



*Small Group Discussion Guide*



## PREPARATION

### ❑ STUDY

Spend the week studying Mark 10:13–16. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

### ❑ DETERMINE

Determine which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

### ❑ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

### ❑ LANDING POINT

Jesus blesses me with His touch of love and grace so I can bless others with mine.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

# THE POWER OF TOUCH

A mother holds her newborn child through a night of crying. One friend holds the hand of another in a difficult season. A husband embraces his wife after returning from a work trip across the country. There is power in human touch. Scientific research supports this truth. Positive touch promotes physical well-being, reduces stress and encourages healthy behaviors and coping strategies.<sup>1</sup> A lack of touch can have negative effects in someone's development. This is true for adults as well as infants.

We need touch, because touch connects us to others in a powerful, emotional way. We hunger for touch. Why? Because touch reminds us that we aren't alone in this world.

In this series we will explore the power behind touch by looking at stories in the Gospels when Jesus physically touched someone or they physically touched Him. These encounters show that Jesus blesses you with His touch of love and grace so you can bless others with yours.

**Q:** *In what ways do you value touch? Why is it important?*

**Q:** *Recall a time when someone's positive touch had a significant impact on you.*



## LEARN

*Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.*

# COMING TO JESUS

Jesus returned to the region of Judea where His ministry began. Throngs of people followed Him. Often people in the crowd would bring their children to Jesus so He might touch them. The people wanted this “holy man” to bless their child, a common practice at the time.

One day when children were brought to Jesus for a blessing, His disciples quickly rebuked their parents for doing

so. Perhaps the disciples were protecting Jesus. He was a busy man and He only had so much time. Or perhaps their selfish pride led them to think these children were not worthy of Jesus's time and attention. In the ancient world children weren't viewed in the same way they are today. Children had little to no status and were considered second-class citizens by most of the population.<sup>2</sup>

**READ:** *Mark 10:13-16. Split into pairs and retell the story in your own words.*

**Q:** *How do we view children differently today compared to how they were viewed in the ancient world?*

## A TEACHABLE MOMENT

Jesus saw these children differently and used this opportunity to teach His disciples an important lesson about the kingdom of God. Jesus was upset with His disciples because what they were doing was the exact opposite of what He had been teaching. So He told them, "Don't stop these children from coming to me. The kingdom of God belongs to them. If you want to enter the kingdom, you must receive it like one of these children."

Then Jesus embraced each child, laid His hands on them and blessed them. As the disciples looked on, they saw how their Teacher not only loved and accepted those who were low on the social ladder, but that He went above and beyond to bless them with His touch.

**Q:** *Verse 14 says Jesus was "indignant" with His disciples. Why was His anger not sinful?*

**Q:** *When was the last time someone went above and beyond to bless you? Share with the group.*



Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.

What can we learn from Jesus's teaching in this story? We learn three things—about 1) human dignity, 2) the nature of the kingdom and 3) childlike faith.

## UNIQUE AND VALUABLE

First, Jesus gave value and dignity to those society considered irrelevant and unimportant. Jesus understood that every person is created by God in His image. Because of this, every human life has value. Jesus shows us that God values every human life and so should we. Every person you encounter on a daily basis is seen and loved by God. He has a plan for their life just as He has a plan for yours.

Q: What can keep you from giving value and dignity to others?

## RECEIVING THE KINGDOM

Second, Jesus teaches us about the nature of God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is God's rule in your heart, together with all the blessings that come when God is at the center of your life. The kingdom is life as it was meant to be lived. God created you to live in relationship with Him as Father and you as His child. Understanding this relational dynamic can radically change the way you live.

The kingdom of God is a gift meant to be received. You can't buy a pass into the kingdom with your good works. Entrance into the kingdom is a gift freely given to you by the Father because of what Jesus has done. In the words of Warren Wiersbe, "We enter God's kingdom by faith, like little children: helpless, unable to save ourselves, totally dependent on the mercy and grace of God. We enjoy God's kingdom by faith, believing that the Father loves us and will care for our daily needs."<sup>3</sup>

Q: What difference would it make if you saw your relationship with God as a relationship between a Father and His son or daughter?

