



FOREVERYOUNG

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SESSION 1: Jesus Loves the Little Children

To Begin

What childhood quality of yours would you like to recapture?

Digging Deeper

Together, read Mark 10:13-16

- **What does it mean to do something in Jesus' name?**

Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. In Mark 10:13-16, Jesus lovingly calls all people to become like children, dependant on God, if they are to enter His kingdom.

- **What have the children in your life taught you about trusting and following God?**

In Jesus' day, children were viewed from a very different perspective. Often they were seen as lesser than until they could contribute to society. The Jewish nation saw children as a blessing not a burden or liability. They viewed children as a rich treasure from God. Every single one of them being fearfully and wonderfully made. Not being able to have children would bring sorrow and often disgrace on the family. It was normal for parents to bring their children to the rabbis for a blessing, and so it was understandable that people would bring the little ones to Jesus. He welcomed them all into his arms.

- **In Jesus' day, not being able to have children was a curse, to have them was a blessing. How does that compare with our view of children today?**
- **Did you receive a blessing from your parents? Have you given your blessing to your children? Why is this practice meaningful and powerful?**

Not everyone had the same approach. In verse 13, we read how the disciples scolded the parents for bothering Jesus.

- **Why do you think the disciples scolded the people and tried to keep the children away from Jesus?**

Children are a wonderful example of how we should approach our faith. They have a humble dependence on others. They are receptive to truth. They are acceptant of others. Of course, Jesus was speaking about a child who isn't spoiled. God wants us to be childlike, not childish! Children live by faith, by trust. By faith they accept their life, trusting others to care for them, and see them through when life seems uncertain.

- **What opportunities do you have to bring your children or those in your sphere of influence to Jesus? In what ways are you participating in their lives to help them learn about Jesus?**

We can enter God's kingdom by faith, just like these little children. We all enter this world helpless, unable to save ourselves, completely dependant on the grace of God. We live by faith, trusting that God's love for us will take care of our daily needs. Think about it, what does a child do when they are hurt or in need? They go to their parents. What a beautiful example of how we are to live out our relationship with our heavenly Father. What an example for us to follow as we continue to trust and rely on God.

- **How do children show they are helpless and hopeful? Trusting and dependent?**
- **In what practical ways can we be more childlike in our relationship with God?**

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SESSION 2 - Jesus and Jairus' Daughter

To Begin

What is the weirdest thing you have ever eaten?

Digging Deeper

Together, read Mark 5:21-43

- **If we had an easy life, with no trials, do you think our faith would blossom more? What leads you to think that?**

In Mark 5:21-43 we read about two encounters with Jesus. The one we are going to look at more closely involves Jesus, Jairus, and Jairus' daughter. Now Jairus was an official in the synagogue, a religious leader. The religious leaders weren't fond of Jesus and wanted to get rid of him. I'm sure it was difficult for Jairus to reach out to Jesus and ask for help when so many of his friends were skeptical of Jesus. The religious leaders and scribes were furious at what Jesus was teaching in the synagogues. However, in a moment of desperation, Jairus went to Jesus.

- **What children has God placed along your path to love and to cherish?**

Jairus had a problem. His daughter was at the point of death. Regardless of what others around him were thinking, he was in desperate need for some help for his daughter. Jairus found Jesus and pleaded for help. On the way to his house Jesus was interrupted by the bleeding woman and Jairus receives word that it's too late. His daughter was dead.

- **How might he have felt upon hearing this news?**

- **If you had been Jairus, standing and waiting for Jesus to come and see about your daughter, how would witnessing this woman's healing have affected you?**

Just when Jairus was full of sorrow and losing faith, in verse 36 Jesus offers him these words, "Don't be afraid; just believe." Jesus wasn't giving up and neither should he. Even if he felt the situation was hopeless, Jairus was encouraged by these words and didn't give up.

- **What kind of faith did it take for Jairus to keep believing Jesus could make a difference even after he heard that his daughter was dead? Why?**

When the group arrives at the home, they saw and heard the mourners who were causing quite a commotion. The presence of the mourners in the home is proof that the girl was actually dead. It was time to grieve the loss of their daughter. However, in verse 29, Jesus offers these words of hope to the family, "The child is not dead but sleeps!"

Finally in verse 41 Jesus offers a word of love and power for the family. Jesus didn't make a spectacle of the situation and was sensitive to the family. The girl not only came back to life, but was also healed of her sickness. She was able to get out of her bed and walk around. God holds the ultimate authority and we need never fear.

