

# A Deeper Journey

A Deeper Journey is designed for those who would like a guide that supports self-study and self-reflection related to a teaching topic.

**Message Date: March 3, 2013**

**Message Title: Come On Down**

**Review Luke 18:15-17 and Mark 10:13-15.** What do you notice?

As we study these two passages, we're answering the question, "Who can participate in church?" Jesus brings it home in this passage, doesn't He? Kids matter to Jesus.

Discuss the value placed on children in American homes today. Do kids matter to our society? In your family? How are they shown (or not shown) value?

In this story, Jesus's disciples stiff-armed kids. Closed the door on them. They answered the question above with "no kids allowed."

## "C'mon. Let's go see how much we're going for on eBay." Hamm, Toy Story 3

Let's take a look at this principle through the eyes of Walt Disney. It will help us understand the message of Jesus. Walt Disney said, "Both my study of Scripture and my career in entertaining children have taught me to cherish them." I wonder if Disney studied this passage – probably. We can't read this story without coming to the conclusion that Jesus cherished kids. Kids matter to Jesus.

Rock 'em Sock'em Robots were made by Marx in 1964. I got mine for Christmas in 1964. They required no batteries and were completely fueled by children fueled by Fruit Loops and Super Sugar Crisp. The movement and the punching of the robots were directed by controllers on either side of the ring. The bots could move forward from side to side while throwing left and right jabs. Connect just right with your opponent's jaw and his head literally flies off of his shoulders. Snap it back down and you are ready for another round. I got rid of mine years ago in junior high. I outgrew it. Dumb move. I could get one just like I had for between \$200-\$500. If we only knew the value of things, we'd take better care of them. We'd hang on to them. What about people? If we knew the value of a person as measured through God's eyes, how would we treat them differently? The Bible tells us, "*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*" (Romans 12:10)

Review the story. Are there times that we treat children the way that the disciples treated children in the story?

When a person grows to cherish a child or children in general, how do you think that happens?

## "Hey, let's play a game. It's called 'see who can be quiet the longest.'" Carl, Up

In Jesus's day, kids didn't matter. Keep in mind that children had zero status in that society. One Roman official of that time once wrote a letter to his pregnant wife and said: "When the child is born, if it is a boy keep it, if it is a girl, drown it!" Wow.

Sometimes, it seems we spend the first two years of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk and the next 16 years telling them to sit down and be quiet. Often we over-value "seen and not heard" when it comes to our children.

A priest had this conversation with comedian Groucho Marx: "Oh, Mr. Marx. I want to thank you for bringing so much joy into the world." He quickly replied, "I want to thank you for taking so much out."

Groucho had a point. A lot of religious folk seem bent on bringing their wet blankets to every party. I've known some people who claim to follow Christ who have felt that their primary calling in life is that of rebuking somebody. On one side of this situation, we have people who stiff-arm and rebuke others. On the other side, we've got Jesus who opens his arms to them.

What is the purpose of rebuking someone? Have you seen a situation where rebuking a person has brought them closer to Christ? If so, note that situation. Have you seen a situation where rebuking has turned a person away from a closer journey with Christ? If so, note that situation.

Whose ultimate job is it to correct and rebuke spiritually? Ours or the Holy Spirit and God's? Who is more effective with dishing out spiritual correction? How do we step aside and let God do His job and stick to following Him – living transparently in our walk with Him, without being the barrier to those trying to get to Him?

## “Find a happy place! Find a happy place! Find a happy place!” Peach, Finding Nemo

In a scary world, kids need someone to hold their hand. The kids in Luke 18 found that someone in Jesus. **Jesus was that happy place.** Will we, as the church, also be that place for people?

Why do you think kids were running to Jesus? It's not always easy to get kids to go to some people. Santa for example. I've viewed many a picture of kids crying while sitting on the lap of Santa. But, the kids came to Jesus. Why? What was different about Him?

**Kids run to the fun.** Kids run to the ice cream truck. Kids run to Jesus. Jesus is fun. That is why Jesus keeps getting invited to parties and the religious people don't. “Jesus can't be the Son of God. People enjoy him.” People flocked to hear Jesus and be near Him because He was fun. Some religious people aren't fun. Repent and be fun.

Is there an area of your life where you need to give up some rigidity and let God show you how to have fun living? Abundant life is not boring. Where is your life in need of a touch of abundance from Jesus? What are you worrying about that you need to give over to Him?

**Kids want a blessing.** Touch can be a blessing. There is a deeper meaning in touch beyond just the good feeling we get when we're touched. In those days, touch meant a blessing.

Waiting for my turn at the barber shop a couple of weeks ago, a family: mom, dad, and two boys about 5 and 7 years old came in. The boys sat on the floor by the table and the younger boy picked up a Dr. Seuss book, *Green Eggs and Ham*. The older boy wanted to read it and so they began the brother dance over who got to have the book. Mom said to the 5 year old, “Give the book to your brother. You can't read it.” The 5 year old, “Yes, I can, I'm reading it in my mind.” Mom, “No, you're not. You're just looking at the pictures.” The 5 year old, “No, I'm reading it in my mind.”

