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LIFE NEWS

Jesus' Children's Ministry

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Jesus did something that is never spoken about in church. It is glossed over even though it is in plain sight. It may be one of the greatest open secrets in His ministry life. Once you have seen it for yourself in the Gospels, you will always see it. This secret is that Jesus had a robust children's ministry. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is always interacting with children and teaching about children. In the next few paragraphs is a short survey of Jesus' ministry with children.

The word "ministry" has lots of connotations and perimeters that immediately come to mind. It could be Jesus' ministry of reconciliation given to believers in 2 Corinthians, or it could be more famously, the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28 - calling us to make disciples. However, the commissioning of the disciples in Matthew 10

is talked about much less. This commissioning is important because this is what Jesus wanted ministry to look like for the disciples and what He modeled. Matthew 10:7-8 reads, "As you go, preach this message: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near!' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give." Jesus did all of this (as did His disciples), and He did most of this with children as well (except cleansing the leper). Jesus ministers to children often and expects others not to exclude them. Let us look at just two examples of this by taking these two verses of what ministry should look like (you can search for the rest of the commission and examples of what Jesus did with children).

Jesus commanded His disciples to heal the sick. There are many stories of Jesus healing the sick, and several

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children being healed are included. John 4 stands out as an example of Jesus caring for and healing children. Jesus was in Capernaum when a royal official came to Him and asked Him to come heal his son. The man's son was going to die if he was not healed. The man begged Jesus to come. Verse 50 says, "Jesus told him, 'Go home; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and set off for home." While he was on his way home, he ran into his servant, who told him that his son had gotten better. He asked what time, and the servant said one o'clock, which was the time Jesus had commanded the healing.

Jesus heals! Jesus heals children. There is no doubt that Jesus' healing ministry included children. Part of the demonstration of power was God's love and restoring wholeness by healing children of various diseases. He took time to hear the heart cry of a parent who wanted their child not only to feel better but be spared of life-threatening sickness. He had compassion both on the parent and on the child and healed the son. Jesus both modeled and told His disciples to, "Heal the sick."

The first part of the verses in Matthew 10, where it says, "Proclaim the kingdom," gives the summary of Jesus' teaching. It was always about the Kingdom of God being near and what that looked like. This is what Jesus taught everywhere He went. When He taught, there were often children present. There are at least two examples to look at in the Gospels.

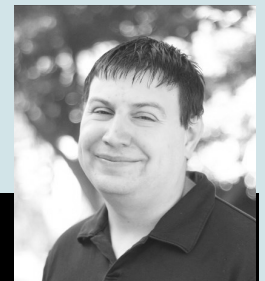
The first was in the feeding of 5,000. This is the story that is in every Gospel. A quick summary is that Jesus had been teaching, and it was time to eat. Instead of sending everybody to get supper, He told the disciples to gather all the food they could. All He got was five loaves and two fish from a boy who was there. Jesus gives thanks and breaks it up, telling the disciples to pass out the baskets. Jesus was able to feed everybody, and they even had leftovers! So there was at least one child there. Even more so, Luke says the 5,000 number was just men, and it didn't include the women and children who were

there. Children were at this teaching, and that wasn't just some fluke.

Matthew 19 is the most famous gospel passage on children. Jesus was teaching a crowd, and the children were being ... well... children. They were trying to see what was going on and probably making some noise. They were probably running around a little. The disciples try to shoo them away and give the adults a talking to. Jesus says "Let the little children come to me for such is the Kingdom of Heaven." He reaches down, puts his hands (high fives? Hugs?) on them, and keeps going. Children were present again here, and in fact, He made them the center of attention.

Jesus had a children's ministry. It isn't often talked about, but it is plainly in Scripture. These are not the only passages that show it. There are more passages about Jesus teaching and healing. You can find the other examples of ministry to children (i.e. casting out demons and raising the dead), which Jesus commanded His followers to do in Matthew 10:8. Begin to look for the children in the gospels because they are there. Take a moment and pray for the children that are part of your life and part of the church here at Parkside.

Jesus never relegated children to not needing Him but ministered in a personal way to them. He wanted the fullness of the kingdom for everybody and never used age as a factor in deciding who was eligible to receive it. To be like Jesus, we must be the ones who minister to children as a church family. (🙏)



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