

CARING FOR SPROUTS

DAVE GELDART | MATTHEW 18:1-6, 19:13-15 | APRIL 25, 2021

Facebook Live Description:

Join us in person or online for Church in the Club! 10am Sunday mornings at the Boys & Girls Club of Manhattan or right here!

"Caring for Sprouts"

Matthew 18-19

April 25, 2021

Dave Geldart

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WEB: <https://tallgrass.church>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/tallgrasschurch/>

YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0drX4wrsE5n9yLza8HSNIQ>

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*Because God first loved you, you exist to love God and love your neighbors!*

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Set songs
  - a. Is He Worthy?
  - b. Beautiful things
2. Mingle – dismiss 2-4s (3-4 min)
3. Deaver – Announcements
  - a. Welcome, EHD, Guys Group, Prayer
- 4. SERMON TIME**
5. Welcome – introduce myself
  - a. Welcome the kids!
  - b. This weekend I was talking to Benji our oldest, just turned 9 yesterday!
    - i. We were discussing the AGE OLD QUESTION: Who is better? Kids or adults?
    - ii. What do yall think?
6. Pictures (compare between 2 pics of people)
  - a. Ask kids: Who is stronger? **Who can carry more?**
    - i. Child or weightlifter?
  - b. Who is smarter? **"Who do you think knows more".**
    - i. Child or scientist?
  - c. Who has more money?
    - i. Child or rich guy
  - d. Who likes to play Basketball?
    - i. **Ok, you are my experts here** Who would you rather have on your bball team?
      - ii. Child or Michael Jordan
  - e. If you were going to teach people the Bible, who would you rather to go with?

- i. Kids playing pillowfight, our lead pastor, Ben Deaver
  - f. *Seems like adults are the best doesn't it!*
- 7. Mat 18:1-6

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (stop)

  - a. Show pics: Bball player? Rich guy? Strong dude? Adult? .....
  - b. HAVE A KID COME UP AND SIT ON A STOOL, look out
- 8. <sup>2</sup> And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them <sup>3</sup> and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, <sup>6</sup> but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,<sup>[a]</sup> it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
- 9. Kids, did you know that Jesus really thinks yall are the bomb???

  - a. And that he tells adults they need to be more like you kids in some important ways if they're going to be citizens on his Kingdom!
  - b. Isn't that **amazing?**...
  - c. **How does that make you feel hearing that Jesus thinks you are so wonderful?**
  - d. What are some things that KIDS are better at than adults?
    - i. Play – FUN!
    - ii. Singing
    - iii. Dancing
    - iv. Good at changing plans
    - v. Brashness ... unfiltered honesty
      - 1. **sharing how you really feel, even when it doesn't sound nice**
      - 2. **and asking the questions you really wonder, no matter what other people might think**
    - vi. **Humble** – kids are generally humble! They typically know they're not the strongest, or the richest, or the smartest. And so they come just as they are.
  - e. Yes, Jesus thinks adults have a LOT to relearn from children!
  - f. Sometimes people call God's Kingdom the Upside Down kingdom
    - i. God loves flipping things on their head to help people see and love others better.... Especially those who are small and weak, overlooked, and left out
    - ii. **1 Cor 1: <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him.**
  - g. So, kids, -- ANSWER OUT LOUD -- are you important to God?
  - h. Adults, -- ANSWER OUT LOUD -- are these children as important to God as you are?