Take a moment and read Romans 8:35-37 and share your thoughts.

Jairus went before Jesus with a request for healing. He loved his daughter so much that he would risk his public reputation to see a miracle. Kids need someone to advocate for them, and they

SESSION 3 - A Little Child and the Disciples

To Begin

If you could eliminate one thing from your daily schedule, what would it be and why?

Digging Deeper

Together, read Matthew 18:1-4.

In Matthew 18:1-4, the disciples are trying to figure out who is the greatest in the Kingdom of God. We live in a world where greatness and power are some people's ambition in life. Jesus comes at greatness with a different approach.

- **What is the difference between the world's approach and Jesus' approach to greatness? Why is it so hard for us to understand this?**

If we look further into verse 1, we see a clear example of the need for humility. The disciples want to determine "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" hoping that their name might be called. Peter was probably thinking it was himself, having walked on the water, being on the mountaintop with Jesus, and having his taxes paid for by a miracle.

What was the problem here? The disciples were full of pride, thinking that they were more important than they really were. Maybe you've heard the popular quote, "Pride comes before the fall." When we live selfishly, there is bound to be conflict.

- **In what areas of your life are you selfish? How can you become selfless in this area?**

In verses 2-6, Jesus gives us an example of humility in a way that was least expected. Picture them waiting to hear their name, but instead he calls over a little child and this child was the example of true greatness. The characteristics that come from an innocent child include trust, dependence, the desire to make others happy, and an absence of the desire to be greater than others. It takes a great deal of teaching for us to learn the lessons of humility.

The disciples wanted to know who was greatest in the kingdom and Jesus drastically altered their perceptions forever. But Jesus warned them that, apart from humility, they could not even enter the kingdom! They have to change their thinking or they will never make it.

- **How have the teachings of Jesus changed your thinking? What was most impactful about Jesus' revolutionary teachings for you?**

As Christians, we must not only accept the little children for Jesus' sake, but we must also receive all of God's children and share God's love with them. True humility thinks of others, not of self. It is a dangerous thing to look down on the children, because God values them highly. When we welcome a child, we welcome Christ.

- **In Matthew 18:1-4 Jesus says that we are to come to Jesus as little children. What traits might Jesus be describing when he says this? What is one area in which you could apply one of these traits to your life?**
- **What are 2 or 3 practical steps you can connect with children as Jesus would have us?**

Praise & Prayer Points

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SESSION 4 - Theology of Poverty*

To Begin

As a child, what did you wish to become when you grew up?

Digging Deeper

Together read Colossians 1:15-20, Isaiah 1:10-17, Isaiah 58:1-10.

When we're confronted with an issue as large and horrifying as child mortality, it's hard to believe that it can be prevented. But it can. Together, we need to examine the causes of the problem. What could be responsible for the deaths of so many little ones? Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, once said, "The biggest enemy of health in the developing world is poverty."

But what is poverty?

"Poverty is a condition characterised by the deprivation of basic human needs, the denial of opportunities, and the deficiency of internal assets that prevent a person from realising their basic, God-given potential." —Dr. Scott Todd, Compassion International

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that poverty is a physical problem; that it means not having enough to eat, or not being able to access medical treatment, or being forced to drink dirty water because there's no access to clean water. While it's true that poverty often involves physical and economic hardships, it is important to note that there are other forms of poverty that can be just as destructive.

In their book, *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert outline a relational framework for poverty. They describe human beings' four foundational relationships:

1. Our relationship with God—This is the primary relationship, from which the other three flow. Developing a healthy relationship with God is paramount to truly living free from the effects of poverty.

2. Our relationship with ourselves—Discovering that we have each been made in the image of God and are precious to Him, while also recognising that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), allows us a relationship with ourselves that is based on God's love and grace, rather than any worldly standard of success or how we measure up to other people.

3. Our relationships with others—God has created community, and human beings are, generally speaking, social by nature. Our relationships with family, friends, neighbours, and the wider society are a powerful force in our lives and govern the way we view the world, including the way in which we approach the issue of poverty.

4. Our relationship with the rest of creation—In the beginning, God mandated us to be stewards of our natural environment and we have a responsibility to care for our planet. Unchecked exploitation of natural resources, pollution and environmental degradation can contribute to poverty.

