

Lambs Are Sheep Too

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Statistically, at least one in every five people within the church is under 12 years old, meaning they form a large part of who we are as a body. Everyone who is a member of God's family has the wonderful privilege and responsibility of playing their part in [raising children](#) to become passionate and devoted followers of Jesus. The same Holy Spirit that convicts and strengthens us is available to them. The same Gospel that saves us as adults is also preached to them and therefore has the power to save and transform them.

When Jesus was 12 years old, He was found in the temple speaking with the leaders and already engaged with others in "His Father's house" (Luke 2:41 – 52). Our role as leaders, and fellow believers, is to train our children to become actively involved in church life and, in so doing, activate their faith and passion for our Fathers' household. The Father's business is a family affair, which means that all of us involved in the local church are, either directly or indirectly, included in shaping its children's destinies and, thus, the church's future. [Discipling our little ones](#) is intentional and inclusive, where all the "grandparents, moms, dads, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters" are called to be both models and mentors. A healthy expression of discipleship is both taught and caught.

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We need to create a culture where our children are loved and nurtured to become the Jesus lovers we want them to be. They are not projects but little lambs who need to grow up in an atmosphere of love and care.

Creating an Atmosphere Where Children Are Welcomed

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. Then he said to them, "I can guarantee this

truth: Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me. – Matthew 18:1-5 (GW)

1. Recognise the Worth of Every Child

Jesus calls every child into a relationship with Himself, and He invites the children to stand amongst them. When we invite children into our lives, we acknowledge not merely their physical presence but how much we value them as part of the family. With each child we intentionally invite to be amongst us, we are saying that we see their worth and destiny as part of the church; that they belong here and have a place in this family.

2. Radical Discipleship Is for All

The beautiful and challenging message of the Gospel is valid for everyone, irrespective of race, culture, language and age. We are all called to an authentic, Jesus-glorifying discipleship journey, where hearts are totally surrendered to Jesus and His Word. This is probably why Jesus said that no one can enter His kingdom or His family without a childlike faith. It is how we enter into an adventure with Jesus, sustained by grace.

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Creating an atmosphere within the church where children can experience a personal encounter with God themselves is probably the single most important key to true discipleship. All of us need to embrace and live out a personal relationship with Jesus, where truth confronts and transforms us through the Holy Spirit. Humbling ourselves with a childlike heart is vital in modelling the lifestyle Jesus showed us to our children, and this will shape their understanding of what it looks like to follow Jesus.

God desires an honest and transparent relationship with us, fostering a culture of authenticity in how we relate to God and each other. Merely jumping through spiritual hoops will not suffice both in the Kingdom and before our children. They will catch what we have and not merely what we say we have.

3. Reward Is Found in Eternity

True greatness in the present kingdom comes only when our highest priority is making God look great in and through our lives. And our greatest reward is found with God Himself, in eternity, together with all those whose lives have been changed by the Gospel. We need to teach and model to our children that this world is not our home and that what we have in Jesus is infinitely more valuable than anything we may possess or strive for in this world.

The truth is that lambs become sheep, who then reproduce after themselves. For this reason, intentionally cultivating a healthy, inclusive [family culture](#) that embraces these little ones is vital in establishing healthy churches that grow and impact communities.