

I Samuel 17:32-37, 41-45, 48-49
August 23, 2009, Children's Sunday

Hampton Baptist
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"Children Can Teach Us Too"

Today's worship service has shown us that children can *lead* us. Our children have led us in sentences of praise, prayer, in Scripture reading, and in other aspects of worship. The children worked with our ushers in handing-out the bulletins and led our deacons down front at the time for our offering. I found that mental picture symbolic of the verse atop our worship page, "a little child shall lead them." Our children can *teach* us too. As a parent, I find that I learn from my children on a regular basis; most parents do as evident by this article entitled "Things I've Learned from my Children..(Honest and No Kidding)." I am not sure who wrote it, but listen to some things that parents have learned from their children:

A king size waterbed holds enough water to fill a 2000 sq. foot house four inches deep. If you spray hair spray on dust bunnies and run over them with roller blades, they will ignite. If you hook a dog leash over a ceiling fan, the motor is not strong enough to rotate a 42 pound boy wearing Batman underwear and a Superman cape. It is strong enough, however, if tied to a paint can, to spread paint on all four walls of a 20 by 20 foot room.

You should not throw baseballs up when the ceiling fan is on. However, when using the ceiling fan as a bat, you have to throw the ball up a few times before you get a hit. A ceiling fan can hit a baseball a long way. The glass in windows (even double pane) doesn't stop a baseball hit by a ceiling fan. When you hear the toilet flush followed by the words "Uh-oh," it's already too late. Brake fluid mixed with Clorox makes smoke, and lots of it. A six-year-old can start a fire with a flint rock even though a thirty-six-year-old man says they can do it only in the movies. Play-dough and Microwave should never be used in the same sentence.

No matter how much Jell-O you put in a swimming pool you still can't walk on water, and pool filters do not like Jell-O. Garbage bags do not make good parachutes. Marbles in gas tanks make lots of noise when driving. Always look in the oven before you turn it on; plastic toys do not like ovens. The fire department in Austin, Texas has a five-minute response time. The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earth worms dizzy; it will however make *cats* dizzy.

Yes, we can learn from our children. Today's Old Testament Lesson highlights the story of David and Goliath. David was only a youth who was much younger and certainly much smaller than the mighty Philistine warrior named Goliath. But we can learn from the child David some valuable truths for our lives today.

Children see things differently. David did not fear Goliath, even though the giant had armor and was much larger. David heard the taunts of the giant, and remembered that God was more powerful than any *giant* problem.

When an adult looks at a patch of dandelions, we see a bunch of weeds that are going to take over our yard. Kids see flowers for Mom and blowing white fluff you can wish on.

When adults hear music they love, and if they know they can't carry a tune or don't have much rhythm, then they generally sit self-consciously and listen. Kids feel the beat and move to it. They sing out the words. If they don't know them, they make up their own.

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When adults feel wind on their faces, they brace themselves against it. They feel it messing up their hair or pulling them back when they walk. Kids close their eyes, spread their arms and fly with it, until they fall to the ground laughing.

When some adults pray, they say “thee” and “thou” and “grant me this, give me that.” Kids say, “Hi God! Thanks for my toys and my friends. Please keep the bad dreams away tonight. Sorry, I don't want to go to Heaven yet. I would miss my Mommy and Daddy.”

When adults see a mud puddle, they step around it. We see muddy shoes and dirty carpets. On the other hand, some kids sit in it. They see dams to build, rivers to cross, and worms to play with.

Children see things differently. There are times when we as adults would be better off if we took a child-like perspective. Even though David was facing a giant problem, he wasn't afraid; he simply trusted in God. Child-like faith should be a goal for all of us.

Children also teach us that what a child has, although it may seem small and insignificant to older people, can be used for great things for God. David was offered the King's armor, but instead he used five small stones. He could have had the latest and most advanced weapons, yet he chose the simplicity of five small stones. David must have been pretty good with a sling; he probably had plenty of practice as a shepherd protecting his sheep. He used what he had, although the soldiers thought it was small and insignificant.

A sobbing little girl stood near a small church from which she had been turned away, because it was too crowded. “I can't go to Sunday School,” she sobbed as the pastor walked by. Seeing her shabby, unkempt appearance, the pastor guessed the reason and, taking her by the hand, took her inside and found a place for her in the Sunday School class. The child was so touched that she went to bed that night thinking of the children who have no place to worship Jesus.

Some two years later, this child died in one of the poor tenant buildings, and the parents called for the kind-hearted pastor, who had befriended their daughter, to handle the final arrangements. As her little body was being moved, a worn and crumpled purse was found which seemed to have been rummaged from some trash dump. Inside was found 57 cents and a note scribbled in childish handwriting which read, “This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can come to Sunday School.”

For two years she had saved for this offering of love. When the pastor tearfully read that note, he knew instantly what he would do. Carrying this note and the cracked, red pocketbook to the pulpit, he told the story of her unselfish love and devotion. He challenged the deacons to get busy and raise enough money for the larger building.

But the story does not end there! A newspaper learned of the story and published it. It was read by a realtor who offered them a parcel of land worth many thousands of dollars. When told that the church could not pay so much, he offered it for 57 cents. Church members made large donations. Checks came from far and wide. Within five years, the little girl's gift had increased to \$250,000---a huge sum for that time (near the turn of the century). Her unselfish love had paid large dividends.

When you are in the city of Philadelphia, look up Temple Baptist Church, with a seating capacity of 3,300 and Temple University, where hundreds of students are trained. Have a look, too, at the Good Samaritan Hospital and at a Sunday School building which houses hundreds of Sunday Schoolers, so that no child in the area will ever need to be outside during Sunday School time.

In one of the rooms of this building may be seen the picture of the sweet face of the little girl

whose 57 cents, so sacrificially saved, made such remarkable history. This is a true story, which goes to show what God can do with what some people see as small and insignificant.

Children can teach us to see things differently. Children can teach us to use what we have, no matter how small, and finally children can teach us that we should take them seriously. No one ever considered the young David to be someone who would defeat the strongest, mightiest Philistine. No one gave him any hope when he said he would go in the name of the Lord of Hosts. Yet it was not the *size* of the warrior that killed the giant; it was the *willingness* to be God's instrument. Goliath did not fall, because David was small; he *fell*, because God can use *everyone*. We are to continue to listen to children and invest in our children, because they have opportunity to change our worlds even when they are young.

A mother took her six-year-old son to a restaurant. He asked if he could say grace. As they bowed their heads he said, "God is good. God is great. Thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if Mom gets me ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen!"

Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby, a woman remarked, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice-cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, the boy burst into tears and asked his mother, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?" As she held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job, and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at the six-year-old and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer."

"Really?" the son asked.

"Cross my heart." Then in a theatrical whisper he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, the mother bought her son some ice cream at the end of the meal. The boy stared at his desert for a moment and then did the unthinkable. He picked up his sundae and, without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes, and my soul is good already."

Even though the boy was only six-years-old and had been hurt by the woman, he still sought to change her world by teaching her a lesson about grace.

Children are teaching us all the time. Granted some of the lessons are associated with ceiling fans, microwaves, washing machines, and other household materials, but some of the instructions are *life* lessons.

I am grateful that God allows the children to teach us that children's perspectives, although seemingly simplistic to adults, have merit; that every gift, no matter how small, can be used by God; and that God can use *every* person, no matter how young or old. To our children, thank *you* for teaching *us*.