



Children of His Kingdom

GOD'S WAY to GREATNESS

LESSON 2 // WELCOMING THE CHILDREN

Jesus wants us to pursue greatness, but in a way that is very different than the world's way. We see this in His answer to His disciples' question about the "greatest" in the kingdom:

Matthew 18:1-5 (NIV) *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.³ And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."*

Clearly, becoming "like little children" and taking the "lowly position" of a child is at the heart of kingdom greatness. But Jesus adds an important insight in verse 5: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

Greatness among Jesus' followers involves welcoming "children" in His name. This doesn't just refer to those who are young in age but to spiritual infants in Christ, fellow believers in God's family and people we have the opportunity to influence for His kingdom.

How do we welcome these "children"? We must:

1. Embrace a welcoming attitude.

The word translated "welcome" means to "receive" (NKJV), "to deliberately and readily take something or someone to oneself. The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness" (MacArthur).

This begins with a heart and attitude that accepts each person as important and valuable. Notice how the Apostle Paul addressed this:

Romans 15:7 (NLT) *Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.*

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (CEV) *We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be, though we once judged Christ in that way.¹⁷ Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.*

Because Jesus has so graciously accepted us and received us into His family, we should embrace this same grace-filled approach to people in His name. Each person is a "child" God loves and wants in His family. We should always be ready to receive them with this same attitude of love and acceptance.

2. Establish a welcoming atmosphere.

What makes you feel “welcomed” or “received” in an unfamiliar situation? How do you know when you are welcome somewhere or with someone?

To feel welcome in unfamiliar settings, a certain atmosphere must be established. You sense this kind of welcoming atmosphere when:

- Preparations have been made for you.
- Warm greetings are extended to you.
- Help, direction, structure and security are available for you.
- Hospitality is offered to you and friendliness surrounds you.
- People genuinely want to know you.

Jesus says that this is the kind of person we are to become. We’re called to “welcome little children in His name.” We are children of His kingdom who should welcome other children as representatives of Christ. This is part of what it means to be great in His kingdom!

It’s important to note that this is both an individual responsibility and a corporate responsibility. Each of us has a responsibility to be a “welcoming person” and we have a responsibility together to be a “welcoming congregation.”

3. Expect to welcome the presence of Jesus.

When we develop and practice a welcoming attitude and atmosphere, we open the door for people to experience the presence of Jesus. In Matthew 18:5, Jesus promises that “whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

This is why it’s imperative that we grow in this area individually and corporately. There are many wandering spiritual children that need to come home to Christ. They need a place to come home. They need to find a “welcoming person” and a “welcoming church.” They need to come in contact with welcoming believers in the workplace and in their neighborhoods.

Let’s commit ourselves not only to becoming child-like, but also to becoming “welcomers” of little children. Jesus promises to be present as we reach out to others in this way!

Discussion Questions

1. Read Romans 15:7 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. How do these verses speak to you about developing and expressing a “welcoming attitude”?
2. In what ways can a welcoming atmosphere at church make a difference? How can you contribute to this kind of atmosphere at your church?
3. Read Matthew 18:5. How does Jesus’ promise in this verse encourage and challenge you to become a more welcoming person?