

Jesus Loves the Little Children

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus welcomes children, and He asks all of us to come to Him as a little child, with humble trust. Never be the one who stands in someone's way.

Bible passage: Mark 10:13–16, Matthew 19:13–15 and Luke 18:15–17. Students read them out loud themselves.

Memory verse: "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." *Mark 10:14 (KJV)* and "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." *Mark 10:15 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Mark 10:13–16, Matthew 19:13–15, Luke 18:15–17 and Matthew 18:3–4. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: Too Young? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students stand if they think the younger kid should be included, and stay seated if not. 1) Your little cousin wants to play the board game with you and your friends. 2) A second grader asks to sit with you on the church bus. 3) A younger kid wants to pray out loud in kids' church. 4) Your little brother asks you a question about God while you're busy. After each, ask: *Why do older kids sometimes push younger ones away?* Say: "Jesus' own disciples once tried to keep children away from Him. Let's see what Jesus did."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Mark 10:13–16. Students take turns, a verse each. Old words in this passage:

- **that he should touch them** (10:13): so that He would put His hands on them
- **rebuked** (10:13): scolded, told them sharply they were wrong
- **much displeased** (10:14): very unhappy, even upset
- **suffer** (10:14): let, allow; **forbid them not**: don't stop them
- **of such is the kingdom of God** (10:14): God's kingdom belongs to people like these
- **verily** (10:15): truly; **receive** (10:15): accept, welcome; **therein**: into it
- **blessed them** (10:16): prayed God's good for them, as the people asked (Matthew 19:13)



Read out loud: Matthew 19:13–15 and Luke 18:15–17. Ask students to point out what each one adds to Mark:

- Matthew: they wanted Him to "put his hands on them, and pray" (19:13); "the kingdom of heaven" (19:14); He "laid his hands on them, and departed thence," went on from there (19:15)
- Luke: they brought "also **infants**," babies (18:15); "Jesus called them unto him" (18:16)
- Only Mark says Jesus was "much displeased" and "took them up in his arms" (Mark 10:14, 10:16)

Teach the key verse. Write Mark 10:15 on the board. Say: "Jesus turned the moment around. The disciples treated the children as if they didn't belong, and Jesus made the children the example for everyone. Another time Jesus said, 'Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 18:4, KJV). A little child can't earn anything or pay anything. A child simply trusts and receives. That is how every one of us comes to God, no matter how old we are."

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Mark 10:13 says the disciples rebuked those who brought the children. The Bible doesn't say why. What are ways people today can get in the way of kids coming to Jesus, even without meaning to?
2. Mark is the only one who says Jesus was "much displeased" (10:14). What does Jesus' strong reaction tell you about how much He values children?
3. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God "as a little child" (10:15)? Use Matthew 18:4 to help you answer.
4. Why is it hard for older kids and grown-ups to come to God with humble, simple trust?
5. The people asked Jesus to touch the children, and He took them up in His arms and blessed them (10:13, 10:16). What does that show about the way Jesus gives?
6. Younger kids watch you. How can you help them come to Jesus instead of standing in their way?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **much displeased** means very unhappy; **suffer** means let; **forbid them not** means don't stop them; **of such is the kingdom of God** means God's kingdom belongs to people like them. In Mark 10:15, **verily** means truly, **receive** means accept or welcome, and **therein** means into it.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Mark 10:14 this week; keep working on Mark 10:15 next week too.



5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus said the kingdom of God is received 'as a little child' (Mark 10:15), not earned. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). You are not too young for any of it."

Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where do I find it hard to trust God simply, the way a little child trusts?
2. Who is one younger kid I could help come closer to Jesus this week? What could I do?
3. Write a short prayer thanking Jesus that He welcomes kids, and asking Him for a humble heart.

If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: do one thing to help a younger kid: sit with them, answer their question kindly, pray with them, or invite them to church.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus welcomed the children and took them up in His arms. Give us humble hearts that trust You like little children, and help us never stand in the way of anyone coming to You. In Jesus' name, amen."

