

The Value of a Child

Sr. Pastor David Hunt
Eastview UPC - Sprouts Growth Conference 2023

Psalm 139:13–15 (NIV84)

¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

- Children are like diamonds in the rough.
- A diamond in the rough means a literal diamond that is **uncut and unpolished**.
- “Rough” diamonds look like rocks, so much so that they are often overlooked.
- We should value EVERY child because every child is a diamond in the rough.
- God made every child to be a worshipper.
- That alone is enough to place great value on a child.
- Every child was created to be a reflection of his glory.
- When children are born again, they become light and salt in a dark and decaying world.
- They are not too young to touch people's lives.
- One of our six-year-old girls, Adeline Johnson, was at school when a teacher was telling the class about a need in another child's life.
- Adeline led the class in prayer and the teacher told her mom that when Adeline prayed they had church in that schoolroom. She prayed like she was truly speaking to Jesus.
- Sadly, the present culture places very little value on a child.
- The devaluation begins before birth.
- Many in the world call them an inconvenience, a parasite, an accident, a mistake, rather than a precious human life.
- Pagan worship in the OT included taking the lives of children to appease their gods.
- The evolutionists say they are nothing more than the result of a random mutations.
- They have no more value than any other living creature.
- Jesus said we are more valuable than other creatures.
- However, God places value on the child even while it is in the womb.

Matthew 10:31 (KJV 1900) Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

- The popularity of abortion and the rate of abandonment show a view that children are disposable.
- “Random” seems to be a word that fits the philosophy of this generation.
- The Merriam-Webster Dictionary tells us that random means “lacking a definite plan, purpose, or pattern, or to run a haphazard course.”
- So, they are told that there is no real purpose for their life.
- This ungodly philosophy says, “There is really nothing to live for.”
- They don’t know how they got here, they don’t know why they are here, and they don’t know where they are going.
- This is the culture that children must deal with – random, chance, accidental, haphazard are words that describe this culture.
- No wonder confusion is widespread in our present culture.
- Christian philosophy stands in stark contrast to this.
- We know where we came from, why we are here and where we are going!
- This is the exact opposite of the randomness promoted by the world.
- God’s knowledge of and purpose for each person is wonderful.
- For instance, he had a purpose for Jeremiah before he was even in his mother’s womb.

Jeremiah 1:5 (NIV84) “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

- I believe God has a purpose for every life.
- Those involved in Children’s Ministry have bought into God’s value system. CHILDREN ARE PRECIOUS, VALUABLE, IMPORTANT, ETC.
- According to Jay Kessler, President Emeritus of Taylor University, “*The identity crisis of today’s young people, individually and corporately, is the largest single factor affecting this generation*”.
- It is our responsibility to help them discover their identity and their value in the eyes of Jesus Christ.
- This includes recognizing their uniqueness and worth.

- For example, Jesse, the father of David, didn't see the value in his youngest son.
- When Samuel came to anoint the next king of Israel, Jesse didn't even consider David as being a possibility.
- It wasn't until God turned down the other seven sons that Jesse mentioned that there was eighth son who was tending the sheep.
- And speaking of Samuel, Who would have thought that he be used of God to rescue Israel from a corrupt priesthood and lead them back to God.
- I believe every child has the potential to bring glory to God in some way.
- A successful children's ministry places great emphasis on helping children realize and respond to God's love.
- "*Jesus Loves Me, This I Know*" is one of the most popular children's songs of all time.
- Feelings and emotions are a very important gateway for the education of a child.
- The passionless teacher is not going to be very successful.
- The child can pick up on whether the teacher is engaged or distracted.
- Adult worship services don't always give children an opportunity to be moved by their emotions and openly respond to the presence of Jesus.
- Children's Ministry with worship associating Jesus with joy and love, will more easily help the child to be spiritually responsive.
- Children do not grasp intellectual concepts until the beginning of adolescence, and even then, not at an adult level.
- However, a child can *experience* emotions such as love and acceptance. And these emotions become the gateway to their intellect where decisions can be made to love and worship Jesus.
- Children learn biblical concepts much more readily in an emotionally positive environment.
- This is why successful Children's Ministry Workers are happy, pleasant, and excited.
- It is important that the spiritual component of children's ministry is not overlooked.
- Without spiritual leadership, Children's Ministry becomes simply a series of church-sponsored children's activities.
- How we value our calling will show up in our prayer.
- It is vital that children become comfortable with prayer at an early age.
- Encouraging prayer during children's worship service by the children and staff is essential.

- Encourage prayer request and praise reports as well as corporate prayer during Children's Ministry sessions.
- Even shy children can feel the liberty to worship and pray when they see other children do the same.
- Study after study has confirmed that the single most common entry point for non-churched people into our churches is the children's ministry.
- Teaching children Biblical truth is the most important task of this present generation.

