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Matthew 18:1-7

1. “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’
2. And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,
3. and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
4. ‘Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
5. ‘And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;
6. but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
7. ‘Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!’”

In this text, Jesus is obviously very concerned about the children. And so well should we be also.

In verse 6, Jesus says, “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be

better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Personally, I’ve often thought that drowning would be such a horrible way to die.

So this illustration of Jesus’ should be a vivid warning to us all, but especially for parents. Our children are given to us, as parents, by God. And they are our primary responsibility for discipleship. This is especially true for dads. Ephesians 6:4 commands, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The word “discipline” used here entails not only chastisement and punishment, but also a balance of reward and praise as appropriate. Ultimately the idea conveyed here is “training in self-control.” Colossians 3:21 puts it this way: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so they will not lose heart.”

Dads, when we are inconsistent, when we don’t follow through with what we say, or neglect giving our children the time they need, we exasperate our children. There are so many frustrated, angry young people today. Dads, we beg you, don’t be a stumbling block to your children.

Today the so-called experts say that quality time with our children is enough, and makes up for the lack of quantity of time we spend with our kids. That’s a bunch of hog-wash! More often than not, this is a rationalization for the little or no time parents give to their children.

Oh, we are always so busy. Many succumb to the pursuit of material things. Others are pulled away by various good and even noble causes. Myself, as a teacher of God's word, have to be constantly vigilant about over-commitment to others, because of the great needs and open-endedness of the task.

Parents, your children are given to you by God, specifically and deliberately. And we have them for only a short time. And like it or not, we are the greatest influence in setting the course of their lives. God designed it this way.

Oh! What an overwhelming responsibility! I fall to my knees and cry out to God for His love and wisdom. Help me to be the dad I need to be for the children You have given to me.

But, oh, what joy our children can be. According to this morning's text, Jesus says in verse 5, "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me." We directly serve Christ--face to face--when we take responsibility to love and train our children.

The children are at the top of Jesus' list. And so should they be on ours!