

A Good Shepherd
Story of Jesus

Let the Children Come

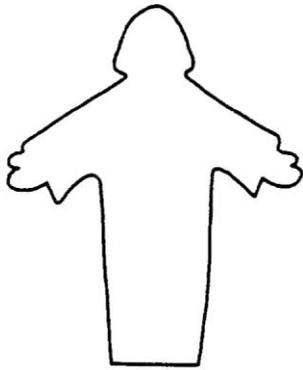
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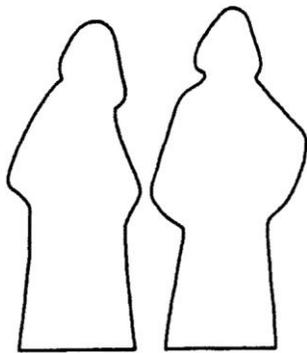
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LET THE CHILDREN COME MATERIALS

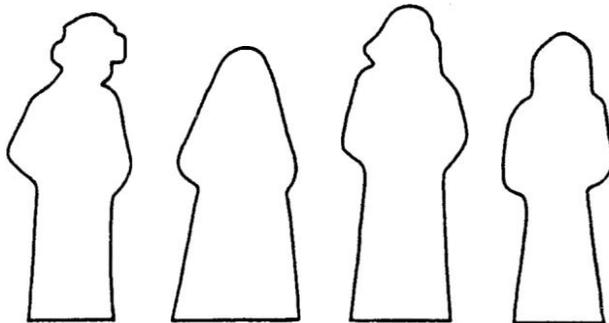
- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden Jesus figure
 - 2 wooden disciple figures
 - 4 wooden parent figures
 - 5 wooden figures of children
 - 2 wooden onlooker figures



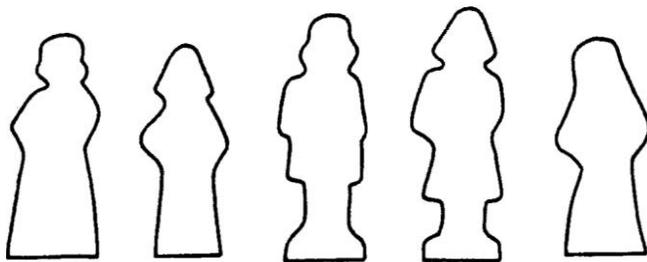
Jesus



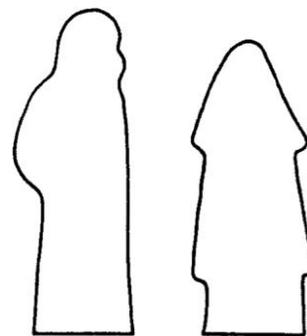
Disciples



Parents



Children



Onlookers

LET THE CHILDREN COME MARK 10:13-16

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand up and go to the shelf. Pick up the story with two hands and return to the circle.

While you are in silence, gently and reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures.

Place Jesus at center right. Place the disciples to the right of him and the two onlooker figures to the right of them.

Place the parents and children on the left of the storytelling area.

Move the figures of the disciples between Jesus and the children and parents. Gesture as though waving someone away.

Move the Jesus figure up to face the disciples.

Use a strong voice and gesture to "come".

Raise your index finger as you speak.

Move the disciples and parents close to you and move the children close to Jesus. Move the Jesus figure to touch each child.

WORDS

Watch very carefully where I go to get this story so you will always know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

There are many words to my story. They are all inside of me. Will you please make silence with me while I find all the words to the story?

Wherever Jesus went with his disciples, many people followed them.

Mothers and fathers knew that Jesus was very special. They brought their little children to Jesus, so he would touch them and bless them.

But the disciples, those who walked with Jesus, became angry. They told the parents to take the children away.

When Jesus heard what the disciples were doing, he became very angry.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and don't try to stop them; for to them belongs the kingdom of God.

