



January 17, 2021
“For the Love of Children”
Matthew 18-19
Pastor Gary Hamrick

The Bible teaches us that God has a big heart for all people, but especially so for children. Between Matthew 18-19, children are mentioned nine times. In particular, those references teach us the following: 1) the example of children; 2) the warning against harming children; 3) the angelic protection of children; and 4) the eternal reward for children. Have you ever wondered what happens to children when they die before they have an opportunity to accept Jesus? What happens to the souls of the aborted or miscarried babies? What can we learn from children? Pastor Gary addresses these questions and he shares about the value and importance of children in this Sanctity of Life message.

Background

1. Pastor Gary said, “[There are] nine references [to children] in just a chapter and a half that stood out to me as a central theme. These references communicate the value and importance of children to the heart of God. And as I was contemplating all of that I happened to realize that today just happens to be the Sanctity of Life Sunday. Now, sanctity of life is not [just] about children; it includes the sanctity of all human life, but especially those who are dependent upon caregivers for their survival and their wellbeing. So, we are talking about children, [elderly, the poor, and] those who are mentally or physically disabled. [All] human life should be protected from the womb to the tomb.”
 - a. Sanctity of Life Sunday began with a proclamation by President Ronald Reagan on January 13, 1984. ¹
 - i. President Reagan declared January 22nd to be National Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

¹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-98/pdf/STATUTE-98-Pg3549.pdf>

2. The Example Of Children

- a. **Matthew 18:1-5** – *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.’ ”*
- b. Luke’s Gospel tells us the disciples were embroiled in an argument about which one was the greatest.
 - i. **Luke 22:24** – *“Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.”*
 - ii. The Greek word for dispute is *philoneikia*, which means to have a love of strife or an eagerness to contend.²
- c. We can learn a lot from children, especially their fun, spontaneous, and joyful outlook about life.
 - i. Children aren’t full of pride or arrogant like adults.
 - ii. Children, like everyone else, do have natural tendencies to sin.
 - iii. Children are not stressed out about money, politics, etc., and many, many adults could and should take a lesson.
 - iv. Children are open-hearted to God.
 - v. Children had no status whatsoever in society, so to become like a child was to lay down status and rights.
- d. Jesus told the disciples that being humble was key because God humbles those who are proud, but he exalts those who are humble.
 - i. **Proverbs 3:34** – *“Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “Greatness is in leastness.”
 - iii. When a person is too full of self, there is no room for God.
- e. Pastor Gary said, “If you can’t recognize your need for God because you are too full of yourself then you are never going to have a relationship with him. We need to humble ourselves [before God]. ... Humility is something we should always pray to God for but never thank him that we have.”
- f. [Someone has said,] ‘Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.’³

3. The Warning Against Harming Children

- a. **Matthew 18:6** – *“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his*

² <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G5379&t=NKJV>

³ <http://www.cslewis.org/aboutus/faq/quotes-misattributed/>

neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”⁴ (Emphasis added)

- b. Pastor Gary said, “The sin of corrupting children and stealing their innocence is particularly offensive to God. The abuse [exploitation, sex trafficking, abandonment, and murder] of children, these kinds of crimes God will hold people accountable for. ... Children are to be loved and cared for, nurtured and protected, [guided] and disciplined, but never harmed. And to those of you who were harmed as children, let me just say to you, you are not damaged goods. God can heal a broken life and turn you into a vessel of honor. ... He will bring justice to those who [have] inflicted harm.”
 - i. **Psalm 27:10** – *“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.”*
 - ii. **Psalm 68:5** – *“A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.”*

4. The Angelic Protection Of Children

- a. **Matthew 18:10** – *“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven **their angels** always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”* (Emphasis added)
- b. Pastor Gary said, “It seems that what Jesus [was saying is] that angels are specifically assigned to children... and I don’t know that, therefore, we ever lose the assignment. ... That means that all of us still have some kind of a guardian angel assigned to us, which means that there would be billions of angels. ... The Bible says that there are thousands and thousands of angels, [but] we don’t know of a specific number. ... We don’t worship angels [or] celebrate angels... There are probably ways that angels have cared for us and protected us that we have no idea about.”

