



# Let the Little Children Come

## Matthew 19:13-15

1. A Wrong Perspective of Children (Verse 13)
2. A Right Perspective of Children (Verse 14)
3. How to Hinder Your Children

In recent weeks, we have seen Jesus teach on marriage, divorce, and singleness. It is appropriate that Matthew continues his focus on the family by teaching about children. Matthew records His encounter with children in verses 13-15. This same story is included in the gospel of Mark (10:13-15) and in the gospel of Luke (18:15-17). And in each of these instances, the story is almost exactly the same. The story begins with some parents bringing their children to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to place his hands upon the children, bless them, and pray for them. But, the disciples attempt to turn the parents away. Jesus was angered by the response of His disciples. He told these parents to bring their children to Him, so that He might take them into His arms, bless them, and pray for them. The story is simple and clear. The disciples of Jesus put forth a wrong perspective of children. Jesus corrects them and put forth a right perspective of children. Indeed, this will form our outline this morning: (1) A Wrong Perspective of Children, and (2) A Right Perspective of Children.

The simple fact that this story appear three times in the Bible in nearly the same form ought to show us something. It ought to show us that this passage contains some teaching that is important for us. Three of the gospel writers refused to leave this story out of their narratives concerning the life of Jesus. This passage teaches us that children are important to God. Psalm 127:3 says that "children are a gift of the LORD." This is pictured greatly in the Bible when Esau asked Jacob about the children that were with him, he said that these are "the children whom God has graciously given" (Gen 33:5). Children are gifts.

Sadly, the world has not always treated children as a gift. Perhaps you remember when Jews were in the land of Egypt as slaves. They were increasing in numbers, which put fear in the minds of the Egyptians, that they might lose their slaves. So, Pharaoh ordered the Egyptian midwives, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live" (Ex. 1:16). Pharaoh hardly saw children as a gift. The Old Testament has many warnings against those of Molech, who would sacrifice their children as an act of worship. They didn't see children as a gift. In the ancient Roman world during the times of Jesus, it was no different. In some periods of Roman history it was traditional practice for a newborn to be brought to the *pater familias*, the family patriarch, who would then decide whether the child was to be kept and raised, or left to death by exposure. This practice is illustrated in a letter from a Roman citizen to his wife, which dates near to the time of Christ, "Know that I am still in Alexandria.... As soon as I received payment I shall send it up to you. If you are delivered (before I come home), if it is a boy keep it, if a girl, discard it." [\[1\]](#)

As a child himself, Jesus faced the wrath of one who didn't believe that children are a gift. Mary and Joseph had to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus from the hands of Herod. Herod had heard that a baby had been born in Bethlehem who was "born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2). He subsequently ordered the death of all male children, ages two and under who were in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16). Our culture today is not much different. Oh, there are many who care greatly for children. And nothing quite touches your heart more than hearing of an innocent child who dies in an accident. But, our country has legalized the killing of babies. In principle, it's not much different than the Romans of old. The statistics are staggering: some 4,000 babies are aborted every day in our country. With the legalization of abortion, we clearly demonstrate how unimportant children are to us. We hardly see them as a gift.

But praise the Lord, it is different within the family of God. The Old Testament law is filled with commands to give protections to those who are helpless: orphans and widows. Exodus 22:22, "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan." God's people have always sought to protect and help children. I am thinking of a few examples. I think about Dwight Moody, who was a very successful business man in Chicago. Rather than becoming a statesman, he put forth his efforts into establishing a mission at North Market Hall for young children to attend Sunday School. Why? Because he knew that children are important to God. I think about George Müller, who established and built five large orphan houses. In his lifetime, he cared for thousands and thousands of orphans who had lost both parents to death. Why? Because he knew that children are important to God. Today, in many foreign lands, where governments can't afford to deal with orphans, many Christian churches will form their own orphanages to raise children as best they can. Why? Because they know that children are important to God. In our culture, there are many in our land, who have arisen to fund and to help Crisis Pregnancy Care centers. With such commitment, the world can hardly accuse God's people of not caring for young children.

In our passage this morning, the disciples of Jesus failed to uphold the importance of children. In verse 13, we see, ...

