himself is in heaven and we look forward to his coming back, but until he comes back, first of all, Matthew chapter 10, verse 40, Jesus was speaking to the apostles whom he had selected and he told them, you know, it's a tremendous honor to be called by Jesus to be an apostle. And he told them that Matthew 10, verse 40, anyone who receives you receives me.

That's quite a word. If you receive an apostle, into your home, it's exactly the same as receiving Jesus Christ. There were apostles then and there have been apostles through all these 20 centuries.

And if you receive Jesus, it says you'll receive the father. But unfortunately, apostles are very rare. There are not so many in the world.

So what do you do? Well, there's another way of receiving Jesus into our homes. That's the second way. And that's a little easier because to look around for an apostle, you may never find one.

I mean, there are a few. It says in Matthew chapter 18, where the disciples asked Jesus, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Now we know that the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is Jesus Christ. There's no doubt about that.

God has exalted him, given him a name, which is about every name. But he also said, he called a child, it says, and set that child before his disciples and said, in verse 3, Matthew 18, 3, unless you're converted, become like little children, first of all, you won't enter the kingdom of heaven. Leave alone becoming great in the kingdom of heaven, that is the second stage.

First of all, entry, you'll never enter into the kingdom of heaven unless you become converted and become like little children. So there's a lot for us to learn from little children, how to be converted. You don't need to go to a Bible school or study theology to know how to be converted.

Just look at little children. I've often meditated on little children lying in a crib, you know, say two or three months old, and thought to myself, what are the thoughts passing through that child's mind? You think he's lying there and thinking, boy, what a handsome person I am, or what a pretty girl I am, or how people are admiring me, or I'm pretty smart. The child doesn't have any such thoughts.

It's blissfully ignorant of itself. You know, Jesus said his angels, the angels of little children, verse 10, the angels of little children see the face of my father continually. I don't know what that means.

We've got angels too. But you know, you and I don't see the face of the father continually because we allow sin in our life. But the closest thing to heaven on earth is a little child.

And I get a feeling that that little child, when he's lying down there, it sees something of heaven. That's why it's not occupied with itself or with the opinions of people around it. And what I've learned from that is the more I become like a child and get more occupied with my father in heaven, the less I'll be occupied with thoughts about myself or what other people think about me, to be converted, to become like a little child.

We can learn a lot by meditating on little babies. And you know, a baby is not ashamed to be helplessly dependent on others. We become so proud of our independence.

And that's because many believers are independent, that they have not understood what it is to be a part of the body of Christ. They are lone rangers, wandering around like butterflies from one church to another, from one flower to another, to see whether they can get some little honey here, little honey there. A little child is helplessly dependent.

And that's what it means to be converted, to be helplessly dependent on God and not to be ashamed of it. Whoever then, and that requires humility to acknowledge that, and says in verse four, whoever then humbles himself as this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I mean, if you want to be great, I mean, people on this earth who belong to the earth want to be great on the earth.

People who belong to heaven want to be great in heaven. And I see there the way to that greatness is by humbling ourselves like a little child, expressing our helpless dependence on God. And now listen to this.

I told you that if you receive an apostle, it's the same as receiving Jesus into your home. And it says here in verse five, whoever receives a child in my name, receives me, is equal to an apostle. So if you don't find an apostle to receive into our home and you want to receive Jesus into your home, the next best way to do

it is to receive a child in Jesus name and not just your child, but to have a warm attitude to all children.

The Pharisees didn't have time for children. Even the disciples of Jesus didn't have time for children, but Jesus had plenty of time because heaven was full of people who had that spirit. And Jesus came from heaven.

So to receive a child in Jesus name, I mean, the whole world receives children, but not many receive a child in Jesus name. There's a lot of difference. In India, you know that most parents are happy, whether they'll admit it or not, when they get a boy and they're unhappy when they get a girl, whether they admit it or not.

They'll pretend to be happy, but they're not really inwardly happy. So there's something in our nature which doesn't want certain type of children. I remember many years ago, I was in a home where, not in this country, another country, where a mother was, I think having her 12th child and that child was mentally retarded.

He had Down syndrome. You could see that from the time he was born. And she held that child with such tremendous joy and said to me, you know, the Bible says children are the gift of the Lord.

It does not say intelligent children are the gift of the Lord. I'll never forget that. I heard that nearly 40 years ago.

I've never forgotten it. And I remember the father telling me, God's given us a child. He knows how much we love children.

And he knew that my wife was too old to have any more children. And so he gave us a child who'd be a child forever. I'm sure that family received that child in Jesus' name and brought great blessing to that home.

I saw that child about 35 years later, and I was amazed to see he still remembered me. That's something. We may think they are mentally retarded, but they've got other values which the earth does not appreciate.

I want to say to all of you, even if your children are not intelligent, not good looking, God gave them to you. Boy or girl, receive them in Jesus' name. It'll be like receiving Jesus into your home.

