

2. The resistance to change.

The disciples rebuked the parents

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." **Matthew 18:1-6 (NIV)**

3. The invitation to Jesus' heart for children.

Let the little children come to me...

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. **Matthew 18:12-14 (NIV)**

When Jesus is inviting us to become like little children, he is inviting us to forget what lies behind... It is only now that we are in the presence of God. —**Brennan Manning, *Ragamuffin Gospel***

THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF GOD'S AMAZING LOVE

ACT 3: THE FULFILLMENT

BECOMING LIKE CHILDREN

LUKE 18:15-17 (NIV)

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

1. The requirement to become like a child.

...receive the kingdom of God like a little child...

As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. **Psalms 103:13-14 (NIV)**

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! **1 John 3:1 (NIV)**

• imagination • curiosity • trust

(continued on the back page)

March 8, 2020

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—WEEK OF MARCH 8, 2020
THE FULFILLMENT—BECOMING LIKE CHILDREN

CONNECT

- Reflecting back on your week, when did you see or feel God's presence?
- What is the difference between being a child and being childish?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE—Lenten Meditation: *Nothing Else*, by Cody Carnes from the Playlist. Find it on Spotify, iTunes, or YouTube. Be sure to print lyrics from this week's Leader Notes for your group.

Preparation: Lent represents the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, the time when we follow Jesus in his journey to the cross. In walking with Jesus, we learn the pattern of his life that is marked by humility, surrender, and sacrifice. Allow Jesus to guide you as you listen to *Nothing Else*.

Listen Prayerfully: This song is a very personal, honest reflection of one who comes humbly before Jesus. It expresses our soul's deepest desire and longing for God, which is often overshadowed by life's immediate needs, desires, and distractions. It is an opportunity to become aware and confess the lesser desires in order to trust Jesus like a child.

Imagine: Picture yourself with Jesus, sitting in his presence. As you listen, circle any words that capture your attention.

Individual Reflection: (Journal your thoughts)

- As you imagine yourself sitting in Jesus' presence, what do you notice about Jesus? What are you feeling? What do you imagine Jesus is feeling towards you?
- What does your soul need (beyond blessings) from Jesus? How might Jesus be inviting you to become like a child and more fully enjoy his presence?

Respond: What do you want to say to Jesus as you sit in his presence, just as you are right now? Do you believe that God desires to receive, celebrate, and embrace you as his beloved child? Write an honest prayer to express your heart to Jesus.

Together

Share: What were you drawn to as you listened and reflected on *Nothing Else*?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION—Questions to stimulate discussion

- Read Luke 18:15-17 aloud. What stood out to you from this week's passage or message?
- Which of the characteristics of children in the outline (imagination, curiosity, and trust) do you need to recapture in order to come to Jesus "as a child"?
- If we were to internalize Jesus' teaching, how would it shape us differently individually and as a church?
- If "little children" can also represent the vulnerable, those without social status or power, how does "not hindering them" look in your life? In our life together?
- How does becoming like a child help us understand God's heart? How does it help us show the heart of God to others?
- How could we, as a community of Jesus followers, model to our children what it means to enter the kingdom of God like a child? What would that require of us?
- What is it we value in children that teaches us about the way Jesus welcomes us? What is the difference between learning about God's love and experiencing God's love for us or showing God's love to others?
- Based on the Manning quote, what in your life interferes with your being in the "now" with God?

PRAYER and BENEDICTION

Prayer updates: Share your current joys, hopes, or challenges with one another.

Pray for one another: How can you help one another in seeking God's Kingdom as a child?

Closing Benediction: *Come Lord Jesus, rule in our hearts and fill them with love; rule in our minds and fill them with peace; rule in our lives and fill them with your presence. May your Holy Spirit fill us and use us so that the whole world might come to know your love, your peace, and your presence. Amen.*

DAILY PRACTICE—Continue to spend time with God daily (see Reading Plan or APP). Intentionally observe children and the qualities they exhibit. Each day, pray for the children around you, in your family, in our church and in the world, asking Jesus to help you value what God values in them.