

WHOEVER WELCOMES THE LITTLE CHILDREN

Icebreaker: What was the craziest thing you did as a child?

1. How has child rearing changed over the previous generations? In what ways is it easier? In what ways is it harder?

Children are VIVID - V valuable/**I** immature/**V** vulnerable/**I** imperfect/**D** dependent

2. What do you think Jesus meant that “unless you and I change and become like these little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven”? (Matthew 18:1-6)

Matthew 18:1-6 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change & become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. 6 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck & to be drowned in the depths of the sea.*

3. Why do you think children seem sometimes to have an easier time than parents in coming to love God? (Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 21:15,16)

Luke 18:15-17 *People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. **16** But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **17** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

Matthew 21:15-16 *But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. **16** "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise'?"*

4. How do we, as parents, guide our children toward obedience, rather than disobedience? (Romans 1:29-32; Ephesians 6:1)

Romans 1:29-32 *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed & depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; **they disobey their parents; 31** they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. **32** Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

Ephesians 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

5. In what manner do Fathers often exasperate their children? Can you remember incidents of being “exasperated” by your father? How are you seeking to avoid that with your children?

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV only) *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Pastor Dave: Children spell love “T-I-M-E.” Rules without relationship leads to rebellion.

6. How do (or did) you give time to your children? What, if anything, would you seek to change?

7. What do you think Proverbs 22:6 means? How should we go about “training up a child in the way he should go”?

Proverbs 22:6 ESV *Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not turn from it.*

8. How should we guide our children away from bad company? (1 Cor. 15:33; Proverbs 13:20)

1 Corinthians 15:33-34 *Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”
34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.*

Proverbs 13:20 *Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.*

EVERYTHING WE DO IS WITH THE NEXT GENERATION IN MIND.

9. How might we improve “our investment” in our children? (Psalm 71:18)

Psalm 71:18 *Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.*

10. How does the above verse apply to other people’s children?

11. How does this verse apply to adult children?

Pastor Dave: Here's why you need this sermon: You must grow in how you care for and consider children.

12. How might we pray more effectively for those of our own children who are apparently lost?

13. How might we pray and care for others who are so frustrated with grown-up children not following the Lord?