Yes. And it can make a lot of difference when Jesus is in your home. And remember what it says here, two warnings he gives us, especially as parents.

Verse six, don't cause one of these little ones to stumble. How do we cause little ones to stumble in our home? By behaving in an ungodly way and stumbling that poor little child. I remember hearing the testimony of a grownup man who was a very fine believer.

He said, when I was a little child, six or years old or so, and I used to sleep in my room. And once when my parents thought I was sleeping and they were yelling and screaming at each other in anger, and I got so scared, it affected me so deeply. It made me insecure.

Do you make your children insecure? Do you stumble your little children by the way you behave at home as parents? Verse six, don't despise one of these little ones. For I say to you, they're angels in heaven. Continually see the face of my father in heaven.

You know, it's very easy for us grown up people who see some of these young people in our church now. And we remember them when they were little babies. And I remember a brother in our church saying this at somebody's wedding.

Oh, I used to see him running around in diapers. What a way to think about a person who's getting married. I wonder whether that brother was even converted.

He has zero understanding of Jesus. Zero. Yes.

Somebody saw you also brother in diapers one day. Don't forget that. Don't despise the little ones.

It goes badly with you. What should you do? If you have that attitude? Jesus gave us some advice, and I'll give you the same advice. Verse six.

After the church service is over today, go to a store, buy a big millstone and a rope tied around your neck. Make sure it's tight so that it doesn't slip out. And there's a lake about two, three kilometers from here.

Go and jump into it. And don't come back. You say, Brother Zach, you're very hard.

I say, you haven't read scripture. Those are not my words. Those are the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 18, verse six.

If you cause a little one to stumble, it's better for you to take a millstone, a heavy millstone. Why did he say a heavy millstone? Because if it's a light one, you may come back to the surface. It must be heavy so that once you go down, you don't come up at all.

And be drowned in the depth of the sea. So many people have got an idea of this meek and mild Jesus who never says anything hard. Can you say anything harder than that to somebody? Tie a millstone around your neck and go and drown in the sea.

For what crime? For despising people. So don't despise them. Don't cause them to stumble.

We have to be very careful. You know, little children here, it's not only parents. Little children are watching the older brothers and sisters.

A little girl goes to her mother and says, Mommy, why can't I dress in that stylish worldly way that young sister in CFC is dressing? One father came to me once and said, what shall I tell my little girl when she asks me such a question? I said, tell her this. There are two types of young sisters in CFC. One, the stylish worldly type, and the other, the modest Christ-like type.

And she has a choice. Which ones to follow? Choice is something God placed in the Garden of Eden. There were two trees.

One was not good. The other was good. God said, Adam and Eve, go in there and choose what you like.

I thank God that God has placed such a choice even here. If there was a choice in paradise, it's okay if there's a choice in CFC too. You can choose, young girls, which young sister you want to follow.

The stylish worldly person who imitates the styles of the film stars and models and gets their inspiration from them, or the God-fearing, modest, reserved sisters who try to imagine how they would dress if they were going to walk with Jesus down the marketplace, dress like that always. And just this one area where

you can stumble little ones. And if you stumble little ones, dear young sisters, I have the same advice for you.

Buy a heavy millstone and go and drown in the sea. These are serious words. Receive a little child just like you receive Jesus.

When you reject a child, you're rejecting Jesus. Look at all the abortions that are committed today. Hundreds of thousands of little children being rejected by their mothers and fathers saying, we don't want you.

We don't want you to be born in the world. It's rejecting Jesus. It's like crucifying Christ all over again.

And when a Christian does that, wow, do they realize that they are crucifying Jesus Christ all over again? Have any of you women done that? I don't want to condemn you. The times of ignorance, God overlooks. Thank God for that.

You were ignorant. But now, Acts 17:30, he commands you to repent. Say, Lord, I never knew.

I'm sorry. But I'm sorry I crucified you in my life. I don't want to do it again.

I want to receive every child in Jesus name. Value the children God gives you and seek with all your heart to bring them up in the fear of God. It's an awesome responsibility.

It's not easy. I brought up four boys, and I know how difficult it is. But I used to fall on my face before God and say, Lord, only you can make them godly.

I cannot. But you can do it. God will do for you what he did for me.

If you humble yourself and acknowledge your helplessness to be able to bring up these little children in a way that God will be happy. There's a verse in the Old Testament which says, a very sad verse. It's written in human terms in Genesis chapter 6. Think of this.

Genesis 6:6. The Lord was sorry that he made man and it grieved him in his heart. Meditate on that. The Lord was sorry that he sent that child into your home and it's grieved him in his heart that you brought up that child to be a worldly child instead of a godly one.

He's not angry. God is sad. Grieved in his heart.

Oh, my brothers and sisters, parents, let us repent that we have not received our children like receiving Jesus, that we have not taken it seriously to bring up our children in the fear of God from the very beginning. If you have loved money, you have taught your children to love money. Teach them to love God.

May God help us.

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