### 1. A Wrong Perspective of Children (Verse 13)

"Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them." (Matt. 19:13)

Here we have some parents bringing their children to Jesus. We don't know the age of these children, but the word Matthew uses indicates that these children were old enough to be disciplined. In Luke's account, he uses a different word to describe these children. Luke calls them "babies" (Luke 18:15). I think that it is best to understand that children of all ages were being brought to Jesus. Older children were brought. Younger children were brought. And yes, even infants were brought to Jesus. They were brought to Jesus with a purpose. Matthew makes the reason clear for us, "that He might lay His hands on them and pray." Those who brought their children to Jesus had heard of what great things that Jesus had done. They knew of the miraculous power that He possessed, as He healed people with the simple touch. Jesus touched the leper, and he was instantly cleansed (Matt. 8:3). Jesus touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, and the fever instantly left her (Matt. 8:14). Jesus touched the eyes of blind men, and they received their sight (Matt. 9:29). We don't know whether or not these children were sick. The text gives us no indication that the children were sick, so it may be that they were all healthy children. These parents simply wanted to have their children receive a blessing from Jesus.

I believe that these parents had good intentions about this Rabbi of whom they had heard. I don't believe that this was too unusual for the Jews in those days. The custom of a father blessing his children goes far back into the book of Genesis. Perhaps you remember when Jacob set his hands upon his grandchildren and blessed them (Genesis 28:8-22). There was some semblance of this in the law as well. According to the law, every first-born son "shall be called holy to the Lord" and a sacrifice of "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons" were to be made on his behalf (Luke 2:23-24). The parents would bring their child to a priest, who would offer up a sacrifice on behalf of the child. I can picture a priest, performing this ritual and taking the child into his arms, blessing the child, and praying for the child. This is what Mary and Joseph did with baby Jesus. They brought Him to Jerusalem so that a sacrifice could be made for Him. When Jesus was brought to the temple, Simeon, the priest, took Jesus into his arms and blessed God (Luke 2:28). Though women and children were often shunned in that society, this practice seemed somewhat common.

I also believe that Jesus routinely spent time with children, blessing them. Jesus cared for the little children. Back in Matthew 18, Jesus called a child to Himself, and held this child up as an object lesson of those who enter the kingdom. And yet, here in Matthew 19, for some reason, the disciples prohibited the parents from coming to Jesus with their children. Our text says that the disciples, "rebuked" the parents. They were telling these parents that their actions were wrong in bringing their children to Jesus. We don't know why they said this. Many Bible commentators have expressed many ideas about this. Perhaps the disciples were annoyed that Jesus was being delayed on his journey (Carson). Perhaps they were being interrupted in their important discussion with Jesus (Carson). Perhaps they were trying to protect Jesus from the nuisance that these children might be to Him, especially as He appeared to be tired and filled with tension while He thought about approaching Jerusalem (Barclay). Perhaps they thought that it would somehow dishonor Jesus to do such a lowly task of praying for children (Spurgeon). Perhaps they thought that children were lower class citizens, and not worthy of sharing the stage with Jesus. Perhaps they thought that "children were to be seen, but not heard." We don't know the exact reason, but we do know that their attitude was very wrong.

In Mark's account, we are told that Jesus was indignant toward the disciples for such behavior. His anger burned at the disciples, who would prohibit these precious children from coming to Jesus. He thought that their actions were inappropriate. And so Jesus corrects their wrong perspective of children by giving them, ...

## 2. A Right Perspective of Children (Verse 14)

Jesus says simply in verse 14,

"Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."  
(Matt. 19:14)

In the parallel accounts of Mark and Luke, Jesus said almost the same thing. Listen to Mark 10:14, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to **such as** these." Listen to Luke 18:16, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to **such as** these." Children are great models for us of how we need to be to enter the kingdom. Because, "the kingdom of heaven belongs to **such as** these." The kingdom belongs to those who are like children.

This is a consistent message of Jesus. Perhaps you remember from Matthew 18, how Jesus brought a child in front of all as an example of what you need to be like to enter into His kingdom. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become **like** children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). So, what are children like?

### a) Children are dependent.

We don't see the children coming to Jesus on their own. They need their parent's help. This comes out in the text. Look at verse 13. Every translation that I looked at translated this essentially the same way, "children were **brought** to Him." Literally, this Greek word gives the idea of carrying or bringing. This word frequently communicates the idea of being led to somebody. For example, you could say, "I brought my parents to church today!" You didn't carry them to church. You led them to church. But, there are times when this word has the connotation of actually carrying an individual to Jesus. It is like the paralytic, who was "brought to Jesus" (Matt. 19:2). He couldn't walk. He needed to be carried, and it took four guys to carry him. Additionally, many of the sick people that Jesus healed were "brought" to Jesus (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; 14:35). I certainly believe that many of these sick people couldn't walk because of their sickness. They must have been carried. So because of how this Greek word is used in other places, I believe that many of these children were carried to Jesus. Some of them may have been of age to walk. But, my guess is that many of them were physically carried to Jesus.