5. The Eternal Reward Of Children

- a. **Matthew 19:13–15** – *“Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.”*
- b. Pastor Gary said, “I’ve had many questions over the years from people regarding children. In particular, what happens to children when they die before they have an opportunity to make a profession of faith? What happens to the souls of aborted babies or the souls of miscarried babies? [I] believe among other things [Jesus was saying] in Matthew 19 is that they go to heaven. [Jesus] said, ‘[O]f such is the kingdom of heaven.’ ”
- c. **2 Samuel 12:22–23** – *“And [David] said, ‘While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me,*

⁴ <https://www.seetheholyland.net/capernaum/capernaum-20/>

that the child may live?’ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’ ”

- i. David pleaded with God to spare the life of his infant son, but God took the child “home.”
 - ii. When his child died, David was firm in the assurance that his son had entered into the *‘kingdom of heaven.’*
 - iii. Pastor Gary said, “In [this] passage David spoke of a great reunion that he would have one day with that little child because [he believed that when he died], he would go to heaven and be reunited with that child...”
- d. [The] Hebrew people disobeyed God long ago in the wilderness wanderings throughout the Sinai [region] between Egypt [and the] Promised Land, after having gone through four hundred years of slavery. They disobeyed God because they did not believe the promises of God about the Promised Land, [so] God judged them for their disobedience. ... [They] wandered for forty years in the Sinai [region], and never [made] it into the Promised Land, except for Joshua and Caleb from that generation. [However], God did make gracious provision for [the children of the Hebrew people, in that] they would be allowed to go into the Promised Land.
- i. **Deuteronomy 1:39** – *“Moreover, your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.”*
 - ii. The Promised Land
 1. In biblical typology it’s a picture of heaven as the ultimate reward.
 2. The picture is leaving the slavery of sin and entering into a glorious reward.
 3. Moses was a type or picture of the Law, which can never save or gain a person entrance into heaven because it must be by grace.
 4. Joshua, whose name means “the Lord is salvation” and is the same as Jesus’ name in Hebrew, led the people into the Promised Land.
 5. Joshua is a picture of Jesus and a picture of grace.
 6. God made gracious provision for the children!
- e. Pastor Gary said, “There is a doctrine called the age of accountability, which [basically takes the position that] until a child is old enough to discern right from wrong and good from evil, [and] make a decision for Christ, then that child is too young [and therefore] not accountable for [his/her] sin. Now, at what age is a child accountable for [his/her] sin? At what age is a child going to be judged for his or her sin? Well, it’s not defined in the Bible [and there] aren’t specific texts... In Jewish tradition, however, the age for accountability for a boy is thirteen. At the age of thirteen a Jewish boy is considered to have

full rights and responsibilities as a grown man, [and] he becomes a son of the law... bar mitzvah. When a girl turns twelve, she [is considered to] have full rights and responsibilities as a grown woman... bat mitzvah. ... I'm not making the argument that the age is twelve or thirteen; that's just Jewish tradition. God knows the heart of every child, and he knows at what point they are at an age [when] they make personal choices [and have] personal responsibility to trust Christ... [I] do know that whatever that age is, before reaching that age, God makes gracious provision to take that child 'home.'

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 18:1-6](#) and [19:13-15](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's opening remarks concerning Sanctity of Life Sunday. (See #1 above)
3. Read and discuss the points Pastor Gary made concerning the disciples' lack of understanding concerning their argument about which one of them was the greatest. (See #2b and #2c above)
4. Spend time talking about [Proverbs 3:34](#) and Pastor Gary's statement about greatness and humility. (See #2d through #2f above)
5. Read and discuss [Psalm 27:10](#) and [Psalm 68:5](#). (See #3b above)
6. Allow the people in your group to either share their personal experiences or the experiences of others concerning the Lord's care and provision.
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning the severity of judgment for those who corrupt or lead children into sin.
8. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about guardian angels. (See #4b above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the eternal reward for children who die before they have the opportunity to make a personal decision for Christ as Savior and Lord. (See #5b above)
10. Read and discuss [2 Samuel 12:22-23](#) and [Deuteronomy 1:39](#). (See #5c and #5d above)

11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's brief overview of the doctrine of the age of accountability. (See #5e above)
12. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.