

Jesus Blesses the Children

Lesson At-a-Glance

Scripture Reference
Mark 10:13-16

Lesson Focus
Kids matter to Jesus.

Bible Memory Verse
"[Jesus said,] 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them.'"
Mark 10:14

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids make a handprint poster.	Spark Activity Pages, Spark Coloring Pages	Poster-size paper, markers, colored pencils
Circle Time Kids play a game of Would You Rather? to learn more about each other.	Spark Song CD, Spark Songbook	Music source
Opening Prayer Kids will pray a prayer of gratitude that they matter.	None	None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Jesus Blesses the Children Story Kids will use movement to participate in the story.	Spark Story Bibles, Spark NRSV Bible	Pencils
Playing with Jesus Kids will draw pictures of having fun with Jesus.	Leaflets	Markers

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Getting to Jesus Kids will find their way through obstacles to Jesus.	Leaflets	Pens or pencils
Jesus Love Kids Video Kids will be actors in a Jesus Loves Kids video.	None	Video camera or smartphone

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids will identify ways kids matter in their congregation.	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids will pray a "clump prayer."	Spark Family Pages	None

Bible Background

In biblical culture, kids had little or no status. Mark's original readers would not be surprised that Jesus' disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus. Jesus broke with traditional social norms when he invited the children to come to him, held them, and gave them a blessing. He then continued to elevate the status of children by telling the adults that in order to enter God's kingdom, you had to become like a child.

Why This Story Matters

Our society values excellence, winning, competition, and constant productivity for kids and families. This radical story of Jesus blessing kids is countercultural. Even the vulnerable, imperfect, and shunned members of society are important to Jesus. Kids need to hear that the love of Jesus doesn't depend on their achievements. Following Jesus means that everything is different. Kids matter, and kids matter to Jesus. This is the most important takeaway from this story for kids.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of an Activity Page and Coloring Page and set them out for kids to try.

Ahead of time, write the words "Kids Matter" in the center of a poster-size piece of paper. As kids arrive, invite them to trace their handprint on the paper and write their name inside it. Hang the poster in a high-traffic area at church or take a picture of the poster and share it online.

Spark Resources

Spark Activity Pages
Spark Coloring Pages

Supplies

Poster-size paper
Markers
Colored pencils

Circle Time

Kids matter to Jesus. Let the kids in your group know that they matter to you too and get to know them better. Gather in a circle and play a game of Would You Rather? **I'm going to name pairs of options, and you have to choose one of the two as your favorite. If you prefer the first option, stay standing. If you prefer the second option, sit down. There are no right or wrong answers.**

Would you rather eat pizza or vegetables?

Would you rather be with a large group of friends or just a few?

Would you rather have a cat or a dog?

Would you rather go swimming or shopping?

Would you rather play with blocks or balls?

Would you rather play with one friend or lots of friends?

Spark Resources

Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook

Supplies

Music source

It was fun for me to learn more about you. Your likes and dislikes are important to me, and they're important to Jesus too. In our story, Jesus loves kids, blesses them, and tells everyone around him that kids matter!

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Song 1: "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (tracks 11 and 28 on Spark Song CD, page 62 in Spark Songbook)

Song 2: "Jesus Loves Me" (tracks 14 and 31 on Spark Song CD, page 76 in Spark Songbook)

Opening Prayer

Stand in a tight circle and ask each kid to put one hand in the center. **When I say "Amen," throw your hand up in the air and shout another "Amen!"**

Spark Resources

None

God, we are so grateful for kids. We are glad we matter to you. Amen. (Amen!)

Supplies

None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

Jesus Blesses the Children Story

Invite kids with NRSV Bibles to each find and sit with a buddy with a Spark Story Bible.

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bible
Spark NRSV Bible

Today's Bible story is about a time Jesus was teaching a large group of people, including children, about God's love. Every time you hear me say the word "child," give yourself a big hug. Whenever you hear the word "children," give your buddy a high five.

Supplies

Pencils

Read aloud Jesus Blesses the Children on pages 328–333 of the Spark Story Bible.

Next, have buddies show each other where Jesus Blesses the Children is in their own Bibles. Younger kids can work with their buddy to count all the kids in the Spark Story Bible illustrations. Older kids can show their younger buddies where the story starts on page 1113 of the Spark NRSV Bible and can draw pictures of themselves in the margin.

Bible Memory Verse

"[Jesus said,] 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them.'" Mark 10:14

Invite kids to say the verse together a few times, then ask the whole group to stand, linking arms with their buddy, and recite the group saying it. Invite kids to shout the final four words, "do not stop them."

Playing with Jesus

If you had a chance to meet Jesus in person, what would you ask him to do with you? Work with your buddy to figure out what the two of you would do together if you had the chance to play with Jesus. Would you sit and talk with him? Play a game? Go for a walk? Take him to one of your activities? Share a snack? On one half of your leaflet, draw a picture of you and your buddy playing with Jesus. Next, figure out what you might talk about, and write it down on the other half of the leaflet. What would you ask Jesus? How do you think he'd respond?

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Markers

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

Getting to Jesus

Kids mattered to Jesus. Their parents knew that Jesus loved kids, so they brought their kids to see him. Some of Jesus' disciples didn't want him to spend time with kids, so they tried to keep them away. But Jesus wanted to be with the kids! He taught the adults to love God like a child would love God. The adults and disciples were surprised that kids mattered so much to Jesus.

Spark Resources
Leaflets
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
Pens or pencils

In your leaflet there are some obstacles in between Jesus and the children. Complete the pattern with the correct shapes before each obstacle. A new pattern begins after the tree, the disciples, and the snow.

After kids have completed the activity, talk about other obstacles that sometimes keep kids from experiencing the love of Jesus. Then ask for volunteers to read the Did You Know? items aloud. Invite kids to place a sticker or special marking next to the item they find most interesting.

Jesus Loves Kids Video

Kids matter to Jesus. Jesus loves kids. If Jesus came to our church today, how might he let everyone know that he loves kids? Ask kids to share their ideas. I wonder if Jesus might ask you to share your name and one thing about yourself so he could get to know you better. Or maybe Jesus would ask buddies to introduce each other and share one thing about their friend. Make a video of buddies introducing each other and sharing one fun fact about their friend. (For example, this is Frankie, and he loves to read. This is Allie, and she loves stuffed animals.) After all kids have been introduced, ask them to stand in a group and give each other high fives as the group says, **"Kids matter to Jesus!"** Consult your congregation's child safety policy if there's a way to share this video in worship, online, or at some other congregational event.

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Video camera or smartphone

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

Kids matter to Jesus. How does our church show that kids matter? What other things might the congregation do so kids feel loved and important? Review the Fun Facts on the leaflet, then read through the suggestions in Faith on the Go! and ask each kid to tell you what he or she is going to try this week.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
None

Closing Prayer

Distribute Spark Family Pages to kids and encourage them to bring a friend to church to learn about God's love for kids!

Spark Resources
Spark Family Pages

Ask kids to stand close to each other in a group and hold up one finger for each kid in their household. Then pray together.

Supplies
None

Jesus, some of us have lots of kids in our families, and some of us have one. No matter what, we know that we matter to you. Thank you for loving us, and for reminding adults to love us and learn from us. Amen.

As you say goodbye to kids, make sure they take home the leaflet and Family Page.