When the disciples rebuked these parents, many of them probably had their children in their arms. What a great picture this is of Christianity. We are always, utterly dependent upon our heavenly Father to carry us. We ought never reach a point where we think that we have arrived somehow. We should not think that we can make it on our own. We are dependant upon God to help in all circumstances. We don't come to God on our own merits. We don't come to God because of our own abilities. The only way that we can ever come to God is by Jesus carrying us to God.

## **b) Children are willing followers.**

Turn over to Matthew 21. In this chapter, we see Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey. As He does so, the multitudes were crying out, saying "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" As Jesus entered Jerusalem, He first went to the temple to do some business there. He turned over the tables of the moneychangers, who were buying and selling in the temple. Look at verse 15. We find the children crying out in the temple, and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (verse 15). Why were they doing this? Because they are willing followers. They had seen the adults doing this. They kept up the tune. There are many times in my house when I will find my children singing some familiar tune. But, this is so typical of children. It is one of the things that makes them great.

In fact, this week, my family was huddled around a glass jar in which a monarch caterpillar was being transformed into a chrysalis. It takes about a minute for this transformation to take place, so we were excited to see it. Well, Stephanie, our one year old, was equally interested in seeing what was going on. It wasn't because she understood what was happening. Rather, it was because she was imitating us. We were all looking intently at this glass jar. She was a willing follower, who wanted to do the same.

This is also a great picture of what it means to follow Christ. We simply need to do as we are told. When we read it in the Bible, we ought to follow and obey, like little children often do. There are many other characteristics of children that are utterly commendable as well. We looked at these when studying through Matthew 18:1-4, "How to be Great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

- Children are helpless (Matt. 5:3)
- Children are not concerned about worldly things (Matt. 6:33)
- Children are eager and ready to obey (Matt. 7:21-27)
- Children are trusting (Matt. 8:10-13)
- Children are humble (Matt. 18:4).

These are the things that make children such an example for all of us. These are the sorts of characteristics that those in the kingdom possess. And the kingdom belongs to those who are like this. Now, there are those who have taken the teaching from this passage and applied it to infant baptism. They argue that the kingdom belongs to those who are like children. And who is more like children, than children themselves? After all, the children meet all of the qualifications necessary to enter the kingdom. Those who teach that believe that children should be baptized in order to be fully accepted into the kingdom. The reality, though, is that infant baptism isn't taught anywhere in this passage. I do not believe that Jesus had in mind the baptism of infants. He certainly had an opportunity to make it clear here. But he doesn't mention it at all.

But, we do need to learn from our paedo-baptist friends, who have pointed out how children ought to be an integral part of our community. This is the main point of this passage: Children are important to God. We ought not to neglect children as second-class citizens. Rather, we ought to accept them and warmly receive them, just as Jesus did. Children should not be excluded from church. Children should not be made to feel low and unimportant in the church.

Notice how joyfully Jesus accepted these children. You get the sense that He was eager to receive these children into His arms. He eagerly wanted to pray for them and to bless them. I'm reminded of politicians who willingly kiss babies in public because they know that doing so is great for their image and will often win votes. But, Jesus wasn't a politician using these children for a greater gain. Jesus took these children into His arms because they were welcome to enter the kingdom. The song is true, "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."

How different is Jesus' reception of these little children than his reception of the rich young ruler (in verses 16-22). Next week, we will see how Jesus places hard barriers in front of this man, who was seeking salvation. Verse 16 tells us that he was seeking to "obtain eternal life." Jesus told him to "go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). Jesus placed upon this man a tremendously high cost to following Jesus. But, with these children, it is entirely different. He doesn't put any stipulations upon them coming. He doesn't make them walk through any hoops. He simply accepts them, because they are children. He says, "Let them come. Do not hinder them. For the kingdom belongs to such as these."

As I reflected upon these verses this week, I thought of how Jesus was a lover of all children. The children that were coming Jesus were complete strangers to Him. They weren't children of the disciples. They were totally unknown to Jesus. We, as a church, need to love all children, even those children we don't know. The Hike for Life is a great opportunity for us as a church to help many children who are not yet born. Your neighborhoods are great opportunities to love children. Adoptions are a way to love unknown children. Being foster parents might also be a way to help. Orphanages are great opportunities. When we send people from our church to minister in Nepal, there is an orphanage there that we may be able to help. These are some ways we can help love children, and I encourage you to take part in them.

