

today for the church to be cleansed, and children brought back into the assembly.

As the children are learning from the adults, the adults can learn from the children. For in **Matthew 18:3**, we read, *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* In the immediate context (**vv. 1-6**), as Jesus teaches on the Kingdom of Heaven, He uses a small child to illustrate true conversion. Before we can be saved we must have a child-like faith. We learn from them the lesson of humility and trust. Children are totally dependent upon their parents for everything. You seldom see a child worrying about where his next meal is going to come from. They look to their parents for all their provisions. We must totally and completely humble ourselves before the Lord and trust Him as our Lord and Savior before we can be saved. This is what we can learn from children: what great importance they are to our congregation! Remember, the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of “little ones.” They are to be in the presence of the Lord.

The whole concept of age-segregated Sunday schools have only been around about 200 years. It was not until the early 1800’s that the first American Sunday School union was organized. Also, age-segregated and peer grouping for education has its roots in evolutionary thinking and is out of the pits of Hell. Many evolutionists believe that the process of evolution takes place in the womb before the child is born and the process must continue after the child is born.

Following this line of reasoning will lead you to many concepts and ideas where children are concerned. The public school system believes in peer grouping because of its embracing the teaching of evolution, and the church is also following the methods of the world. God help us.

In closing, let the children praise the Lord, for out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord is glorified, Amen.

*“Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:
Let them praise the name of the LORD:
for his name alone is excellent;
his glory is above the earth and heaven.”*

Psalms 148:12-13



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*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”*
Acts 16:31

The RICHES OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed
January 2004

“hath appeared to all men.” Titus 2:11

Why Children in Church?

“But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 19:14

+ THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN CHURCH +

The role of children in church (public worship) is clearly defined for us in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The pattern throughout Scripture is family-oriented worship, that is, God commands His people to worship Him as a family. Congregational worship included the entire family (fathers, mothers, and children) as they came together in the presence of the Lord to pray, sing, and preach the Word of God. The children have a vital role in the public meeting and are to always be present with the adults. If not, we will rob them of their spiritual heritage.

“Masters of their families should bring their children and their wives with them to the solemn assembly for religious worship.”

Matthew Henry

If children (toddlers, infants, suckling babes) are to be an important part of the church, why are so many kept from the public worship service today? I believe the answer is the lack of Biblical understanding. Families are divided up into many age-segregated groups in the modern church. This peer grouping is supposed to be a blessing, but actually becomes a curse in that Satan desires to see families divided. Children spend less time with their parents than ever before. So, a family drives to church together and is separated from one another until they get back into the automobile to go home.

This article will examine the truth about family-based worship from a Biblical standpoint.

First of all, in **Exodus 10:8-11**, Pharaoh wanted to keep the children of the Israelites in Egypt and let the adults go into the wilderness to worship their God. But Moses refused Pharaoh's request and said that they must have all the family to go to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. In **Deuteronomy 29:10-13**, the entire family came to gather before the Lord to make a covenant with Him, "*Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*" All were required to hear the words of this covenant, even the children. Again, in **Deuteronomy 31:11-13**, the entire assembly came together as one body. In **Joshua 8:35**, we see the entire congregation coming together to build an altar, worship, and read the Scriptures, "*There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.*" God deemed it necessary that the children be present. In the days of King Jehoshaphat, the enemies of God came against the cities of Judah. The King called the people together in order to seek the Lord for deliverance and even the little ones were present, **II Chronicles 20:13**, "*And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.*" In **Ezra 10:1**, we have another example of the entire family coming together in worship. Also, in **Nehemiah 12:43**, God's people came together to sacrifice and the children were present, "*Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.*" The sacrifice was most important in Israel's worship because it pointed to Christ. Even though the children did not fully understand the significance of the sacrifice, they were there. In **Joel 2:15-17**, the nursing infants were to be a part of the solemn assembly, "*Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom*

go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" The solemn assembly was a time of seriousness, prayer, and repentance, and still the children were commanded to be there. No one was exempt, not even the newlyweds and babies.

One argument that is used is that the children will not comprehend everything, but they are learning. They learn to imitate the adults in worship. They learn to listen, sit still, and show reverence to God's Word. This atmosphere will produce sobriety and maturity. Many parents have a low estimation for their children and treat them as second-class citizens. **Proverbs 22:15** says, "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.*" If children are always together, you only have multiplied foolishness. We must not separate the youth from the wisdom of the older generation, "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*" **Proverbs 13:20**.

In the New Testament the same is true. Nowhere do you see age-segregated worship. The Lord Jesus Christ desired to have children in His presence. For example, in **Mark 9:33-37**, He not only used a child as a sermon illustration, but taught His disciples with a child in His arms, **vs. 36**, "*And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them.*" In **Mark 10:13-16**, Jesus rebukes His disciple for not wanting children present, "*And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*" He actually took the children up in His arms and blessed them. In parallel passages, such as **Matthew 19:13-16**, they are called "little children;" in **Luke 18:15-19**, "infants". In **Matthew 21**, we have the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the temple. After His healing of the blind and lame, **Matthew 21:15** tells us that there were children in the temple proclaiming Him as the King Messiah, "*And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased.*" The word "hosanna" means save now. The chief priests and scribes were very much displeased in **verse 16** with the children honoring the Lord in praise. Jesus makes reference to **Psalm 8:2** in **Matthew 21:16** to the testimony of these children saying, "*Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"* The point is, the Lord will be praised by the young and innocent even if these remain silent (**Matthew 11:25**). Also, in **Psalm 8:2**, it says, . . . "*that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger,*" which was very applicable to the priests and scribes. There is a definite need