Reach Them While They Are Young

(Mark 10:13-16)

12/10/06

Introduction:

** We must reach young people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!*

Why is it so important to reach youth?

It is vital that we reach young people for Christ because…

I. Children are <u>SPECIAL</u> to God (Mark 10:14)

See Matthew 18:5-14:

4 Evidences of His Care for children:

A. The Lord wants *"little ones"* to be <u>WELCOMED</u>
as He would be welcomed (v. 5)

B. The Lord is vehemently <u>CONCERNED</u> that no one <u>STUMBLES</u>
His *"little ones"* (v. 6-9)

C. The Lord has <u>ASSIGNED</u> special <u>ANGELS</u> to watch over His *"little ones"*
(v. 10)

D. The Lord is <u>NOT WILLING</u> that a "little one" <u>PERISH</u> (v.14).

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II. Children are <u>OPEN</u> to God (Mark 10:15)

A. A child is <u>TEACHABLE</u>
(Children have an openness to be taught)

B. A child is <u>DEPENDENT</u>
(Children have a deep sense of dependency)

C. A child is <u>TRUSTING</u>
(Children have an eagerness to trust)

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Introduction:

Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world; red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world.

The Lord used a man who had a burden for children, when I had just turned 16. I was a bus kid; and am to this day thankful for my bus captain, driver, and youth pastor.

Why is it so important to invest time into children?

1) Their vulnerability – Children can be easily swayed for good or bad; God or Satan; Truth or Lies. Satan is swallowing up children today!

2) Their teachability –
Young children have uncluttered minds
Young children have unhardened hearts

They are like: unhardened clay (they can be molded and shaped);
wet cement (they will take any impression);
a tender twig (they can be bent in any direction)

Young children are like sponges
(They have a great ability to memorize God's Word)

By the age of 5-6, a majority of their character has been formed.

3) Their adaptability – Like their physical bodies, their spiritual life has the greatest potential for change; patterns will be established early in life that will continue.

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4 Evidences of His Care for children:

A. The Lord wants His *"little ones"* to be <u>WELCOMED</u> as He would be welcomed (v. 5)

***"Receive"* =** to welcome, to accept

"Little child" - (*paidion)* a very young child

"In My name" - ie. for My sake. This phrase qualifies and defines what Jesus means by *"receiving little children"*

To welcome a young person in Christ's name means to welcome them (help them; teach them; care for them) for the sake of Jesus who loves them!

"Receiveth me" - Not speaking of receiving Christ for "salvation," but for fellowship.

What He means is this: Whatever you do to or for a young believer in Christ, you actually do to or for Christ (because of His oneness and identity with that believer)

Jesus' point: "The way you treat one of my children is the way you treat me." Whatever affects them, affects Him.

To welcome a young believer (for any purpose that would glorify God) is to welcome Jesus Christ Himself. Why? Because Jesus is <u>One</u> with His children no matter how old or young they are.

Who are we to reject someone whom Christ has not rejected?

If He accepted that person, who are we not to?

Since He is willing to identify with him, so should we!

The Lord must have a special place in His heart for Sunday school, Junior church, and AWANA workers!

Any one who pours His heart into young people is pouring their life out for Christ! This is what living for Christ is all about!

You cannot be living for Jesus if you are not in some real, tangible way doing something for those people who belong to Him! (the two go hand in hand)

Something is desperately wrong with a church that has no active children's ministry, no outreach to kids, no youth work.

A "young church" is a healthy church!

Jesus is saying: Don't reject children and teens; receive them into your life and ministry.

Sure, they test your patience; sure, they dirty your carpets; sure, they require work.

But they are the future of the church! They are future leaders, pastors, missionaries, and lay-servants.

Most nations in the world are nations filled with youth. 54% of India are youths under 24 years of age.

B. The Lord is vehemently <u>CONCERNED</u> that no one <u>STUMBLES</u> His *"little ones"* (v. 6-9)

V. 6

"Offend" - to cause to stumble and fall; to trip up (i.e. to hurt the faith of and lead astray or lead into sin).

It is interesting that Jesus changes the word from ***"child"*** (*paidion* - v. 2-5) to ***"little one"*** (*mikron* - v. 6, 10, 14).

Such a shift indicates that Jesus is referring to any young Christian.

Although Jesus would not want any little one to be led into sin, He is especially jealous over those ***"little ones which <u>believe in</u> [Him] Me"***

"Believe in <u>Me</u>" - Jesus is the <u>object</u> of our faith (trust, confidence, reliance) (cp. John 14:1).

Anyone who would intentionally be a stumbling block to a new believer in Christ would be better off choked with a several hundred pound millstone and dumped into the depths of the ocean; rather than to face the severity of hell fire that awaits them.