Our perspective of children ought to be the same as the perspective of Jesus. As a church, children ought to be important to us. We ought to eagerly receive them. We ought to do what we can to help them, to teach them, to nurture them, and to train them.

Someday the children of this church will grow up and be adults. When they do, it's our desire to see them walking faithfully with the Lord. We want to see them embrace the saving gospel of Christ. We want them to come to the end of themselves and realize that their hope of eternal life can only be found in Jesus. It's a matter of life-long dependence. In their early days, they were forced to be dependent upon their parents. As they grow, they need to learn to be dependent upon God. It's a matter of life-long willing obedience. In their early days, they may have loved to imitate their parents. As they grow, they need to learn to imitate God. Sadly, there are many children, who lose their child-like characteristics as they grow up. They become like the rich, young, ruler, thinking themselves to be so righteous, keeping all of the commandments. They become like the Pharisees, righteous in their own eyes, but actually wicked to the core. They become like the seventeen year old boy I heard of recently, who grew up in a good church in a good family, which was described as being a "rock in the church." Two weeks ago, he robbed a bank at gun-point. It happens. Children can grow up and rebel, losing all of their child-like

characteristics. Rather than finding favor with God, they actually find themselves recipients of the wrath of God.

As a church, we need to do what we can to mature our children in the faith. While they are children, they are wet cement, that is hardening fast. We need to do all we can do to shape our children while they are still able to be influenced. Proverbs 19:18 says, "Discipline your son while there is hope." And the longer you wait, the harder it gets.

Recently, I was attempting to glue a plastic toy for my son. I was using super-glue. Unfortunately, the glue had fixed the cap to the container. When I attempted to open up the glue, the tube ripped open and fell upon the counter, spilling glue all over the counter. As quickly as I could, I grabbed some paper towels to wipe it up. But, some of the glue had already hardened. There still remains a mark on the counter. Rather than understanding children as wet cement, perhaps we might better think of them as super-glue. I can't tell you how many parents I have heard speak about how quickly their children have grown and gone. We need to work hard at training our children "while there is hope." The time to start is yesterday.

Here at Rock Valley Bible Church, we don't offer much for our children in the way of programs, but what we are doing with them fits very well into a vision of training children to be godly men and women. "Keepers at Home" is a great program that helps train our young girls. It actively involves the mothers in the process. Its focus is to train these girls to be godly wives and mothers. I'm excited about the level of participation and interest in this program. "Contenders for the Faith" is similar in it's approach. We want to help the fathers of this church be active in training their sons to be godly husbands and fathers. We are in the early days of this program as we have fewer boys at Rock Valley Bible Church than we have girls. I'm encouraged at the potential that we have with "Contenders for the Faith."

In our worship service, we try to be friendly to children. This has been an intentional effort. It has been with a vision of what the children will experience when they grow up. It doesn't mean that we have to compromise anything, or intentionally bring our worship down. But, it does mean that we need to be sensitive to the children in our midst. I know that as a young boy, I found church services incredibly boring at times. In fact, I remember on several occasions taking a hymnal out of the pew in front of me and opening it to the first page. I then proceeded to turn the page again and again. I wanted to see if I could page through the entire hymnal during the service. It was possible.

Too often, churches are aware that their worship services can be challenging for children, so they provide some alternative for them, which they really like. When they get of a certain age, then they are brought into the worship service which they often find much less exciting than what they were used to. In this case, church becomes a bore for them. Perhaps this might explain the format of many churches today. They are essentially youth groups for adults, who have come to love the hype and excitement of their youth groups.