I mean it when I say, you must accept the kingdom of God like a child if you expect to enter there. "

Then Jesus took the children near to him. He picked them up and held them. Then he blessed them and laid his hands on them.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder if the children were afraid of the disciples?

I wonder how Jesus' voice sounded when he was angry?

I wonder how it felt to be held in Jesus' arms?

After speaking, place the figures into the basket one at a time.

Watch carefully how I put these pieces back so you will know how to handle them if you decide to make this your work today or another day.

Pick up the basket with two hands and carry it back to its place on the shelf.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will remember where to find it if you decide to make this your work today or another day.

Dismiss the children to their work **ONLY** after everyone has had a chance to choose what they will do.

What will you make your work today? Think about how this story made you feel. Maybe you can draw or paint some of those feelings. Or maybe today you will work with a story and make it your own. Let's begin.

LET THE CHILDREN COME •... TEACHER HELPS

The disciples believed they were helping Jesus. They believed that in keeping these troublesome children out of the way they were allowing their master time and energy for important works, important people. How they misunderstood!

Part of Jesus' ministry that was difficult for his followers to understand was Jesus' unusual desire to care for the powerless. This is exhibited as Jesus ate with tax collectors, talked with prostitutes and touched the untouchable lepers. Jesus loved the children. The scriptures tell us that Jesus became angry with his disciples when they tried to keep the children away. Instead, Jesus made examples of the children, reminding his disciples that to such belong the kingdom of God. The disciples were told that they must come like children, seeking his blessing, to enter the kingdom.

This story is very powerful for children. We need to remember that children are basically powerless. That is, legally at least, less so today than it was in Jesus' day. And yet it's not completely different. Even today a child's wages are legally his parent's until the age of 18 and in some states 21. In the traditions of the Old Testament children were the property of their father. He could sell them if he wished, as slaves, or even have disobedient children put to death. (The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible, Pat Alexander, Batavia: Lion Publishing, 1986, p. 163)

In this story Jesus took those with no power and made them the models for those who would have the greatest reward, a place in God's kingdom. The kingdom will belong to those who come to God like children, open and trusting.

This story says that children were and are important to God. This is the time when the adults are not the models the children are to follow, but rather the children are the ones the adults are to fashion themselves after.

The wondering questions begin by considering if the children were afraid of the disciples. Let the children answer this. Some may rely on the fact that the parents were with their children so they wouldn't be really afraid, while others may feel that the children were scared of the disciples.

We imagine Jesus' voice being kind and gentle in most cases. But here it says that "when Jesus saw it (the children being rebuked), he was indignant." How would Jesus sound if he was indignant, or angry? It's important to children, and adults, to allow a full range of emotions to belong to Jesus. Anger is not bad, even for, or maybe especially for, Jesus. This anger was beneficial for the children and most children will sense the difference between just anger and irrational anger.

The final question is a very different wondering. As we wonder what it would be like to be held in Jesus' arms, we go far away from anger and very close to peace and security. Jesus didn't just talk to the children. He didn't bless them only with words, but with his touch as well. We try to carry this out as we bless each of the children as they leave the room.

This story is included because it speaks on two levels. To children it will say, "There is a special place for me in Jesus' heart and kingdom." To adults it will say, "God's love is a radical inversion of power with much being given to the otherwise powerless." Hopefully, the child we teach, will understand both when he/she becomes an adult.

You may have noticed that we do not capitalize "kingdom" when referring to the "kingdom of God". This is intentional. It's very easy for adults and therefore easier for children to concretize the "kingdom" as a geographical place (much like "heaven" is seen to be above the clouds). We are urging a growth for all of us to understand the "kingdom" as broader than that. It is here and now, within us, around us, and yet to be.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

The disciples didn't want the children to "bother" Jesus. Share a time when you felt like "a bother" to someone. Who was it and what was going on?

Jesus told the adults gathered there that unless they become like a child, they couldn't enter the kingdom of heaven. What characteristics do you think you have that adults don't have?

Think about yourself. What are the things about yourself that you really like? How can you be sure you'll still have those things when you are an adult?