"Millstone" - the large, heavy upper millstone that was turned in a grinding process by a donkey (MacArthur, p. 104).

They say that drowning is one of the most terrifying ways of dying; yet such is nothing compared to the horror of facing the wrath of God.

Such a drowning is nothing compared to the intensely hot and eternal torment and wrath of God to fall upon those who are stumbling blocks to God's people.

Zechariah warned that whoever harms God's people Israel *"touches the apple of His eye"* (Zech. 2:8) (i.e. *"the apple of the eye"* was an ancient figure for the cornea, the most delicate and sensitive exposed part of the body (MacArthur, p. 105).

You are a serious irritation to God -- you who lead any of His children into sin!

God is severely upset with churches which tolerate members who stumble His children (Rev. 2:14 - *"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."* Rev. 2:20 - *"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.")*.

Anyone who influences, entices, or leads a young believer into sin, or makes it easier for him to sin, is in serious trouble with the Lord!

One of the main reasons for avoiding:

--pornography
--alcohol
--rock and rap music
--immodesty
etc.

is so that (out of love for others) we don't stumble anyone by what we allow into our lives.

Even in the area of *"Christian liberty"* we should *"use not [our] liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another"* (Gal. 5:13).

We should be so concerned that we do not cause another believer to stumble that we would even avoid practices that are lawful, if by such a practice we would violate a weaker, more immature, believer's conscience (EX: Paul's not eating meat offered to idols - Rom. 14; I Cor. 8).

William Barclay tells the story of an old man on his deathbed who was terribly distraught. When asked what was bothering him, he replied, "When we were boys at play, one day at a crossroads we reversed a sign post, and I've never ceased to wonder how many people were sent in the wrong direction by what we did." (cited by MacArthur, p. 109).

Instead of tempting others to sin, we should provoke them to righteousness (Heb. 10:24).

One of the most common ways a "believer" will cause another believer to sin is by failing to lead them into righteousness (MacArthur, p. 108).

Parents (moms and dads), what kind of example are you setting for your children?

Is there a sin in your life that may cause your children to stumble?

Any parent who belittles, slanders, or verbally attacks spiritual authority or leadership (such as a S.S. teacher, deacon, or pastor) in front of their children is doing lethal harm to them. Don't be surprised when your kids turn teenagers and have no spiritual interest, desire for church, etc.

V. 7

"Woe" - a word expressing deep sorrow and pain for someone.

The lost, unregenerate, godless worked "is in a woeful state because of the stones of stumbling they throw out for God's people to trip on!

Because man is sinful, depraved, and lost, it is impossible for societies to avoid the planting of stones of stumbling.

But woe to the master minds behind such diabolical immorality and wickedness.

Woe to the TV producers whose seductive programs warp the minds of children!

Woe to the music bands, groups, and sponsors whose devilish, twisted, rebellious, lustful lyrics and sounds imbed themselves into the minds of young people!

Woe to the inventors of the RU486 French abortion pill, and to any president who would allow such a child-murderer into the USA!

Woe to the writers and publishers of the Rainbow curriculum!
Woe to those who use children for child pornography, books, and films!
Woe to those who teach evolution as if it were fact and boldly deny God's existence!

V. 8-9

It is interesting that Jesus shifts from speaking about not offending *"little ones"* to give a warning about not offending yourself!

Why? Because before you will ever stumble anyone else, you will stumble yourself.

The way to safeguard against causing others to fall into sin is to safeguard yourself against falling into sin.

Hence, the stern warning in vv. 8-9.

If what you do (*"hand"*), where you go (*"foot"*), or what you see (*"eye"*) will detract you from Christ (if it will turn your attention away from Christ and His salvation), you would be better off losing that body part than to be cast into the lake of fire with all your body parts and a dirty, sinful soul.

V. 10

Jesus now gets back to His point.

Beware that you do not "think down upon," look down at; even <u>one</u> of the little ones who believe in Him.

Why not? Because God thinks so much of them that He has at least one angel stationed on duty to minister to them (Heb. 1:14 - *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?")*

C. The Lord has <u>ASSIGNED</u> special <u>ANGELS</u> to watch over His *"little ones"* (v. 10)

The phrase ***"their angels"*** shows a special relationship angels have with particular children of God (cp. Acts 12:12-15).

What is significant about angels continually looking at the face of God is that they can see as it were the expression on God's face when something which grieves Him is happening to one of His children on earth.

They get their orders from God; looking at Him, anticipating His command to go and defend His *"little ones."*

The angels wait attentively, never taking their eyes off of the Father "lest they miss some direction from Him regarding a task they are to perform on behalf of a believer" (MacArthur, Matthew, p. 118).