I believe that this is a mistake. Don't sell the children short. They are learning quite a bit as they watch what goes on. In fact, children are very insightful. They're pretty smart. This week, I found a list of observations that children have made:

- Never trust a dog to watch your food. --Patrick, Age 10
- When you want something expensive, ask your grandparents. --Matthew, Age 12
- Wear a hat when feeding seagulls. --Rocky, Age 9
- Sleep in your clothes so you'll be dressed in the morning. --Stephanie, Age 8
- Never try to hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk. --Rosemary, Age 7
- When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?" don't answer him. --Heather, Age 16
- Never tell your mom her diet's not working. --Michael, Age 14
- Don't pick on your sister when she's holding a baseball bat. --Joel, Age 12
- When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she's on the phone. --Alyesha, Age 13
- Never try to baptize a cat. --Laura, Age 13
- Listen to your brain. It has lots of information. --Chelsey, Age 7
- Stay away from prunes. --Randy, Age 9
- Never dare your little brother to paint the family car. --Phillip, Age 13
- Forget the cake, go for the icing. --Cynthia, Age 8

I'm amazed at how well our children pay attention to the notes that we give them. I was told last week that one of our children was unable to come to the service. But her father was there. She told her father to make sure that he looks at the children's notes to see what they were like. A few weeks ago, I placed on the notes a few cartoon bears that were bride and groom, as we spoke about marriage. When I preached about divorce, I split these two bears. That Sunday, I asked the children what they might expect the next week, when I would preach on singleness. They guessed it. I would have only one bear on the notes. This week, what do you think that I had? A bunch of little children bears. Last week, one of the questions that I had on the notes was about marriage. When I gathered the children to go over the notes, as is my custom after the service, several of them told me that they knew how Jesus defined marriage before I even said something last Sunday. They told me that marriage is "one man with one woman, forming a strong union for life." They are learning. Let us not cast them away from what they will ultimately experience in the future as grown men and women. We want to include them in our worship.

John Piper gives a great perspective of children in worship services. He writes, ...

"There are several reasons why we urge parents to bring their children to worship. But these arguments will not carry much weight with parents who do not love to worship God.

The greatest stumbling block for children in worship is that their parents do not cherish the hour. Children can feel the difference between duty and delight. Therefore, the first and most important job of a parent is to fall in love with the worship of God. You can't impart what you don't possess. "

Parents have the responsibility to teach their children by their own example the meaning and value of worship. Therefore,

parents should want their children with them in worship so the children can catch the spirit and form of their parents' worship.

Children should see how Mom and Dad bow their heads in earnest prayer during the prelude and other non-directed times. They should see how Mom and Dad sing praise to God with joy in their faces, and how they listen hungrily to His Word. They should catch the spirit of their parents meeting the living God.

Something seems wrong when parents want to take their children in the formative years and put them with other children and other adults to form their attitude and behavior in worship. Parents should be jealous to model for their children the tremendous value they put on reverence in the presence of Almighty God." [\[2\]](#)

But, there are some children, for whom the worship services are a bit long. I know this. Particularly, those who can't read and write. We do provide children's church for them. And I say to you teachers, I consider your role to be very important. You are providing for these children a taste of church. As you prepare to teach them, I encourage you to work hard in doing so. I work hard each week in preparing to preach each Sunday. I would encourage you to work hard in your preparation as well. You may not be formally "preaching," but you are seeking to instill spiritual truth in the lives of our youngest people. I would encourage you to receive the children in your children's church as eagerly as Jesus.

At Rock Valley Bible Church, we want our children to come to Christ. We ought not to hinder them in coming. Rather, we ought to provide them with every opportunity to see Christ, be touched by Him, and to believe in Him. There are ways to hinder your children from coming to Christ. I want to be real practical. Let me give you some ways ...

### **3. How to Hinder Your Children**

#### **a) Being busy with activities**

Recently, there was an article in the *Rockford Register Star* that was given the title, "Playing or Praying" (Rockford Register Star, August 8, 2004). It highlighted the difficulty that many parents and children have with sports activities that are scheduled for Sunday. The article said, "On most Sunday mornings this summer, one could drive by Sportscore or Forest Hills Diamonds and find fields packed with youth athletes beginning a long day filled with sports games." Last Sunday, I came home from church and had a message on my answering machine from a friend from out of town, whose son was playing soccer at Sportscore. He told me when and where the games would be and invited me to come and see them. After I finished lunch, I went to Sportscore and was amazed at the number of cars there and the number of people who were out playing soccer. There are many parents who are teaching their children that soccer is more important than God. And in a very real sense, soccer has become their god. One mother said that she feels a little guilty sometimes, prioritizing soccer over church. But, she said, "It's almost impossible to do both. I would like to think that I'd be a more consistent church goer if they didn't play. My kids have a solid foundation, but I do wish their religious upbringing could have been stronger." My fear for this woman is that she will quickly discover her children out of high school and out of her house, and more interested in soccer than they are in God. After all, mom was more interested in soccer than in God. And thus, she was hindering her children from coming to Christ.