I can't keep my nose out of people's business so I said, “Hey guys, come up here and I'll read it to both of you.” The older brother wasn't too interested and sat on mom's lap but the younger boy snuggled close and as we read, I would read a line and he would say the next one. He was reading with his mind. It was my turn in the barber chair. As I was getting my hair cut, the little boy would make eye contact and wave periodically. When I was finished, he waved at me and said, “Will you finish the book?” **Kids just want a blessing.** They want to be accepted. They want to be given time. They want to be given affirmation.

List some examples of being a blessing to a child. What does it look like to notice children and bless them?

At The Venues, we value children and want to collectively support their journey toward relationship with Christ. Where are you plugging into the life of a child? Where are you linking arms with a team of people to bless a child? If you aren't already plugged into blessing children, we invite you to pray over your place in linking arms with the children's ministry at The Venues. Decide one way you will bless a child this week and write it here:

**Kids are looking for entertainment.** Actually, we are all looking for entertainment, aren't we? You say, "Wait! What do you mean? That's what's wrong with the church today! Too much entertainment. Not enough Bible!" Hang with me for a minute – Entertain is made up of two words:

**Inter** – inside + **tenere** – to hold = to hold inside, to hold one's attention

Jesus was anything but boring. He was able to hold attention when he spoke. To be entertained is to focus and hold your thoughts together. At The Venues, we are committed to the entertainment of our kids and our adults. Our goal is to emulate Jesus in this way. Jesus is attractive. God's Word is Golden. We can enjoy it.

## **“Prepare to meet....Mr. Angry Eyes!” Mr. Potato Head, Toy Story 2**

When the disciples kept the children away, Jesus put on his angry eyes (Mark 10:14). Do you want to make Jesus mad? Keeping people out of His church, out of His Word, out of knowledge of Him when He has invited them in will do just that.

Jesus takes the subject of who He came to serve and to SAVE seriously. Who in your life is His target audience?

Everyone – right? So, why do Christians often act like church is an exclusive group, not to include specific people?

Jesus was passionate about children knowing Him. He was passionate about many people groups that the society of His day didn't value. What about you? Where do you need to be paying attention and investing your time and/or money to support a people group that is often overlooked in our society today?

## **“All it takes is faith and trust.” Peter Pan, Peter Pan**

A four-year-old son tore into the house calling, "Mommy! Look what Aunt Emily gave me!" In his hand was a quarter. "I helped her in the garden," he explained. "When you help somebody," Mom said, "you do it without expecting them to pay you." He darted back to Aunt Emily's house and knocked on the door. "What is it Jimmy?" she said. "I have to give you back your quarter," he explained. "My mommy wants me to be good for nothing."

Jesus said that kids are good for something. Good – valuable just because of who they are.

Review Mark 10: 13-15. We tend to tell kids to grow up and Jesus is telling us to act more like kids.

In what way are we to be like kids?

Jesus makes a big statement. We have to receive the Kingdom like a child or else we don't get in. Here's the key: Children are totally dependent on someone else. They can't do much alone. *A baby is a loud noise at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.* That baby can't do anything – he can't even hold his head up. Jesus says that's what it takes to live in His kingdom. Not your ability, not your works, not your goodness. You have to be dependent on Him alone.

Have you placed your faith and trust in Jesus or are you trying to get into His Kingdom based on your ability, your worth, your works, your goodness? If you have been trying to be good enough, take a moment and commit to dependence on God.

If you have fallen into thinking that a certain person or people group should not sit next to you and learn more about God, His Word, and how to follow Jesus more each day, take a moment and commit to adopting the same attitude that Jesus has towards that person or people group....He says that person has just as much of an open door into relationship with Him as you do. Do you believe that? Is there an action or attitude that you need to adjust to show that you believe it?

## **“Fish are friends, not food.” Sharks, Finding Nemo**

Once again, Jesus surprises us. He places high value on a group of people that in that day held little or no value – children. He turns the value system of that day upside down. Jesus opens His arms to children – fudgesicle stains, boogers, and all.

**Church is for all.** Who can participate in His church? Therefore, who can participate in our church?

### **Prayer Focus**

Father God, You value the groups that our society doesn't value. Give us Your heart. Give us Your eyes. Show us where You want us investing our time, our money, our focus. Show us how to value people in the way that You value them. Teach us how to link arms as a congregation and bless others, especially our children. Teach us how to give of ourselves to bless others. Teach us how to be a catalyst for people to see You more, to have greater access to You and relationship with You. Forgive us for the times that we have been like the disciples in this story where we have been a barrier to a person who is seeking You. Teach us to be open to people, to children, the way You are open to them. Teach us how to bless them. Open each of our eyes this week to one way in which we can bless another in a new way in an effort to follow after You more fully this week. Thank You, Father, that You place value on each of us and that You have touched us in blessing and relationship with You. Thank You, Father, that You sent Your Son so that we could have relationship with You for eternity. Help us not keep the promise of that gift to ourselves. Help us to live in abundant joy and dependence on You so that You shine transparently through our lives like a magnet to those who need to know You as we do.