In this framework, poverty is not a lack of material wealth or resources; it's not even a lack of choices or opportunities. It's living a life that lacks healthy, dynamic relationships—with God, with our selves, with each other, and with our environment. We can see from the verses listed in the Scripture focus for this week that God's people have often struggled in their relationships with their Creator, and with each other. If we take time to reflect

upon poverty from this perspective, we may discover areas in which we are lacking—areas in which we might be struggling against social or emotional poverty without recognising it.

Great wealth cannot protect us from poverty if we are estranged from our families or ostracised from society. Earthly riches can actually contribute to poverty, when we allow wealth to corrupt us and disrupt our relationships with God. Our worth, our value, cannot be measured by our bank balances, the size of our homes or our outward appearances. It is the inner self, the *“unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”*— 1 Peter 3:4.

So what action can we take if we recognise our spiritual, social or emotional poverty? What happens once we’ve acknowledged the broken relationships in our lives?

There’s no easy answer to that question. We all need to help each other; there is no one, other than God, who has all the answers. We need to look to Him for our fullness as there is no other means by which we can be truly freed from our poverty.

Fortunately for us, God is able to reconcile us to Himself and to each other, as the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:18: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” By turning to God and asking Him to heal our broken relationships, we attack the core reasons for the existence of poverty and take the first step to overcoming them.

Talk it out

- How do you personally define poverty?
- Why did God the Father send Jesus to the earth?
- What were some of the major reasons why God sent the Israelites into exile?
- How can you see the Israelites' attitude and actions reflected in the modern western church?
- What forms of poverty can you see in yourself and in society around you?
- How does the relational framework for poverty change the way you view people in the developing world, and the way you respond to the needs of others?

**Excerpt from the study "i believe." This small group study resource by Compassion Australia focuses on the issue of child mortality from a biblical perspective.*

Praise & Prayer Points

SESSION 5 - Generation to Generation

To Begin

What was your favourite childhood nursery rhyme? Why?

Digging Deeper

In this last session we are going to be spending time discussing the importance of passing on wisdom from generation to generation from two sections of Scripture; Psalm 78:1-7 and 2 Timothy 1:1-7 & 2:1-2.

Let's begin by looking into Psalm 78:1-7.

Together, read Psalm 78:1-7.

In this particular psalm, we learn about the importance of wisdom from the past and about teaching these lessons to the future generations.

In this psalm from Asaph, he had received instruction from former generations and was now passing them on to the next generation, as God had commanded. In verse 7 we see that the purpose of this teaching was that the young would not forget God but trust in Him and obey His Word. By obeying and trusting God they would avoid the mistakes of their ancestors like being stubborn and rebellious towards God. For those of us that have relationships with children, we need to communicate God's truth to the generations that follow us.

- **Who in your life has been influential in teaching you about God? As a child? As an adult?**

First, we must put our trust in God's Word above the whims of culture for all areas of life, including raising our children. The Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God that teaches and

guides us to have a full and abundant life. Through the Bible we can know and experience God. What then is the ultimate goal of parents? To bring our children to the point where they know God, have confidence in Him, and finally, love and obey Him.

- **In what ways can we practically point the children in our lives towards God and help them to trust and obey Him?**

Verse 8 helps us understand that children who know, trust, and love God learn from our example. Faith at home needs to be an integral part of a child's life to help them grow in their knowledge and understanding of God.

- **What are some ways to keep faith at home a part of our every day lives?**

Together, read 2 Timothy 1:1-7 & 2:1-2

In 2 Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy while Paul is currently living in a prison cell. Paul's life hasn't been easy. (*Read 2 Corinthians 11:24–28 to find out the kinds of Paul been going through.*) Paul reaches out to Timothy to remind him of the life that he is called to live.

In verse 5 we see the impact of generational faith. Timothy's mother and grandmother were filled with faith and it was passed along to him. Paul encourages Timothy to remember with him the faith that is evident in his family. Paul encourages Timothy to fan into flames the spiritual gifts that God has given him. We are to live by faith and use the gifts that God has given us to build his kingdom.

- **What does your spiritual heritage look like?**

- **Along with being reminded of Timothy’s sincere faith, what does Paul remind Timothy to do? What does fanning the flame look like today?**
- **When you first decided to follow Jesus, did you think it would be difficult or easy? What have you learned about the cost of following Jesus since then?**

In 2 Timothy 2:2, we read about the importance of mentoring, and sharing God’s truth with the people around us. This is how we can help ensure that the message and hope of Jesus will live on from generation to generation.

- **What people is God placing on your heart to reach out to share His love?**

Praise & Prayer Points

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