Rather than putting children around the things of God and around God's people, some parents will hold them away. But, I think about the parents in our text this morning. These parents who brought their children to Jesus were demonstrating their priorities. Their priority was to place their children around Jesus. Jesus doesn't walk among us today like He did back then. But, the best place in which to expose your children to Jesus is with the church and the activities of the church. By saying this, I certainly don't mean that you need to attend a church service every Sunday or your children will never learn of Jesus. I'm not saying that. Certainly, there may be other opportunities for these children to be around God's people, hearing God's word. But, I am saying that there are many children today who are so involved in all of their activities of the world, that they are too busy for spiritual matters. These activities aren't bad in and of themselves. The danger is when they become so consuming that they push God right out of their lives. Some mothers feel more like chauffeurs than they do like mothers, driving their children all around town in the busyness of their life. When it comes down to it, I believe that these activities can actually hinder children from coming to Christ.

#### **b) Trusting others to do your job**

There are many people who think that they are doing just fine with their children, because they bring them to church. I know of people, who have thought that church and God was important for their children. They will drag their children out of bed on Sunday morning only to drop their children off at church while they themselves go out for breakfast. But, parents, you are responsible for the spiritual formation of your children. Sure, we as a church can help. We can teach your children. We can model what it means to be a child. We can help guide you to resources that can help you in parenting. We can give children sheets of paper with fill-in-the-blanks for children to use during the sermon to take notes. We can have programs for children. But, there is no substitute for parents taking responsibility to train their children in the ways of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 addresses the role of fathers with their children: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." This verse speaks of a father's role in training his children. He isn't to provoke his children to anger, as can easily be done by domineering dads. He is supposed to teach them the truth of God. He is supposed to discipline them in godliness.

Fathers, how are you doing? Do you ever gather your family and say, "wife and children, it's time for us to read the Bible"? Do you ever pray with your family? Do you ever discipline your children? Do you speak to them about spiritual things? Do you tell them of the cross of Christ? Do you explain to them how "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Pet. 2:24)? Do you urge them to believe in Jesus, that their sins might be washed away? Do you describe to them the wonderful grace of God to save any sinner? Do teach them how to "live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24)? Or, have you delegated your responsibility to other activities.

I'm delighted that many of the children in this church attend AWANA programs, where much Bible memory takes place. I really am. But, the responsibility of bringing your children to Christ doesn't lie with an AWANA program. It helps. But, it can't get it done without the help of parents, who take an active interest in the spiritual formation of their children. You can hinder your children from coming to Christ by trusting in your religious activities to train your children, rather than taking the responsibility upon yourself to spiritually train your children.

### **c) Being a hypocrite**

Hypocrisy will hinder your children from coming to Christ. If you are different at church than you are at home, your children will see it. If your children watch you undergo this transformation, they will see that you are nothing but an actor. Jesus blasted the Pharisees with these words,

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matt. 23:27-28).

Oh, how many there are that do this with church. Sunday in and Sunday out, they make a good show outside their home, looking to play the part of a righteous man. But, once they return back home, their uncleanness comes out. The smile is wiped from their face and replaced with a frown. They begin to argue with their spouse. Their choice of Sunday recreation defies everything proclaimed in church on Sunday morning. Their tongue lets loose with profanity. Their Bible collects dust, sitting untouched on the shelf all week long.

If you say one thing and live another, your children will learn from you. They will not learn from your words. They will learn from your example. They will come to believe that Christianity is a sham. They will act just like you do. Your children may very well rise up and say, "Dad, your actions are speaking so loudly to me that I can't hear a word you are saying."

It's not perfection that is going to impact them. It is honest realism. When you fail in your parenting, you ought to confessing your sins to your children. They will learn much from your confession. It communicates what you are attempting to do and your humility in not achieving it.

What is it that most excites you? Are you excited about God? Are you excited about Christ? Or, are there other things that interest you? Don't think that you will fool your children. If you love your television or your computer or your hobby more than you love Christ, your children will see it. Your actions may very well be hindering your children from coming to Christ.

We can hinder our children from coming to Christ when we are (1) busy with activities, (2) trusting other to do your job, or (3) being a hypocrite. Let's not hinder the children. We need to "let the children come."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 22, 2004 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Biblical Archaeology Review-July/August 1991.

[2] "The Family: Together in God's Presence," by John and Noël Piper. You can read it at [http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/family/family\\_worship.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/family/family_worship.html).