

Jesus Blesses Children

Grades
3-4

BELONG

MARK 10:13-16

What's happening in this story?

Just before this passage, the Pharisees were quizzing Jesus about divorce. The focus of his response was decidedly about God's promotion of justice for those whom society tends to treat as inferior. Now, as the disciples would follow societal conventions and keep children from approaching Jesus, he welcomes them and holds them up as models of discipleship.

What does this story mean for kids?

While children were often mistreated or ignored in Jesus' day, he wanted people to know that the little ones were valued members of the kingdom of God. In fact, he even affirmed them as examples for grown-ups of how to receive the kingdom! Kids can rest in Jesus' love just as he invited their New Testament counterparts to do—without having to act like miniature adults. They can also demonstrate Jesus' message by welcoming all people in their church, school, and community.

Why this theme?

Jesus frequently redefines stereotypical definitions of who's "in" and who's "out." It's a tension in his whole ministry that teaches us about God's character and grace.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Kids this age sometimes struggle with being told no because it makes them feel less valued. Help kids remember that even when they feel like they should get to do something but aren't allowed to, they are still valued greatly, by their parents and teachers and especially in God's kingdom.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- White paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Crayons (green)

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Whirl Classroom Song CD
- CD player
- Chenille stems (2 per kid)
- Ink pads (several colors)
- Magazines with images of children/families
- Hand wipes

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

On a large piece of paper, write: "Welcome to the Wacky Dance Family. Every move belongs." Invite kids to think of wacky dance moves to teach each other. Play music from the Whirl Classroom Song CD as kids share their moves.

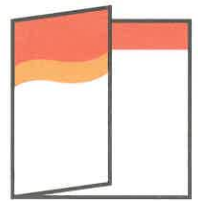
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

How do you know you belong somewhere? Allow time for kids to discuss. **We spend more time than we realize trying to figure out where we belong: in friendships at school, in sports teams or music groups, even in our families. In today's story, the disciples think they know who belongs in God's kingdom and who doesn't. But Jesus surprises them by saying that everyone belongs.**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for showing us that we belong in your family. Help us to let others know they belong too. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and chenille stems.

Jesus tells us that with God, we always belong. He shows us that kids belong in God's kingdom too. Twist two chenille stems into a shape that represents you. Place it in the center of the hands



on your leaflet. Allow time for kids to do the activity. **Jesus cares for each of us. You belong here!**

Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Have there been times when you felt that adults didn't understand you or wouldn't listen to what you had to say? Have you ever had a good idea, but found that no one would listen? How did that make you feel? Watch to see who that happens to in today's video.

View Episode 9, "Youthful Nuisance," on the Year Gold Winter Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What were Gabe and Ruby trying to do?**
- **How were the planners interrupted?**
- **What kept them from listening to the younger kids?**
- **What might have been different if they had listened to the younger kids?**
- **Talk about times when it's important for kids to listen to adults and for adults to listen to kids.**



Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is in the book of Mark. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from Mark, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1198.



In this story, Jesus is teaching the disciples, but they keep getting interrupted. Parents are bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed. The disciples become frustrated because they think the children aren't worthy of learning from their great teacher. But Jesus has another idea.

Help kids find Mark 10:13-16 and read it in this creative way together: Read this passage aloud to the group, pausing after each time you say "children" or "child" for kids to say, "Like me!" Once you finish reading, invite kids to take turns gently laying their hand on the shoulder of the child to their right while saying, "You are a child of God."

Invite kids to read what Ruby says about Mark 10:13-16.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- How does it feel to know that Jesus cares about you?
- Why do you think Jesus cares about kids so much?
- I wonder why the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus.
- Jesus blessed the children. How do you bless others by just being yourself?
- What does it mean to *belong*?

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Belong*. Invite kids to press their finger on an ink pad and stick their fingerprint on or near the box by *Belong*. In God's kingdom, we all belong.



BIBLE BIT

Jesus shows what it means to have a "childlike" faith. Children see the world anew and accept grace easily. When adults lose sight of the wonder of the gospel, they forget its center.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, have the kids shout, "No! Listen to the kids!" when the older kids reject the younger ones' ideas.

OUR CHURCH

Work with other Sunday school groups to create a banner of kids' handprints that says "Jesus blesses us!"

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out magazines, scissors, and glue sticks.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **Name some of the groups you belong to.** Ideas might include family, friends, sports teams, music groups, church, and so on.
2. **Look at the places named on your square. Pick one of those places and share one story about a time you felt like you belonged there.** Give kids time to share. **Are there places where you feel more like you belong than others? Why or why not?**
3. **Look through the magazines. Work in small groups to find, cut out, and glue images of people or things that belong in each place.**
4. As kids work, encourage them to talk about how each place is made better by the people or things they choose. **What's a place that's not listed on the leaflet where you would like to belong?**
5. **In which places did you glue pictures of kids? How do you know kids are welcome in those places?**
6. **Were there any places named on your leaflet where you don't think kids belong? Why or why not?**
7. When kids finish, read the title together: **"In God's Kingdom Everyone Belongs!"**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Jesus could not have been clearer: **Children are important, valued people in God's kingdom. God's people belong together in the community of their church. If you see someone at school or on the playground who seems to feel like they don't belong, what can you do to make them feel welcome?**

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out green crayons.

A green light tells us to "go." Change this light to green by coloring in the bottom light. Take the chenille stem figure of yourself that you made earlier. Place it next to the green light. Think of a place where you know you belong. Write it inside the street sign.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.