## CHILD-LIKE FAITH

Third, Jesus gives us an object lesson of true faith, a child. Childlike faith requires total trust and complete dependence on God. Like a child, you accept what God says and does on faith, even if you don't completely understand His actions. Think of a father playing with his son. He throws him up in the air and the child squeals with laughter and says, "Do it again, Daddy! Do it again!" That child has complete trust that his father won't drop him and depends on him to not do that very thing. Also, notice how the child's trust and dependence allow him to freely enjoy his relationship with his father.

Q: *What does childlike faith look like to you? Describe it.*

Q: *Where do you need to make a change in order to have a more childlike faith?*



### LEAD

*Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.*

## OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Jesus accepted those who were helpless, insignificant and could offer Him nothing in return. Jesus had an open-door policy in relationships and so should you. The good news of the gospel is that the kingdom is open to everyone. Regardless of color, social status or wealth, the door is wide open for anyone to come to Jesus.

Jesus's welcoming attitude to all is one we are to carry out in our lives. Open your life and home to others. Let them see what life in God's kingdom is like.

Q: *What's one thing you can do this week to open your life and home to others?*

## A TOUCH OF BLESSING

To touch is an act of love and acceptance. You may not agree with someone's opinions or lifestyle choices, but Jesus

calls you to love them and accept them as someone who bears His image and has inherent dignity. No one should be deemed unworthy of your time and attention. When God brings them into your path, He wants to use you to give others a touch of His love and grace.

To bless is to give honor and grace to those society views as insignificant and irrelevant. Followers of Jesus see others differently. They see opportunities to bless and share the good news that Jesus has opened the way for us to enter the kingdom and live the lives we were made to live. He has opened the way to eternal life, real hope for change and abundant joy and satisfaction in God.

**Q:** *Write down the name of someone who needs a touch of blessing in their life. How will you give it to them? There are people everywhere who need a touch of kindness, grace and the love of Jesus. Who will your group serve through GroupSERVE, coming next Sunday, October 28?*



## PRAY

Pray as a child coming to the Father. Come to Him and acknowledge where it is hard for you to trust and completely depend on Him. Pray for faith like a child to receive His love grace and give it to others.



## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Remind your group of how you will touch a life through GroupSERVE on October 28. Take three minutes to register your group's commitment at <http://signup.pinelake.org/groupserve/>.
- Read Mark 9:33–37 and reflect on how Jesus's teaching relates to this week's passage.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



**WHO WERE THESE CHILDREN?** “The word Mark uses for children (*paidia*) is the same one used of the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus (5:39–41). Here, however, it appears to denote small children (since Jesus took them into his arms). In the parallel passage in his gospel, Luke uses the word *brephē*, which means ‘babies.’”<sup>4</sup>

**BLESSING IN THE BIBLE** Blessing is an act found throughout the story of the Bible. The Old Testament contains multiple instances of blessing. God made a covenant with Abraham and promised that all nations would be blessed through him and his family (Gen. 12:1–3). Jacob blessed his sons before his death (Gen. 48–49). The Mosaic covenant contained blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the ultimate blessing to all nations (Gal. 3:14). The Sermon on the Mount begins with Jesus showing who is blessed in God’s kingdom (Matt. 5:3–12). Jesus commanded His followers to bless those who curse them (Luke 6:28), and Paul gave similar commands in his epistles (Rom. 12:14; 1 Cor. 4:12).<sup>5</sup>

**THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY** Jesus considered the children He encountered to already be part of His kingdom. So what about the age of accountability? Isn’t an awareness of your sin and your need for a Savior a prerequisite for salvation? Pinelake’s position is that a child is innocent and protected by God’s general grace. There comes a time when one moves into awareness of right and wrong, sin and righteousness, obedience and disobedience. It is then that someone becomes accountable and needs to repent and believe in the gospel and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

#### ENDNOTES:

1. Krystine I. Batcho Ph.D., “Are You Hungry for Touch in a Touch-Free World?” *Psychology Today*, June 15, 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/longing-nostalgia/201806/are-you-hungry-touch-in-touch-free-world>.
2. Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew–Mark (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 861.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 145.
4. Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew–Mark (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 861.
5. Donnie R. Vick, “Bless and Curse,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).