The fact that God has "hosts of angels in His presence ready to be dispatched to their aid demonstrates clearly how <u>valuable</u> believers are and how unthinkably wicked it is to look with disdain on someone whom God so highly prizes." (MacArthur, p. 119)

D. The Lord is <u>NOT WILLING</u> that a "little one" <u>PERISH</u> (v.14).

It is not God's will that even one of His *"little ones"* perish (be destroyed - cp. I Cor. 8:11).

It is vital that we reach young people for Christ because…

II. Children are <u>OPEN</u> to God (Mark 10:15)

"<u>as a little child</u>" - Jesus is not calling on us to become children (to somehow revert back to childish ways); but He is saying we need to be <u>as</u> children in a certain respect.

There are certain qualities children have that we desperately need in order to enter God's kingdom.

Prior to this account, Jesus had said that no one could enter the Kingdom who was not *"born again"* (by the Spirit) (John 3:1ff). Now He says that no one can enter the Kingdom who is not like a little child.

The fact that a person must *"receive the kingdom" (welcome, to take to oneself)* assumes he is born outside of it under the rule of Satan and that he is not naturally a heavenly citizen

A. A child is teachable
(Children have an openness to be taught)

Small children have an inquisitive mind that naturally seeks to learn everything about the world around him. They constantly ask questions. Like sponges, they absorb information without effort.

Children can readily accept new concepts and make corrections to previously held erroneous ideas.

Since small children have the greatest capacity for learning new things, they also are most vulnerable to being led astray. Hence, Jesus gives severe warning about stumbling one of these *"little ones."*

There are many who are so convinced that they have the truth; that they have "arrived," and they are so complacently comfortable with where they are that they are not open to seeing defects in their lives and religion. They are so convinced that they *"see"* that no one could challenge them about the blindness in their lives.

The Pharisees condemned themselves with such delusion: *"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."*

Are you open to learn God's plan of salvation; are you will to have your ideas (about salvation) corrected?

Small children are not "set in their ways" like many older folks are.

A person is in a sad predicament who is not open to God's instruction.

God calls such a person a "fool." *"Fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Prov. 1:7).

Our prayer should always be: "God, make me teachable." "May I never be so proud (arrogant) that I cannot be rebuked and corrected."

B. A child is <u>dependent</u>
(Children have a deep sense of dependency)

A small child depends upon his parents (or guardian) for everything.

Without even giving much thought to it, our children depend on us to protect, feed them, cloth them, shelter them, teach them, guide them, etc.

Children are "Dependent." As you fill out your taxes, you will not that they are listed on the form as "dependents."

Children know that they are in a position of <u>need</u>. They readily recognize that they cannot make it on their own. That spirit of "independence" may be in teenagers, but it is not in little children.

A little child simply submits to the care of his parents, relying on them for all that he needs. He knows he cannot meet his own needs and has no resources to stay alive (MacArthur, p. 99).

Whether you realize it or not, you need God for everything (both for this life and the life to come).

Jesus taught a lesson on dependency in His teaching about the "vine and the branches." (John 15).

What are you depending on for your salvation?

Are you depending on your righteousness? (Is. 64:6; Titus 3:5) (Ro. 10:3 - *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about toe stablish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."*)

Or on Christ's righteousness? (II Cor. 5:21).

Sometimes God allows afflictions, trials and tribulations to keep us <u>dependent</u> (Psalm 119:67 - *"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."*) (II Cor. 12)

C. A child is <u>trusting</u>
(Children have an eagerness to trust)

What does a child have that we need to have? A willingness to <u>trust</u> (willing to trust the security and safety provided for by another)

When a parent says something to a child, the little child does not suspect a lie, he takes what you say literally and believes you are being truthful.

A child trust his parents to take care of him.

They entrust their lives into our care (EX: How as a child I trusted my father to drive safely and to bring us to our desired destination).

The back of our dollar bill says: "In God we trust." But it would be safe to say that more people put their trust in that green piece of paper than in the living God.

Paul wrote to Timothy, saying: *"We trust in the living God."* (I Tim. 4:10).

I Tim. 6:17 - *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."*

What a release! What a joy! What peace comes when one has confidence in the faithfulness of God's promise. What solace comes to the heart of one who learns to totally *"commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator."*

Paul had such assurance, as evident by his words: *"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."*

See: Psalm 78:4-7

We must perpetuate the truth to the next generation!
The Home's purpose for it's existence is about perpetuating the faith to the children.

The basis for missions is <u>not</u> supporting missionaries but in <u>producing</u> missionaries.
We have a responsibility to disciple our children; to reach Kids for Christ.

- Will you pray for children & teens by name?
- Will you consider helping with VBS or "the WAR" for teens this week?
- Will you consider teaching a class & putting your heart into it?
- Will you consider helping with a youth ministry?
- Will you determine not to overlook children in your evangelistic endeavor?