**Children and Church (Matthew 18:1-14)**

***Deputy Senior Pastor Chris Kam***

He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” (Matthew 18: 2-5)

**Introduction**

The Big Idea on the sermon series discussing what does the Bible teach about sex, marriage and being single, is for us to live in undivided devotion to the Lord, no matter what season of life we are in because it's a gift of God. And the greatest gift of all is the grace of God.

I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:35)

Marriage is hard work. Children come from marriage. Being a parent is even harder.

However Pastor Chris offers us a word of caution: that is to nurture the marriage always and not to make the children as idols - so to provide the children a model of a strong mariage in the growing years, and to prepare for the empty nest and yet be able to enjoy each other’s presence.

The Big Idea for the message this week is:
Children are important to God. It takes a village to grow a child.



The church by default acts like the extended family for each of us. The church in itself is the village, no one is alone in their journey. Each member can model and play a part in parenting the children.

That is why Pastor Chris stresses that DUMC is to be a family-friendly church. The definition of a family-friendly church by Ben Freudenburg, author of ‘*The Family-Friendly Church*’ is that it is a “*home centred and church supported ministry where parents are the primary Christian educators in the church, and the family is the God-ordained institution for building faith in young people and for passing faith on from one generation to the next.”*

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What DUMC wants to constitute in the Family life:

* Authenticity: Be accountable to each other
* Community: Help and build each other
* Stewardship: How families can be power homes

# Theological Basis (Matthew 18: 1-14)

## Become like little children (Matthew 18:2-4)

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1)

Disciples asked Jesus “who will be the greatest?” among them as they were imagining that Jesus the long-awaited Messiah was going to deliver them from the clutches of the Roman conquerers.

That was the wrong question to be asked. Jesus had been trying to teach them - and us - to become like little children: helpless and reliant on parents for everything.



Learning to be like children teaches us two things about God:

1. Our relationship with God is like a child with their parents:
- Be dependent on Him; and trust that He will provide for us.
2. Be like God to your children
- Always be loving and generous to them.

## Welcome little children (Matthew 18: 5-6)

“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6)

Children can believe in Jesus and they are members of the covenant community. Do not stumble children by making them feel unwelcome. If a child becomes unruly in church don't give the children/parents ‘the Look’. Be gracious and ask if the parents or the child if they need help. Make the children feel at home here in the church.

**“The Look”**

## Treasure little children (Matthew 18:10, Hebrews 1:14)

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14)

Do not look down on children just because they are young. In Hebrews 1:14, it is said that angels are sent to those who are not yet Christian in order to keep watch over them - especially when they are children. The Father does not want any one of His sheep to be lost; it is our responsibility as a church to treasure the children and make sure we do not stumble them in their journey in faith.

# Practical basis

There are 3 reasons why people stay in church: a sense of belonging, a sense of encounter with God and a sense of purpose. It is the same for children as it is for adults.

## Sense of belonging for children

Faith is communicated and taught through relationship(s) with one another. Children at the age of 6 and below are a handful for the parents. However In a family-friendly environment, the church can provide a sense of belonging to the children and opens the way for children to be excited about church.

## Sense of encounter with God for children

The volunteers at the Children Church are not the primary educators of children. It is the parents’ responsibility to disciple and teach their own children.



Rest assured that even though the children run around and play, that they are learning about theology, discipline, honouring God, and importance of Word of God by coming to church. They are watching everyone, not just their parents. They are watching how the church worships, prays, gives, and partakes in the holy sacraments every time we come together for the weekend celebration.

Parents, bring your children to attend celebration, and train them to be in church. Church, be patient and understanding of children and their behaviours they sometime exhibit, and be a good model to them as well.

## Sense of purpose for children

Start them young. Get them into the rhythm of going to church that it becomes part of their lives so that when the time comes for them to face the world as an adult, going to church is a part of them. Be vigilant to keep God foremost in your minds. Live in undivided devotion to the Lord and do not let your children become your idols.

