

Luke 18:15-17

Introduction: Between 18:14 and 18:15 Jesus taught on the topic of marriage and divorce (Matt. 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12). Now He shifts gears and tackles the topic of one's attitude toward children. This is paralleled in Matt. 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16.

- 1) The setting for Jesus to teach about children—18:15
 - a) The crowds wanted Jesus to touch their small children—18:15a ¹⁵ *Now they were bringing* [προσφέρω] *even the babies* [βρέφος] *to Him so that He might touch* [ἅπτομαι] *them,*
 - i) Who were these babies?
 - (1) While this Greek word applies to both unborn and born children, it most obviously applies to young infants and toddlers.
 - ii) Why did they want Jesus to touch them?
 - (1) Apparently this was associated with a desire for Jesus to bless them (Mark 10:16).
 - (2) Placing your child into the arms of another demonstrates trust and acceptance of that person. The parents trusted Jesus with their children.
 - b) The disciples responded by attempting to correct the parents—18:15b *but when the disciples saw it, they began to rebuke* [ἐπιτιμάω] (scold) *them.*
 - i) Why were the disciples upset with the parents? What does this show about their attitude?
 - ii) It seems that the disciples did not think such trivial things should be permitted to bother Jesus. The children were infringing on Jesus' time. They apparently thought Jesus had more important things to do.
- 2) Jesus teaches His disciples about children—18:16-17
 - a) In contrast to the disciples—18:16a
 - i) Jesus was indignant—Mark 10:14
 - (1) Jesus was strongly displeased with the disciples
 - ii) Jesus was inviting—¹⁶ *But Jesus invited* [προσκαλέομαι] (summoned) *them, saying,*
 - (1) Jesus wanted the children near Him
 - b) Jesus commands the disciples—18:16b
 - i) The commands
 - (1) Positive—“*Allow* [ἀφήμι] *the little children* [παιδίων] *to come to Me,*
 - (2) Negative—*and do not stop* [κωλύω] *them,*
 - (3) Jesus does not bar anyone from access to Himself. (Bock)
 - ii) The reason
 - (1) *because* [γάρ] *the kingdom of God belongs to such as these* [τοιούτους].
 - (a) Children are a picture of those whose simple trust illustrates what faith is all about. The remark illustrates how everyone is important

to God, even those whom others regard as insignificant. (NET Bible)

(2) These children were too small to exercise saving faith in Jesus.

c) Jesus applies His teaching to His disciples—18:17

i) What did Jesus **say**? ¹⁷ *Assuredly I tell you^{pl}, whoever does not welcome [δέχομαι] the kingdom of God like [ὡς] a little child [παιδίον] will not in any way [οὐ μὴ] enter into it.*"

(1) The point of the comparison *receive the kingdom of God like a child* has more to do with a child's trusting spirit and willingness to be dependent and receive from others than any inherent humility the child might possess. (NET Bible)

(2) Some have mistakenly taught that this says you must embrace the kingdom of God while you are still a child.

ii) What did Jesus **mean**?

(1) Negatively—what Jesus did **NOT** mean

(a) Children are not automatically in the kingdom.

(b) Children do not automatically trust in Jesus for salvation.

(c) Children should be baptized very early as proof they are entering the kingdom.

(2) Positively—what Jesus **DID** mean

(a) Only those who recognize they are totally helpless apart from God may enter the kingdom, just like a small child is totally helpless apart his/her parents.

(b) Only those who recognize they are totally dependent on God to enter the kingdom may enter, just like a small child is totally dependent on his/her parents.

(i) A child does not ask for an adult's credentials or inquire into his or her parents' qualifications—he or she just recognizes the authority and ability of the parent intuitively. (Moody Commentary)

3) Points for us to remember

a) By His openness to children, Jesus shows the disciples, whose attitude was not the same, that every person is to be treated with sensitivity and received with love. (Bock)

i) Quite obviously Jesus responds to the Jewish leadership differently after they had rejected Him.

b) Jesus was not too busy for children, though the disciples thought He was. His attitude reminds the disciples that their mission is not only to the powerful, but also to the dependent.

c) The kingdom belongs to the nobodies, those who do not approach it on the merits of their own status. (Keener)