

Chapter 3

JESUS' MINISTRY TO CHILDREN



Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus took time to minister to the children. Both the Scripture and the pen of inspiration indicated very clearly the value He placed on children. His ministry to them included:

1. He blessed and prayed for the children. When mothers brought their little ones to Jesus, the disciples tried to drive them away. However, Jesus rebuked them instead. Then He placed His hands on the children, blessed them, and prayed for them (Matthew 19:14).

2. He affirmed the children. Jesus declared affirmatively that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children, too. In fact, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it (Mark 10:15). Here He identifies an important criterion for entering God's kingdom as being trusting and humble as a child.

On another occasion when Jesus was asked by His disciples who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, He placed a little child in their midst, "And He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3, NIV). Here again, Jesus underscores the importance of learning from a child. He mentions one of the characteristics in Matt. 18:4: "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

3. He befriended the children. He enjoyed the little things they did and even the flowers they brought Him. E. G. White writes: "As the children gathered the wildflowers so abundantly around them, and crowded up to present to Him their offerings, He received them gladly, smiled upon them, and expressed His joy at seeing so many varieties of flowers."—*Upward Look*, p. 57.

4. He participated with the children. Jesus not only watched the children at play, but He got involved with them in their activities. Again, E. G. White writes: "Christ watched children at their play, and often expressed His approval when they gained an innocent victory over something they were determined to do. He sang to children in sweet and blessed words. They knew that He loved them. He never frowned on them. He shared their childish joys and sorrows. Often He would gather flowers, and after pointing out their beauties to the children, would leave them with them as a gift. He had made the flowers and He delighted to point out their beauties."—*Upward Look*, p. 57.