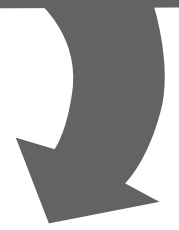




Welcome!



“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).

- What does it mean to have childlike faith?
- Jesus genuinely cared about children; how can you show that same caring in your ministry?

▼ Training Session

Jesus welcomed children and wanted relationships with them. Though he was surrounded on all sides by throngs of people, Jesus nurtured the children in his midst. We'd do well to follow his example.

Take the initiative to get to know the children in your class. Here are a few easy tips to help you get started:

- **Talk eye to eye.** If you're teaching younger children, squat down so you can make direct eye contact.
- **Greet kids by name.** Let your students know that you're glad they're in class!
- **Show kids you value them by being in class on time and having quality supplies ready.** Periodically go through your supply closet to make sure crayons and pencils are sharpened and game balls are inflated.
- **Find out what sports your students play and what their favorite (or least favorite) school subjects are.** Jot notes so you can remember to ask the next week how the soccer game went. You could even go to the soccer game!
- **Offer to pray for your students—then pray!** Follow up the next week on whatever the prayer request was. Let kids know that you've been praying for them.
- **Engage kids in meaningful conversation, using open-ended questions rather than questions that require a “yes” or “no” answer.** For example, you'll learn far more by asking, “When is a time you had to forgive someone?” than by asking “Have you ever forgiven someone?” Kids know you're interested in them and their answers when you ask open-ended questions.

And nothing communicates care like listening when kids talk.

Make your kids feel cherished. Most adults don't make the effort to truly see children. Be the exception to the rule and you'll quickly become a favorite grown-up!





Take this training deeper as you think over these questions:

- How welcome do the kids in your class really feel? How do you know?
- What can you do better to show your students that you value them?
- How well do you really listen to your students? How can you listen better?

▼ Journal

*Lord, please give me the energy and imagination to truly welcome children to my class.
Help me to follow your example by...*

You have the awesome opportunity to welcome children into the kingdom of God. Be assured that the little things you do and say in class can have an eternal impact. Rely on Jesus to help you welcome your students, just as he did.

▼ Application

Try this little self-awareness test. For each person in class, make a list of what you know about that child—likes and dislikes, sports, musical instruments, siblings, and special needs.

Then decide what you can do to foster a deeper relationship with each student. Commit to one simple idea to make each child feel more valued and welcomed in class. For example, you might simply ask a student how basketball is going or write a child a brief note of appreciation. Whatever you do, you'll be making a positive impact on that child's life!