Pastor Chris achknowledges that being a young parent is tough. Having said that, he advises that young parents should allow no longer than 6 months to get used to their new baby. After which, get back into the rhythm of church by serving and attending celebrations on a regular basis. Keep in mind that the church is the village in helping you raise your child.

**Conclusion**

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10: 13-16)

Jesus loves the little children. Let us build this church for the children so that they will grow up loving Jesus. Dedicate your children to God by saying this prayer:

*“Dear Lord, we bring our child/children, before You. We sincerely dedicate this precious life to You.*

*You have given this child to us and we accept this responsibility with humility, knowing that it is through You that we are empowered to be Godly parents. Let our lives and marriage bring great blessing and security to the child. Lord, write into his/her heart Your words of wisdom so that he/she may not depart from them when he / she grows up. Give us your wisdom to guide him/her in all Your ways. May he/she glorify Your Name all the days of his/her life. In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*“

Sermon summary contributed by Adeliyn Lim

Prayer points contributed by Chrisandra Wong





SERMON: Children and Church

**Pray:**

* Godly and child-like parents to guide children in a proper manner.
* Blessings upon lives and marriages, bringing forth great blessings and security to their children.
* Wisdom upon parents to guide their children in His way.
* We as the church will be understanding, compassionate and a good example to the children in our church.
* Children may not depart from God as they grow up.
* Children to develop sense of belonging, sense of encounter with God and sense of purpose in church.

***Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)***

**MINISTRIES & EVENTS: Children’s Church - World Shapers (18-19th March 2016)**

***A 2-day experience to learn about prayer, or known as the Prayer Adventure where children learn about the importance and power of prayer. 18 March 2016 (Friday) at Hall 4 from 8-10pm and 19th March 2016 (Saturday) at Hall 1 from 9am-4pm. Parents are encouraged to participate on Friday, 18t March.***

**Pray**

* Parents to sign up their children for this event.
* Children to be willing to participate and be blessed by the sessions.
* Each and every child to have a personal encounter with God.
* Wisdom upon organizer and trainer(s) to ensure smooth progress of event.
* Availability of parents to participate on Friday the 18th.

*Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counsellors there is victory. (Proverbs 11:14)MALAYSIA MY NATION:* ***The Rise of Concerned Citizens***

*Earlier Friday, 58 influential leaders, led by former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad signed the Citizens’ Declaration. 3-time Asian best debater, Syed Siddiq Syed Abdul Rahman and his friends started Challenger (Change Led by the Young Generation) to voice out their concerns for the country. Meanwhile, investigations on reported corruptions in the nation are being done in many countries.*

**Pray:**

* Thank God for a group of leaders who cared more for the country’s interests rather than their own fortunes.
* God’s interference and grace upon Malaysia.
* Continuous unity and team spirit of all people across the political spectrum and former foes.
* God to remove all serious and severe threats that the country is facing and struggling with.
* Pressure from the international community to generate conscience and accountability of this nation.
* Well-being and safety of those who are involved in calling for institutional reform, directly and indirectly. May the Lord’s protection be upon them and their loved ones.

***“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. (Matthew 12:25)***

* **A TRANSFORMED WORLD: Turkey Seizes Zaman.**

*Ankara, Turkey: The court ruled on Friday (4th March 2016) that Zaman, the biggest newspaper publication company in Turkey, which has a circulation of some 650,000, should now be run by administrators. It is seen as an effort to silence free press, drawing international criticism over its treatment of journalists. Protest against such injustice by hundreds of Zaman supporter turned violent when riot police fired rubber bullets and tear gas into crowds. It is described as one of the darkest days in the history of the country’s press.*

**Pray:**

* Healing and medical care for those who are injured during the riot.
* The church will arise during this time and bring hope and comfort.
* Free press to continue through other means.
* The European Union to interfere in this issue.
* Situation to turn around and high democratic standards and practices to be in place.
* International pressure to be upon Turkey to do what is righteous.
* Grace and wisdom to be upon Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

***Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. (1 Peter 2:16)***