

Kids In Charge

Take a few moments each day this week and read again the stories of some hero youngsters in the Scriptures.

Kid needed for: Courage (Exodus 2:1-8)

Read the story of an older sister and her mother as they protect their baby brother/son, who later became the leader of their nation.



Kid needed for: Conviction (1Samuel 3:1-17)

Imagine for a moment that your child was the one God wanted to speak to. But what happens next may be even more daunting—he has to tell the senior pastor that he’s a terrible father and his sons are a disgrace.



Kid needed for: Confidence (1Samual 17:1-48)

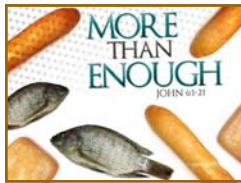
Think about the showdown between David (the shepherd boy) and Goliath (the Philistine warrior giant champion). It sounds like a fable about a giant and a kid.

Kid needed for: Compassion (2 kings 5)

A remarkable girl who’s name we do not even know, who lived her faith under trying circumstances and changed at least two lives, one for the better and one for the worse for generations to come.

Kid needed for: Generosity (John 6)

This New Testament story tells how a boy’s small lunch of two small fish and five bread rolls fed a convention of thousands who had come to hear the Greatest Speaker of their day, Jesus.



Kid needed for: Confrontation (Mark 14:66-72)

Here’s a servant girl, probably an adolescent, tackling an adult about his previous commitment and not willing to back-down. Teenagers have a way of forcing both the Apostle Peter and us into self-honesty and truthfulness.

Kid needed for: Protection (Acts 23:12-35)

It is usually the prerogative of adults to protect their children, but here is an account of a nephew who saves his uncle’s life. Our Heavenly Father always has a way to derail the best laid plans of God’s enemies.

The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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THEY ARE JUST KIDS

By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES

Dr. Tony Campolo, well-known author and sociologist, recalls this personal story. One day while visiting downtown Philadelphia, he got the idea to visit his old boyhood church. Since the time when he was a small lad, he knew the demographics of his suburb had changed a number of times from Caucasian to African-American to Asian and now to nothing in particular.



He drove to what had once been a familiar site but was now a deteriorating building with plywood covering the once picturesque windows of his boyhood house of worship. This current condition saddened him, but he was also curious and, as a sociologist, he began to mull over the questions: What destroys a congregation? What makes a once thriving church slowly die?

He decided to make his boyhood church a special case study. By inquiring with past leaders, he found that the old church records could be found in the basement of the sanctuary, and using a crowbar to open the bolted down door and dusting off the cobwebs of the filing cabinets, he located past annual reports.

“Where do I begin?” he said to himself. “I know—I’ll start with the year I gave my life to Jesus Christ.” He opened the pages and began to read. It was not a particularly great year for the church—the attendance was down, offerings were in decline

and mission activities were dismal. Then he noticed this comment: “There were only three conversions in the previous twelve months and they were *only* children (italics provided).”

Campolo stared at that remark with disbelief and exasperation and thought, *Wait just a moment, I was one of those three kids! And further, I know the life careers of all three—one spent years as a missionary in Africa, the other became a seminary president and I personally gave my life to Christian higher education. What do they mean, just three*

“Our children are the only possessions we can take to heaven.” — anonymous

children! He felt he had his answer as to why that church died: because they had the mindset that those new members “were just children.”

Beginning in 1954, November 20 is designated as “Universal Children’s Day” by the United Nations.¹ Jesus, too, was a true believer in the value and importance of children. You will remember this declaration from Him, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14 NIV). Three of the synoptic Gospel writers included this account. Luke, being a physician, called them babies (Greek *brephos*), whereas the other two writers used the Greek word for young children (Greek *paidion*). What makes this incident so important is that in the over one thousand days of Jesus ministry, this single gesture and those few words from His mouth were powerful enough to be included in the few illustrations of our Master’s life here on earth.

Although this incident has been used as a sermon or presentation by

pastors, Sabbath School teachers and TV and radio speakers, few have captured the real essence of what took place that day. Few spend even a moment on the intense expression in Mark’s account which says that, as the disciples began to push aside those youngsters, “Jesus was *indignant*” (Mark 10:14 NIV, italics provided). After all, the Pharisees and other religious leaders at that moment were in a deep discussion on the important issue of divorce. We are not told how long our Lord tolerated His disciples as they tried to control the crowd and especially the children.

What caused our Savior’s reaction? Was it the hurt expressions on the children’s faces or their expressions of sadness? Whatever it was, suddenly Jesus stopped in the middle of the debate and declared, with emotion and fiery passion, these paraphrased words, *Let the little children come to me. Don’t you dare hinder them! My kingdom belongs to such as these!*

In writing of this experience, Wess Stafford has written, “What Jesus did and said that day were extraordinary. After all, He wasn’t

a political candidate out on the stump, kissing babies for the television cameras. He had no ulterior motive for his action. He simply reached out to children for their own worth, and it no doubt startled everyone.”²

On another occasion, our Lord reminds us yet again that children are significant when the mother of Zebedee’s sons (Matthew 20:20) comes to Jesus requesting that in the new kingdom her two sons be placed on thrones next to Him. Jesus does not miss a beat, but takes a young boy, has him stand in the midst of the disciples, and after he gets their attention, He firmly asserts, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3 NIV). The Master was not talking about a slight modification but a definite turn in the theological road: “You demonstrated out on the road that each of you have the *childish* part down, but I tell you

what I am looking for is that you become *childlike*” (author’s paraphrase). Matthew continues in a grave and serious tone in verse 6, “If anyone causes one of these little one who believes in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

I believe Jesus was looking ahead to our time and the great harm that is being done to His little ones in North America through child exploitation in pornography, incest and dysfunctional homes, and further worldwide through child slave trade, child soldiers, the scourge of AIDS, lack of immunization and hunger. Since we are stewards of our families, may we as adults dedicate ourselves again to the protection, nurture and love of our precious children, not only during children’s month, but every day, week and month of the year.

References:

1. <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/universal-childrens-day>
 2. *Too Small to Ignore*, Wess Stafford, Waterbrook Press, 2009, pg. 197.
- Concepts and illustrations taken from Dr. Wess Stafford’s book, *Too Small To Ignore*, Waterbrook Press, 2009.

“Children: God’s apostles, day by day sent forth to preach of love and hope and peace.” — James Russell Lowell