Psalm 78:4–6 (NIV84)

4... we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. 5... he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, 6. so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

- Opportunities for children to be involved in worship should be plentiful.
- There are some very good reasons why we should have a ministry that concentrates on children.
- It is common knowledge that children learn better when material is presented at their level.
- A ministry designed specifically for children gives them a sense of belonging, identity and ownership.
- We are telling the children and their parents that we value them when we have a strong Children's Ministry.
- Teachers and staff should never be just spectators. They need to participate. If they are not teaching or leading, they should still be engaged in appropriate ways.
- As children are given the opportunity to be in closer settings with these adults, they are better able to build intergenerational friendships.
- These relationships help to convey our love and concern for the individual child.
- How can we reach children on an emotional and spiritual level?
- Here are a few practical ways:
 - Smile and say hello.
 - Look them in the eye.
 - Be sure to greet each child by name.

- Recognize and make a special effort to acknowledge children from your ministry when you see them elsewhere.
- Be enthusiastic about what you are teaching. Children are responsive to enthusiasm.
- Let the children know that you are turned on about Jesus. Let them know both directly (by saying it) and indirectly (by a positive attitude).
- Holding a child's hand or a pat on a child's back can send a powerful message that you care.
- Obviously, the way we treat a child is important.
- But it takes on a new level of importance in the light of the words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew.

Matthew 18:5 (NIV84) “And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.

- The most important thing for children's ministry success is the same as any other ministry – LOVE!!
- We must value them!
- Nothing else trumps this. If love is in the children's ministry, then it will be a success.
- If love isn't there, then nothing else matters.
- Jesus loves children and so should we.

Mark 10:13-16 (KJV)

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them . 14 But when Jesus saw it , he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God . 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein . 16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them .

- Jesus touched the children to show their great worth in his eyes.
- The disciples tried to keep the people from bringing the children to Jesus.
- No doubt they believed their motives to be sincere.
- They may have resented this imposition on the Master's time.

- They may have even made the tragic mistake of concluding that the needs of children weren't that important.
- When Jesus saw the attempts of the disciples to keep the children from coming to Him "He was indignant". (verse 14 - NIV)
- It displeases Jesus very much when we stand in the way of His being able to touch the children.
- They are very valuable to Him.
- The Bible portrays children as a blessing, not a burden.
- Like Jesus, we should invest time in touching our children by being involved with them, investing time in them, letting them know how much we love them and how much God loves them.

Jesus touched the children to bless them.

- It was common for parents in Jesus' day to bring their children to a godly rabbi and ask him to bless them.
- With the teaching and miracle ministry of Jesus it was no doubt an exciting prospect to have one's child touched by the Master!
- Our Children's Ministry is there to make it possible for Jesus to touch them.

Jesus touched the children to teach salvation.

- Child Evangelism Fellowship estimates that 85% of Christians came to Christ before the age of 21! That's a staggering statistic!
- And many of those who come to Christ later in life do so as a result of seeds sown in their childhood.
- Obviously, the way we treat that child is important, because Jesus wants them to experience salvation.
- Matthew 18:10 gives us a warning about how we treat a child.
- We need to treat that child just like Jesus came to our Sunday School today.

Matthew 18:10; Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

- One of the meanings for the word despise is, “to think little or nothing of.”
- It doesn’t mean we hate them. It means we just don’t think a lot of them.
- They are not significant.
- Jesus said, “Beware, they have heavenly connections.”
- Children need affirmation.
- Words like “I’m proud of you,” “I love you,” and “I’m glad you are here,” can make such a profound difference in a child’s life.
- You can “make the difference.”

With apologies to Paul and the Lord I have a Children’s Ministry Version of I Corinthians 13.

If I have the newest technology, but have not love, I am only making noise.

If I have the best classrooms, the coolest decorations and fanciest furniture and a staff that can move all that furniture, but have not love, I am a big zero.

If I give all my time to study and know how to put all the crafts together on time, but have not love, I am ineffective.

Love is patient with rowdy children, love does not envy others that have well-behaved children, love doesn’t make the class all about me and what I want.

Love is not rude even when the child is not polite. (Someone has to be the adult in the room. It might as well be the teacher.)

Love does not get angry with students even if they are repeat offenders.

Love doesn’t embarrass the child when it is wrong, but rejoices when he gets it right.

Love always protects the child from harm, always finds a way to say, “I believe in you,” always hopes for the work of the Spirit in the child’s heart, love always keeps trying.

Love never quits. Words may be forgotten, crafts will be lost and we may forget the Scripture memorization.

The years of childhood will pass away.

These three remain: songs (Father Abraham, I’m in the Lord’s Army), stories (David & Goliath, Christmas, and Easter), and a loving teacher. But the greatest of these is a loving teacher.