

# Jesus Blesses the Children

Matthew 19:13–15, Mark 10:13–16, and Luke 18:15–17 record the same event in Jesus’ ministry—His blessing of little children and His teaching about the kingdom of God using children as an object lesson. While similar in content, each Gospel offers unique emphases. Let’s explore the passage deeply by comparing them side by side, then drawing theological insights, cultural background, and practical applications.

## Parallel Gospel Comparison

| Element              | Matthew 19:13–15                                    | Mark 10:13–16   | Luke 18:15–17   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Who brought them?    | <i>Children were brought to him</i>                 | <i>People were bringing children to Jesus</i>                     | <i>People were bringing even infants to him</i>             |
| Purpose              | <i>That he might lay his hands on them and pray</i> | <i>That he might touch them</i>                                   | <i>That he might touch them</i>                             |
| Disciples’ reaction  | <i>The disciples rebuked the people</i>             | <i>The disciples rebuked them</i>                                 | <i>The disciples rebuked them</i>                           |
| Jesus’ response      | <i>Let the little children come to me...</i>        | <i>He was indignant and said: Let the little children come...</i> | <i>Let the children come to me...</i>                       |
| Kingdom teaching     | <i>To such belongs the kingdom of heaven</i>        | <i>To such belongs the kingdom of God... like a child</i>         | <i>Whoever does not receive the kingdom like a child...</i> |
| Physical interaction | <i>Laid his hands on them</i>                       | <i>Took them in his arms and blessed them, laying hands</i>       | <i>(No mention of physical act)</i>                         |
| Emotional tone       | Implied compassion                                  | <b>Indignant</b> at disciples’ rebuke—shows strong feeling        | Calm correction and teaching                                |

## Key Themes and Exposition

### 1. Jesus Welcomes the Overlooked

- In the 1st-century Jewish culture, children had no legal status, authority, or religious standing. They were loved but not central to public life or spiritual instruction.
- By welcoming children, Jesus:
  - Elevates their value.
  - Honors the humility and dependence children naturally demonstrate. Contrasts the disciples’ pride and preoccupation with status (see earlier dispute in Mark 9:33–37).
- **Mark’s word “indignant”** (ἀγανακτέω) signals that Jesus was not just mildly disapproving—He was deeply displeased. He forcefully corrects His disciples’ misjudgment.

### 2. The Kingdom Belongs to “Such as These”

- Jesus does **not** say the kingdom belongs *only* to children but to those who are *like* them.
- Key childlike qualities relevant here:
  - Humility** (not self-reliant or status-seeking).
    - **Dependence** (trusting others for provision and guidance).
    - **Receptivity** (open to instruction and gifts).
- This teaching is counter-cultural to both the ancient Roman world (where hierarchy and status were paramount) and today’s world of achievement and independence.

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## 3. Blessing Through Physical Touch

- Matthew and Mark highlight that Jesus **lays hands** on the children—symbolizing **blessing, affirmation, and impartation** (cf. Genesis 48:14, Numbers 27:18).
- Mark intensifies this by noting that He **took them in His arms**—an image of warmth, embrace, and personal attention.



## Theological Reflection

- **God's Kingdom is Grace-Oriented:** One enters not by merit, knowledge, or ritual, but by receiving—like a child who receives food or affection without earning it.
- **Jesus as the True Shepherd:** He doesn't just tolerate children—He delights in them. This models divine tenderness and attentiveness.  
**Correcting Misguided Zeal:** The disciples likely thought they were protecting Jesus' time or dignity. But Jesus exposes how spiritual elitism or efficiency can block others from encountering grace.



## Practical Applications

| Audience           | Application   |
|--------------------|---|
| Parents            | Bring your children to Jesus intentionally—through prayer, Scripture, and blessing. |
| Disciples/Teachers | Don't overlook the spiritually hungry or those considered “less important.”         |
| All believers      | Adopt a posture of <b>receptivity, trust, and humility</b> before God.              |
| Church community   | Prioritize children's ministry and make space for the youngest in worship life.     |



## Cross-References

| Theme                     | Reference        | Summary   |
|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| Humility like a child     | Matthew 18:1–4   | “Unless you become like children...”                  |
| Jesus' attention to lowly | Luke 9:48        | “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me.” |
| Children praising God     | Matthew 21:15–16 | “Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies...”  |
| God's care for the humble | Isaiah 57:15     | God dwells with the lowly and contrite.               |