



5 day devotional

FTD month
'26

God's word has power in changing lives! This devotion is intended to help believers connect their faith to God's heart for young children.

This five-day devotional explores the love that Jesus has for young children. We see in him a saviour who welcomes babies and declares that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. We will explore what this means for our lives and our churches. We pray that these readings and reflections open our eyes, makes our hearts soft and stirs us into action: embracing and loving the little ones that Jesus himself embraces.

This devotion can be used following the sermon guide for FTD Month 2026, but could also stand alone if your church is not preaching on this topic.

Day 1: Jesus values young children

“¹⁵ 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.” Luke 18:15-16”

When we imagine Jesus surrounded by crowds, teaching, healing, debating with religious leaders, it's easy to picture adults leaning in eagerly. Yet Luke tells us that in the middle of this busy ministry, people were bringing **babies** to Jesus. The Greek word *brephe* describes newborns or even unborn children. Jesus welcomed not only talking, running children, but the smallest, most dependent little ones.

The disciples believed Jesus had more important work to do. They thought babies were distractions. But Jesus turned their thinking upside down. He called the infants to Himself and declared that the kingdom belongs to such as these.

Jesus reminds us: **No child is too small to matter in the kingdom of God.**

Pause and consider:

- Do you see young children, including babies, as central to Jesus' heart?
- Are there ways you overlook or undervalue them?
- How does your heart need to change to more reflect Jesus' heart for other people's children?

Prayer response:

Heavenly Father, help me to see children as you see them: valuable, treasured and part of your kingdom. Help me to see where I am not seeing young children as you see them. Soften my heart, and help me to live faithfully in loving the youngest of children.

Day 2: Do not hinder children



¹⁵ 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. Luke 18:15-16



Babies could not come to Jesus on their own: they needed someone to carry them. When Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me,” it involved parents, too. And the disciples were standing in the way.

It must have been a bit of a shock to the disciples and adults that day: Jesus rebuked them, and said they must not hinder (obstruct or stand in the way) the little children. Their attitudes, their actions and perhaps lack of action, were getting in the way of these parents and children.

Many of us might do the same in subtle ways. Sometimes we think children should be quiet, unseen, or “old enough to understand” before being welcomed into church spaces. Sometimes we judge parents, or expect them to meet certain standards before we believe their children are worthy of our attention or the church’s care. We might be the ones who are in the way.

But Jesus does not place conditions on little ones. He simply says: *Let them come*. He would say to us today: remove the barriers that are in the way of parents with young children.

Pause and consider:

- Have my attitudes or actions made it harder for families to approach Jesus?
- Have I judged, ignored, or dismissed parents or their little ones?

Prayer response:

Lord Jesus, I pray that I would have eyes to see the parents and young children in my community. Help me to notice and find ways of helping them bring their little children to you. Forgive me for when I have been in the way, and hindered them from coming to you.

*A garden cannot grow if young seedlings are blocked by stones or weeds. In the same way, children cannot grow spiritually if we block their access to God. **Bishop Elphas Radebe***

Day 3: The church is a community where families can thrive

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*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.
Luke 18:16*

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Jesus embracing little children is a powerful image: he is declaring, as the Son of God, that children belong. They matter. They are mine.

These young lives are valuable to God. In addition, what a child experiences during these early days has a big impact on their life course. The first thousand days, from conception to age two, form the foundation for a child's future learning, health, relationships, and emotional wellbeing. This season is full of both opportunity and vulnerability. Parents feel the weight of responsibility deeply, often while exhausted, overwhelmed, or isolated.

The church can become a community where parents feel strengthened rather than judged; supported rather than hindered. We can help ensure babies receive the nutrition, care, safety, and love essential for healthy development.

Jesus welcomes young children. Let us do the same.

Pause and consider:

- How can our church become a place where families in the first thousand days feel welcomed and supported?
- What practical help can I offer? (eg encouragement, prayer, meals, childcare, presence?)

Prayer response:

Jesus thank you for the gift of your church and the many ways you work through your church to reach and serve the world. Help us as a church community to be giving children a strong start to life. Please show us all how we can play our part with what you have given us.

Day 4: Children: models in the Kingdom

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¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” Luke 18:17

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Jesus did more than welcome children, He used them as models of how adults must approach God. This was shocking in a culture that viewed children as unimportant. But Jesus saw in them something we often lose with age: humility, trust, dependence, and openness.

It is important to remember that being ‘childlike’ does not mean childish. Jesus invites us to shed spiritual pride and return to the posture of the child: being reliant, teachable and eager to receive.

Children in our churches are not just recipients of ministry; they are reminders of what true faith looks like. When they are absent from our community, something essential is missing.

Pause and consider:

- What does a child teach you about trusting God?
- Where is God calling you to depend on Him more deeply?

Prayer response:

Heavenly Father, thank you that your Kingdom is big enough to include the youngest children, and that they are not just recipients, but teachers and models for us all. Help me to learn from the children, to be more reliant upon you and to trust you more and more.

*Jesus is not asking us to stop thinking like adults. He is asking adults to trust God like children. The kingdom is not guarded by status, but opened by Christ. When listeners see Jesus' compassion, they will begin to open to his instructions. Sometimes life teaches us to rely so much on ourselves that we forget how to trust God. Some of us struggle to trust because life has taught us to protect ourselves but Jesus invites us into a different kind of trust: the safe trust of a loving father. **Sitha Mathe***

*Examine your own faith, is it childlike? Trust God fully, depend on Him, and be humble in your service. A child trusts that when their parent lifts them high, they will not fall. God calls us to have that same trust in Him, even when we cannot see the full picture. **Bishop Elphas Radebe***

Day 5: Together we can see children get a strong start to life

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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.” Luke 18:16-17

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We have learned how valuable young children are to Jesus and how important it is that children get a strong start to life. And when we look at the children in our communities and our nation, we might feel despair: so many children are not getting the kind of care that will build the strong foundation they need to flourish and reach the potential that God has put in them. It might break our heart and we can feel overwhelmed.

There are things we can do as believers – in the places and spaces God has put us. This is an incredible reach to people near and far from church. We remember today that God has brought his followers into churches. Working together, there are things that churches can do that individuals can't do. It is a beautiful feature of the local church that they have existing activities and strengths that can be used to reach parents, and to help them bring their little ones to Jesus.

Pause and consider:

- Who are the families God has placed in my life?
- What is in my hands? Think of time, skills, encouragement, resources... What can I offer?
- How can I help bring the youngest children closer to Jesus?

Prayer response:

Lord God, thank you for the local church. You have gifted us with people, with strengths, and with opportunities to bless families. Please show us what we can be doing to give families with young children a strong start to life. Help us honour you with our service to others.