- i. We got it? → I think so! Lets see if the DISCIPLES Got it
- 10. In the very next chapter, the disciples have a chance to practice what they were just taught
- 11. **Mat 19** <sup>13</sup> Then children were brought to him [Jesus] that he might lay his hands on them and pray.
  - a. **How do you think the disciples will treat the children now?**
- 12. The disciples rebuked the people, <sup>14</sup> but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." <sup>15</sup> And he laid his hands on them and went away.
  - a. OH MAN!
    - i. Jesus had just gotten done teaching his disciples how important children are to God and his Kingdom
    - ii. But did they learn their lesson?
      - 1. NO
    - iii. Because the very next story when people/parents were bringing children to Jesus for him to bless and pray over them, the disciples KEPT THEM AWAY
      - 1. Either they didn't like the kids
      - 2. Or the parents?
      - 3. Or didn't think Jesus wanted to be bothered with such unimportant matters
    - iv. But they BLEW IT
      - 1. The Disciples had not yet absorbed his revolutionary scale of values, in which the 'little ones' were the greatest.
  - b. This story is in all 4 Gospel accounts, each with the same story, but a few different details:
  - c. **In Mark 10, adds this detail: "v 14: But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant"**
    - i. Indignant is a strong word, one we don't use every day
    - ii. Which of these people do you think is INDIGNANT like Jesus when he saw his disciples KEEPING kids from coming close to him?
      - 1. 1 pic someone laughing. Other indignation
    - iii. Yes he was furious and offended. Outraged. Because he saw someone being treated unfairly.
  - d. Jesus was NOT OK with even his followers treating kids like 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens... especially in ways that hindered them coming closer to Him
  - e. They made Jesus seem like he didn't have time for them
  - f. And Jesus was NOT OK with that
  - g. In fact even as his disciples were rebuking the parents for bringing the kids, Jesus stands up and rebukes his disciples IN FRONT OF EVERYONE
  - h. God loves little children... so very much. He wants them to come close to him. Sit on his lap.
    - i. **In Mark 10 it says he took the children in his arms!**
    - ii. His heart is WARM and open to these children, even though they'd done nothing to earn his respect.
    - iii. It wasn't just the well behaved ones ... or the quiet or the extra smart ones.
    - iv. **He delighted in them.**

- v. He wants to bless them and care for ALL of them. Get down on their level and talk with them. Touch them with care and love and blessing and honor.
- vi. **It's likely Jesus was the first non family adult to ever show those children acceptance and delight.**
  - 1. **Perhaps this is the key to something greater that we often miss.**
- i. God wants children to know that they are extremely important to Him
- j. That all, including children, who come to Jesus in childlike trust and dependence, are given free access to Jesus.
  - i. There are no age limits on who can put their trust in Jesus
  - ii. Adults can do it
  - iii. Kids can do it
  - iv. Before the Throne of God, in Christ, we stand shoulder to shoulder in equal standing beside our younger brothers and sisters.... Little children who have placed their trust in Jesus
- k. So Jesus can't stand it when adults intentionally or unintentionally make children feel like they're less important in God's Kingdom.
  - i. In the church.

### 13. Tallgrass Church adults, How are we doing in this area?

14. What is our church culture like when it comes to how we engage our children?
- a. Now, I **say OUR CHILDREN intentionally here**
  - b. I'm not speaking only to the biological parents of these children.
    - i. **All adults set the tone of the emotional environment. Both at home and at church.**
  - c. In the Body of Christ, we're now a big family. So whether you like it or not, the person next to you is your brother or sister, if they've trusted in Jesus.
  - d. And likewise, whether you like it or not, whether you feel it or not, these children are your brothers and sisters too – with EQUAL STANDING in God's Kingdom as you.
    - i. That goes for single people. Married folks without their own kids. Parents who have kids. All of us.
      - 1. **We all play a significant role in the message that is sent to OUR kids.**
    - ii. These are OUR people.
    - iii. **These are OUR kids.**
    - iv. Do you think about them like that?
    - v. **If not, adults, I want to challenge you with the love of Christ to repent!** -- CHANGE your mind, and begin acting out of that new perspective.
    - vi. Our church may just depend on it.
15. A recent survey by the Barna group reconfirmed what has been shown to be true for many years:
- a. Barna 2009: <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>
16. By far, most of the people who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching their 18th birthday
- a. Nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%),
  - b. 21% of three born again Christians made that commitment to Christ between age 13-18
  - c. Only One out of eight born again people (13%) made their profession of faith while 18 to 21 years old.

