



Children and Values

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The Value of a Child

Who Is the Greatest?

As we turned the calendar into the 21st century, there were those who created lists of who were the most notable men and women of the 20th century. Some were surprised at who made the list; others were amazed at who didn't make the list.

In Matthew 18, Jesus' disciples asked Him a similar question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus' response was to call a child unto himself and to use the child as an illustration.

✦ He said one must become childlike in faith. A child has a simplicity that everyone must have to become a believer. You tell a child about a certain matter, and he or she has not learned to question the matter. He simply believes what you told him was truth (verse 3).

✦ He said one must be humble as a child. You see, a child has not yet learned pride, arrogance, or that he must think himself important. He or she hasn't yet known achievement or attainment, so there is no reason for pride in his ability. Titles or offices have not been given to him, so he doesn't know of self-importance. He hasn't yet learned that he "knows it all." So one of the true qualities that Jesus looks for is

found in the heart of a child—humility (verse 4).

✦ If you receive a child in the name of the Lord, you receive Jesus (verse 5). The lesson for us in this verse is that Jesus placed importance upon those who minister to children, those who value children, those who care for children, and those who teach children.



✦ If anyone should cause a child who believes in Jesus to be misled or deceived, it would be better that a millstone was placed about his neck and he were drowned. The lesson here is—don't tamper with the faith or trust a child has in the person of Jesus Christ. It is incumbent upon all to live and speak so that what we do and what we say does not undermine the

faith of a child.

Why did Jesus place such value on a child? Because it is how their lives are shaped that will determine what they will be when they are adults.

The Value of Instruction

Children are fast learners.

Not only do they learn good habits, but poor ones as well. When I was a boy, my parents were wonderful Christians and pastored the local Assembly of God. Thus, we never heard a curse word or slang in our home. When we would play with our peers on the schoolyard and they would swear, it was surprising how quickly we learned bad words, many of which we never knew the meaning. I received a mouth washing for the use of those bad words—an experience I shall never forget!

The same holds true when we, as parents and teachers, teach our children how to pray. In Proverbs 22:6 it states, "Train up a child." Part of that training is instructing him:

- ✦ who God is,
- ✦ how one talks to God,
- ✦ how God talks to us,
- ✦ that God does hear and answer us when we pray,
- ✦ that He is a God who does miracles.

The Value of Prayer

One of the characteristics of a child is he or she believes what you tell him. It is that simple childlike faith that results in

miracles. Children also learn by observing. They need to see and hear us, as parents and teachers, pray.

It is important that we are repetitive in instructing them.

They will learn that we place real value on prayer. It is so very important for everyone, young and old, to know how to pray. This is a marvelous privilege God has afforded us.

Questions For Further Study—

1. Why did Jesus say that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children?
2. Why did Jesus place such value on a child?
3. List several childlike qualities adults should emulate.
4. How well do the people in your church value children? Is there need for improvement? If yes, list steps you could take to help change the people's attitude toward children.