

April 19, 2026

“Children: Gift and Model”

Mark 9:36-37, 42; Mark 10:13-16

Lesson 3

**Intro**

Today’s passage comes between Peter’s confession that Jesus is “the Christ” in 8:29, and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem in 11:1-10. Between these two events, Jesus teaches His disciples about the upside down and backward (compared to what people thought) nature of God’s kingdom. Examples of this teaching includes the high cost of discipleship (10:21-22), the difficulties of wealth (10:24-31), and a redefinition of greatness (10:36-45). Throughout this section, Jesus continually exalts the weak and lowly while humbling the powerful and proud.

As this passage deals with the position of children in Jesus’ eyes, it is helpful to understand how the Roman world of His day viewed children. In essence, they held little if any significance. Adults saw them as lacking reason and requiring training. The aim of this training was to learn their parents’ business and duties. Their value lay in what they contributed to the family. In the extreme, they were considered property, to be dealt with (positively or negatively) as the head of the household determined. This was true in Jewish households as well, with an addition. God taught His people that children were a blessing (Ps. 127:3-5). God instructed the parents to teach their children the faith they practiced, and to train them properly in behavior and wisdom. Even if they did this, though, the children had little power or status.

**Read Mark 9:36-37, 43**

Just before these verses, the disciples have been arguing among themselves about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus teaches them that the greatest must be the last, and the servant of all. He then gives them this practical demonstration.

1. vs. 36: Jesus calls a child to Him, as His disciples are situation around Him to hear Him  
This would be seen as unusual, given the status of children in their society  
Jesus then embraces the child—“taking the child in His arms”  
This is an action of a father to a beloved child  
Jesus is modeling for them how they are to both treat children, and to think of them
2. vs. 37: First, He tells them that “whoever welcomes (a child) in my name welcomes Me”  
This verse, and this phrase in particular, are essential for understanding true discipleship  
The way someone treats others and the way they welcome Jesus are connected  
This includes how we see others, how we accept them, and how we serve them  
Jesus and His disciples are likely speaking Aramaic, they everyday language of the time  
In Aramaic, the word for “child” is the same as the word for “servant”  
Jesus’ words and actions point to doing something considered upside down in their eyes  
They are to treat children and servants the way they treat Jesus  
Jesus connects this particular outlook on life to following Him  
He is going beyond merely saying it’s a humane and kind thing to honor children  
He is redefining values that are fundamental and essential to God’s kingdom  
Because Jesus is King, His followers must pursue a new way of thinking and acting

They aren't to be seeking status; they are to treat all as worthy regardless of status

Second, He connects welcoming Him to welcoming “the One who sent Me”—God  
Jesus' followers are to welcome the lowly in the way they welcome Jesus Himself  
If they do that, another positive outcome follows

The way they welcome Jesus is the way they welcome God Himself  
By equating these two treatments, Jesus shows that He and the Father have similar purpose  
Treating Jesus and the lowly well is acting with honor towards God the Father  
Yet Jesus models lowliness throughout Mark, not the glory of God  
God possesses unequaled authority, but He reaches down for the lowly and unworthy  
To know God and belong to God, we must act the way He acts  
We must follow Jesus' model and humbly extend the gospel to anyone/everyone

3. vs. 42: After presenting a positive treatment and result, Jesus moves to a negative one  
There is a punishment for any who spiritually trip up the small, weak, and vulnerable  
The word “stumble” used here holds the idea of entrapment  
Jesus is referring to anyone who interferes with another's faith negatively  
This might cause them to sin, or even to give up on their faith entirely  
This is a warning to keep the way to Jesus spiritually as clear as possible  
Jesus makes a “better than” comparison to show how serious this issue is  
He says it would be better if the one causing stumbling had a millstone tied on their neck  
This stone is so heavy that a person would sink without hope of escape  
Death is certain, and not an easy death at all  
Jesus says this death would be *better* than being a stumbling block  
Woe to the one who causes another to stumble!

### **Read Mark 10:13-16**

Jesus and His disciples are heading toward Jerusalem for Passover. On the way, they stop and Jesus continues to teach them. At this point, a connecting series of actions to the previous verses occurs.

4. vs. 13: People are bringing their children to Jesus of He can bless them  
This action was often done by rabbis in Jesus' day  
The “disciples” rebuke the parents, preventing them access to Jesus  
The word disciples can refer to the 12, all who followed Him, or the crowd  
The preventers may have thought they were protecting Jesus' time or energy  
The next verse shows Jesus' reaction to this
5. vs. 14: Jesus definitely sees what is happening; He may even have heard what was said by both  
Jesus is “indignant” with the people being prevented from bringing their kids to Him  
“Indignant” means angry or irritated at an unjust action  
Jesus is indignant with an attitude that seems to value one person over another  
This is a wrong attitude and priority in “the kingdom of God”  
Jesus is both positive and negative towards the preventers here  
He tells them “Let the little children come to Me”

Let means “allow, do not hinder”

He also says, “Do not hinder them, *for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these*”

Why does the kingdom belong to children? Children are lowly, insignificant

Those who have no status or standing come to God ready to receive His kingdom

They come with open hands, looking for grace and mercy, not feeling something’s owed

6. vs. 15: Jesus here lays out the requirements for getting into the kingdom of God

It isn’t in power, prestige, or importance

Jesus says we have to be like children

Unable to do much for ourselves, but able to receive what is given to us

People can try to “earn” their way: I’ll do this, so God will let me in

Instead, we are to be like children: humble, vulnerable, needy

Jesus says anyone who isn’t childlike will not enter; that’s a sobering statement

7. vs. 16: Jesus finishes his lesson by actions, demonstrating His words

He takes “the children in his arms”

He hugs them—the implication is that He hugged ALL the children

They are the model of what a person should be like to get into the kingdom

Instead of being insignificant, Jesus says they are the *most* significant

Application: Jesus’ teaching here is the complete opposite of the world’s view. Instead of being bigger, richer, smarter, Jesus says the best thing to do and be is to be like a child. His message challenges His disciples then and now to shift their mindset to His. He values unity, service, and childlike faith. Our challenge both this week and into the future is how to better live this way. What goals and perceptions might you need to adjust to better align with Jesus’ instructions? What might you have to do to better embrace being a child: vulnerable, innocent, and trusting? These are good things for all followers to consider.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for welcoming us into Your kingdom. Help us to strive to be more childlike as we relate to You—in our faith, in our innocence, in our trusting how You work. Teach us to depend on You like a child depends on an adult. In Jesus’ name, Amen.