- d. Less than one out of every four born again Christians (23%) embraced Christ after their twenty-first birthday.
- 17. From a pure numbers perspective, the most important demographic for reaching people with the Gospel are preteen children.
- 18. Said another way, stats show that the most strategic and fruitful ministry in reaching people for Christ should be our Childrens Ministry. At Tallgrass, we call that Sprouts.
- 19. And it's not just a "get them saved" flash in the pan metric. Ministering to young children in particular has loads of deeper benefits:
  - a. That same Barna report showed that
  - b. People who become Christian before their teen years are more likely than those who are converted when older, to remain "absolutely committed" to Christianity through their lifetime.
  - c. It's a well established fact that the values a child learns through their preteen years have a
  - d. Americans who embraced Christ during their high school or college years (i.e., ages 13 through 21) are less likely than other believers to describe themselves as "deeply spiritual." They donate substantially less money to churches than do other Christians, are less likely to be charismatic or Pentecostal, and are less likely to engage in lifestyle evangelism
  - e. **"Families, churches and parachurch ministries must recognize that primary window of opportunity for effectively reaching people with the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection is during the pre-teen years. It is during those years that people develop their frames of reference for the remainder of their life – especially theologically and morally. Consistently explaining and modeling truth principles for young people is the most critical factor in their spiritual development."**
    - i. Love the point that adults are called not only to explain the truth of God and the Gospel to our children, but also to MODEL it to them.
    - ii. Some is caught.... EVEN MORE is taught
      - 1. A hard but strategic reality
      - 2. Not just for parents. For all adults in the Body of Christ to MODEL Christian living to our young children.
    - iii. And it's not just FOR THE CHILDREN's sake. It's for your sake, adults. And mine.
      - 1. Jesus' interactions in these passages focus on him training his disciples for Kingdom living.
      - 2. The way they engaged with kids had a direct bearing on their spiritual lives and their practical understanding of His Kingdom
      - 3. This is true for us too! How we engage with our kids, says a whole lot more about us as adults than it does about our children.
      - 4. This is the Gospel that we have believed: That when WE were helpless in our sin, far more helpless than children, Jesus got down on our level and gave himself for us.
        - a. Even though he was God Almighty—he humbled himself for us... for our Good... to show us the heart of the Father
        - b. God's special brand of love can't exist as mere theory
        - c. It MUST be played out with others
    - iv. We practice out our Christianity with one another, including our children.

**20. 24MIN!!! ---- STRETCH BREAK – get the wiggles out for 10 seconds**

- a. Kids, keep your hands to yourself
- b. Adults, stand up for a sec!
- c. (BY 1040p)

21. We're in this new teaching series looking at NEW GROWTH – seeking to hear from God together about how we can emerge from this hard winter and grow healthy and strong.

- a. Individually
- b. And as a church family

22. Today's topic falls perhaps unexpectedly right in that series!

- a. Today's teaching is called "Caring for Sprouts"
- b. The brand new little plants just poking through the soil
- c. They're small.
- d. They're fragile
- e. They need constant care and attention.
- f. And they're literally the future.

23. When we planted Tallgrass Church 3 years ago, we were like a little sprout of a church. And our little church was heavily weighted with little sprouts – children!

- a. We even called our childrens ministry SPROUTS!

24. We knew from the beginning that care for children would be a big piece of the strategic decisions of our church.

- a. That's why we started meeting on Sunday nights... knew we needed a meeting spot with accommodations for large numbers of children.
- b. So we chose to rent CHBC on Sunday evenings.
- c. And this reality has played out over the years. Choosing to restrict our gathering spots to only ones that have some accommodations for our kids ministry

25. 26MIN ---- Invite up Elisha

- a. Introduce Elisha
  - i. She and Taylor were a Part of the original TG launch team
  - ii. She has an Elementary Ed degree from KSU
  - iii. And for the last couple years has served in our church as Sprouts Coordinator
  - iv. And for the last 6 months has accepted your nomination to join our Elder Team

**b. Q1: How would you describe the culture you've seen and experienced in TGC in relating to our children (THINGS DAVE THOUGHT OF IN ITALICS).**

**i. Q1a: Let's start with the positives – what have you seen that's good/healthy**

1. Our kids are learning about the truth of the gospel. They can recall information from last summer at Longs Park!
2. Our kids have been so resilient and flexible.
3. Our kids love being together in a shared space.
4. A good chunk of our families have put in the effort to bring their kids, even when it's been inconvenient.

**ii. Q1b: What are some of our struggles when it comes to engaging our kids?**

1. Lots of us are in the trenches with young kids, so we are tired. By in large, most families here are just starting to create our family cultures, make decisions on how

to parent, and doing the hard work of cyclebreaking. So, there's a lot of learning as we go...and since we are young both in church years and in demographic years we have a lot of us in the same boat. No one is the expert. This is messy, and since we are a small church with lots of kids, the messiness is magnified when we bring all our young kids together in one space. Its easy to put each other under the microscope unintentionally.

