

Word Notes Sunday 15/07/2012 Jan Hodge
Children & the Church

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Nehemiah 8:1-8

When Ezra read out the Book of the Law, and then with his helpers “*gave sense*” or taught the people, it was to “*the men and the women, and those that could understand*” (KJV) that they spoke. If listeners on that day were not men or women and yet were still able to understand they must have been children. In the same way at NCC we worship together as a family and follow this by age-appropriate teaching. On Sundays at NCC all the family are together in the worship time, which includes space for the Lord to speak prophetically, so the children are able to hear and either ask questions or respond. As adults we should be looking out for them, assisting them in hearing what God has said and helping them take part – always remembering both how children listen and for how long they can give their attention to one thing.

Jesus also included children in his ministry of lifting up those of low status and teaching them about the Kingdom (Mark 10:13-16). Children were not held to be important in the pecking order of society then and even today we honour businessmen, politicians and many others above those who nurture and educate our children. If children were important to Jesus then surely we should meet our responsibilities to them too. This is not limited to preparing them for “their turn” as “the church of tomorrow”, they are part of the church today and Jesus makes this clear in Matt 21:16 – the children were the ones still on board with singing Jesus’ praises as Messiah while the religious leaders were complaining of his actions and their words in the Temple.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 is a well know summary of the Law – Jesus uses it himself; yet it also includes an imperative (a command) to teach the children, not just in the temple, but through life lived together. Worshipping together and the children’s teaching on Sundays is a strength which the fellowship here has always sought to maintain and has borne good fruit in the “grand-child” generation in our fellowship today, yet this needs to be part of a life lived for God together with our young people to really fulfil all that God has for them – and us.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Discuss what Jesus words and actions in Mark 10:13-16 means both to adults and children:

1. What does this tell us about the role of children in a church setting?
2. Adults and children are not the same in understanding and maturity so how practically is their role worked out?
3. What does the passage say about your role, your attitudes and your relationship with God?

Read Matt 21:1-16

1. Who among the crowds welcoming Jesus had the shorter attention span adults or children? Why might this have been?
2. Why were the religious leaders upset by what the children said?
3. Were the children truly listened to or dismissed as troublesome? How then should we regard children who disrupt our nicely planned meetings?

How will you see children in the church in future – and what is your role in accepting them and nurturing them?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

We have recently started a youth initiative: Energize and a number from within NCC have risen up to see this through. Will you pray for this regularly and in earnest to see the “missing generation” in NCC refilled?