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## The Child in the Bible: Chapter 16 "...Child in the Midst..."

from TCITB

Chapter 16 "He Placed a Little Child in the Midst": Jesus, the Kingdom, and Children

by Keith J. White

Mr White explores the Gospel of Matthew in light of the child that Jesus placed in their midst. [TCITB p. 355] He finds ". . . some of the most significant child-related actions and teachings of Jesus" in [Matthew 18:1-14](#). Jesus talks about greatness in His kingdom, child-likeness, welcoming children, God not wanting any to be lost. The author says, ". . . Jesus freely and deliberately chooses a little child as a way of challenging and illuminating the disciples' theological "discussion" or "argument" about the kingdom [TCITB p. 353] Given all the other possible types of people Jesus could have chosen to place in their midst as examples, the author sees children as, among other things, a source of hope.[TCITB p. 354]

Jesus placed a child in their midst. The author asks, what does this mean? He asks whether this act of placing a child in their midst was a running theme or the exception. He says, "The placing of a child in the midst of a theological discussion also prompts questions about one of the central and continuous themes in Matthew's Gospel: the kingdom of heaven." [TCITB p. 354] His footnotes about distinguishing between church and the kingdom of God are worth reading. [TCITB p. 354-5] This chapter is full of detail worth pondering.

The author notes that Matthew's Gospel opens with a child in the center of God's narrative. Matthew 1-2 focuses on Jesus' lineage and childhood. Prophetic scriptures from the Old Testament are fulfilled on

many levels through the birth of this child. Even more significant, the author says, "his birth story is also an account of God placing a child, His beloved Son, at the center of history" - in our midst, as it was. [TCITB p 358] The author tells us Jesus came with a promise about what he would become but about the child Jesus placed in their midst he says, "no promise about what he will become in adulthood is attached." [TCITB p. 359] Still, Jesus used that child to make a point.

Mr. White journeys from birth narrative to John the Baptist, Jesus, and their proclamation of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. He looks at the significance of placing a child in their midst in the context the other stories in Matthew. Jesus, the Beloved Son, is baptized and Mr. White says, "the kingdom is not only near but is revealed in and through his person." [TCITB p. 359]

Mr. White sees "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Matt 6:33) as the theme of [Matt 5:1-7:29](#). Like other contributors to TCITB, White sees Jesus' Sermon on the Mount highlighting "a reversal of expected roles and experiences. . . ." He reminds us that young children don't store up treasure on earth. They don't worry about tomorrow. He says, in the Lord's prayer "'Our Father...'" assumes we are children of a heavenly Father." In footnotes he references learning to say "abba" again and explores Matthew's references to physical children and use of metaphor. [TCITB p. 360] White fills this chapter with insights showing us that the individual references to children are perhaps less significant than the ways that Jesus (and God the Father) are using children to reveal a much bigger picture.

White's discussion of [Matt. 11: 25-26](#) and Peter is worth reading. [TCITB p 361-2] He notes that children "become a key sign of the kingdom after the Transfiguration as Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem (Matt. 17:14-21:16). He notes that ". . . coming down from the mountain Jesus finds a boy suffering from seizures" [TCITB p. 363-4] He looks at Jesus' journey, His teachings about the kingdom, and His references to children in context of one another. He points out details that make the Matthew story of Jesus placing a child in their

midst distinct from the same story in the other Gospels. He makes some wonderful observations. [TCITB p. 364-7]

Something to chew on from a footnote: ". . . one fruitful line of inquiry concerns the congruity between the kingdom of heaven, which is both 'now and not yet,' and children , who are also fully human and yet still in the process of becoming mature adults." [TCITB p. 367]

Mr. White begins his discussion of the last seven chapters of Matthew in light of his previous observations saying, "...the grain of mustard seed is falling to the ground. The time for teaching is over: the pivotal crisis on the way toward the realization of all that this kingdom is and means has arrived." [TCITB p. 369] White says, "From the time Jesus began to teach his disciples about the fact that the Son of Man must suffer and die, the presence of children as signs of the kingdom can be detected." The author elaborates in poignant terms [TCITB p. 369] a much needed description of the kingdom of God. [TCITB p.370]


He summarizes and then concludes having shown us that "children are in a real sense" [not just as metaphor] "God's language in and through which he reveals his true nature and therefore the nature of His kingdom." [TCITB p. 373] He elaborates.

Considering all the authors of this book are used to writing scholarly articles, some chapters are easier to read than others. This is one of the easier chapters to read.

So, my daughter asked, "Mom, how long have you been reading that book? You were reading it when I started college."

"Last September?" Hopefully not September '07 . . .

Two chapters left. I will try to finish before she goes back in four weeks! Two chapters, three posts left...

Posted by margieh at [7/21/2009 07:13:00 AM](#) [0 comments](#) [Links to this post](#) 



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Tuesday, July 14, 2009

## Time and Timelines

Somebody googled "Crafts for Mark".

I'm looking at Mark 1. A prophesy. What do you do with that for children? I like time lines.

You can probably start with a child's own life when they're old enough to have memories. Kindergarten/1st Grade. Do something with seasons. Add the special things you do in class.

Use giant calendar pages with photos of special things that happen in class during your Sunday School year.

Make a visual time line of Bible stories for the wall to give kids a sense of the big picture. Leave space for the future.

Photo albums are, in a sense, visual time lines in a book. Draw pictures of the Bible stories you tell to make a "photo album" for God's family.

Create your time lines with photos or pictures instead of words, even for older kids. Maybe you want pictures of Bible story time and place or symbols instead of images of specific people given we don't know what they looked like. I leave that to your imagination.

Use individual picture of individual stories to place strategically around your room or use a long piece of shelf paper the way you would for a mural. Divide it into suitable time spans (bc and ad - sorry I'm still old school) so they fit around your room.

Make a time line of a child's own life. Add Mom and Dad. Add Grandma and Grandpa or friends the same age as parents and grandparents.

Add Jesus. Then put Isaiah and his prophecy on the time line.

If you leave it up all year you can put a picture of each story you read on the time line. If you have the same basic time line for each classroom you can give the child, your church, Jesus, each Bible story and character a visual place in time over the course of your whole curriculum. The whole time line is like looking faraway without a telephoto lens. A child's life, the life of Jesus, the life of David are close-ups.

Something to play with.

Posted by margieh at [7/14/2009 08:27:00 AM](#) [0 comments](#) [Links to this post](#) 



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