

## Kids in church.

Over the past 12 months we have spoken of many things. Faith has been a theme for the year as you can see on the wall behind us. Yet we have tried to apply that faith to aspects of life, not only within this congregation but also with Sunday Night and Church on Tuesday.

One of the hardest things about faith is how to pass it on. How to give it to someone else and in particular, how to give it to our kids.

We have just seen some of what the Kids Church program has been about this year. Credit must be given to Margaret and her team. We have Scripture in our local schools and again credit needs to be given to those who fulfill that ministry. Parents here do a great job of bringing up their kids.

Yet the truth of it all is that **We lose 80% of our children and youth from our churches.** Why?

There are a multitude of reasons but I don't want to focus on reasons I want to focus on solutions.

But First I want to debunk a statement that has had me frustrated for 31 years of full time ministry.

It has been said and is said regularly that:

**The children are the future of the church!**

In essence there is a truth to it.

But in process it is crazy.

**Children are not the future of this church, you are!**

Let's keep that in mind while we look at some passages.

Look at Jesus dealing with the future.

### **Matthew 19:13-15 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,

<sup>14</sup> but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

<sup>15</sup> And he laid his hands on them and went away.

A couple of things here:

1. The disciples didn't want the kids around.

We can be like that.

We want the Sunday morning service all quiet and pristine so WE can get what WE want out of it.

Yet, Jesus says bring the kids to me.

A question, should we make our services more kid friendly.

OR

Is there a principle here that extends from children in age to children in spirituality?  
IS our service time here teaching all people about getting closer to Jesus?

Often we want a service that hits our spot, and we want a sermon that fills our needs or shores up our spirituality. Some people have expressed it as wanting a sermon with more meat to it.

I ask the question then: Who feeds those on milk?

Want more meat – get into a bible study that is full of meat lovers. You cannot hope to get all you need for your weeks spiritual development from a half an hour a week sermon.

2. Do not hinder the kids.

That is a concept of not putting blockages in their way. Paul said it like this:

**Romans 14:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

In other words don't put stuff in kids way to make it hard for them.

On the same token, don't put stuff in a spiritually young person that make it hard for them.

In Armidale I met a bloke, Daryl. He was an Army Medic. But as I heard his story, I found out he was disciple and lead to Jesus by my Theology Lecturer Max Davidson. He told me that Max asked Daryl to go to church. And Daryl said, I can't because I don't have a tie. (Ok this was a fair while ago) So rather than have Daryl miss out on Church Max took his off and gave it to Daryl. He removed the obstacle. Not long after that, Daryl became a Christian.

Notice too what Jesus did.

3. <sup>15</sup> And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Laying hands on them was a sign of a couple of things.

- i. He Blessed them. The laying on of hands is a process of passing on blessing.
- ii. The laying on of hands denotes continued concern. This is something we often miss in translation. The person laying the hands on is saying they will continue to be part of their life. (It's a discipleship / mentoring concept.)
- iii. He went away. He let them develop in the own situation.

This is furthered by Jesus in another passage.

**Mark 9:33-37 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were

you discussing on the way?”

<sup>34</sup> But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

<sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”

<sup>36</sup> And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them,

<sup>37</sup> “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

Notice what it is all about. Who’s first? Who is preeminent? And what does Jesus say?

It’s about service not about status.

It’s about others not about ourselves.

It’s about right perspective of ministry not our spiritual desires.

MMm, where does that leave us?

Just where Jesus left the disciples.

### **Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

There is a bucket load in here for us so quickly.

V18 – All authority is with whom – Jesus

Jesus is saying this is the process you follow. This is a directive

V19 – Here’s what we do - make disciples. (That is followers of Jesus)

V20 – Here’s the process –

i. Baptise them

To baptise them is to bring them into our protection, to bring them into our system of learning, to bring them into our family. It is a symbolic initiation. It is a symbolic welcome to the family.

ii. Teach them (everything Jesus already told them)

Teaching them everything takes time!!!!!!

BY the way we are not left alone in this- **And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

So going back to the first concept. The kids aren't the future of the church – You are because you have to teach them and disciple them. **The future of the church depends on how effectively we do the great commission.**