2. There's space for folks to have different preferences and convictions about parenting styles, discipline philosophies, even preferences about expectations in gathering settings. We want to foster a culture where we can talk about these things. Some baseline expectations can be helpful to put us all on the same playing field:
  - a. (like no running wild and yelling inside. Respect the teacher and be willing to follow directions. Respect others by keeping your hands to yourself and saying I'm sorry....)
3. *Different parenting styles*
  - a. *Helicopter vs Detached*
    - i. *we are figuring it out!*
4. *Discipline styles*
  - a. *Is it OK to discipline/punish kids? Or should parents just redirect them? (here are more questions: what does discipline mean? Does it mean to punish or to teach? Is there a difference?! What does that look like in real life? somebody help please)*
5. *Expectations in group/gathering settings*
  - a. *should kids be expected to be quiet and still? Or is it OK for them to be (a little) scattered and running around? (Again, what are reasonable expectations for this? Where is the healthy middle ground in this? The middle ground is always the hardest for us to find.)*
6. *Many people don't ever talk to any TG children*
  - a. *Oblivious*
  - b. *Uncomfortable/unconfident talking to kids*
  - c. *feel irresponsible for interacting with kids or contributing to the culture of how kids feel at TG.*
  - d. *Annoyed with kids*
  - e. *For some its painful to engage children b/c of pain/loss*
    - i. *Those struggling with infertility*
    - ii. *Miscarriage*
    - iii. *Divorce*
    - iv. *loss through adoption (you are a birth parent)*
    - v. *Or loss through death or abortion*
    - vi. *GRACE ABOUND!*
7. *5<sup>th</sup> Sundays/Kids in CG, some love it, others (esp parents with multiple littles) report struggling to engage and pay attention*
8. *Struggle to find enough volunteers for Sprouts ministry to function*
  - a. *Leads to imperfect scenarios – fewer/larger classes, smaller age range for Sprouts classes*

- i. *Can't do as much*
    - ii. *Inconsistency of classes*
  - b. *Very few men choose to engage and serve our children – mostly women (nothing biblical about that, and reinforces some unhealthy cultural ideas: ie – tending the kids is women's work)*
  - c. *Sense that people who "don't feel gifted" to serve with children take a pass from helping with Sprouts*
- c. **Q2: Why did you take this job? What gets you excited and passionate about when it comes to the vision of Sprouts?**
  - i. **I took this job because it was an opportunity to intersect my passion of teaching children with my passion of Jesus and the gospel. There was also potential for me to engage families and other adults in this process, and pass on those skills to them as well. I remember sharing about this in the interview for this job, and it was one thing I also really passionate about. That would be so huge to see that become more of a reality.**
  - ii. *I really missed that after resigning from my classroom. I adore teaching children (especially about Jesus), and I've discovered I love teaching families even more. That's where the real magic happens.*
  - iii. *I saw so much evidence of the knowledge and skills gap as a classroom teacher. It made my heart yearn for a place where I could teach kids, and also pass on knowledge to their parents so that the home could be the most powerful place for positive change in the world. There was potential for this position to have cross over.*
  - iv. **I get excited about the potential for Sprouts to be a place where kids are taught the truth of Jesus, and where any and all safe and loving adults are equipped to do that too. That way those adults can continue that teaching at home or in their life, which is the most important place to live out the gospel. I love love love equipping adults to be empowered with the skills needed to be their best selves, and at the same time amazing teachers for their children.**
  - v. *The way to change a child's life, is to help adults see their role in that.*
- d. **Q3: What do you long to see change in our church culture relating to our youngest Tgians?**
  - i. *It's a blessing and a curse that God has created our children to be incredibly intuitive. Our kids pick up the emotional temperature in a space long before we adults can label it.*
  - ii. *Every adult, parent or not, plays a role in the emotional environment, whether that's at home, school or at church.*
  - iii. **I long for our kids to sense that they are deeply valued, by all of us.**
  - iv. **I hope for Tallgrass to be a church where children leave feeling deeply valued and seen. If we can pull this off, we will have such a greater potential to truly share the message of Jesus with them that will change their life forever, and that will have ripple effects through the generations. That's the Jesus I see in that story. A Jesus who deeply values those children to their core and does not send them the message that they are an inconvenience. Can we do that? I sure hope so.**
  - v. *I sense that we all want that too, but the way that happens is lost in translation.*
  - vi. **Historically, what I've seen at TG is a portion of our kids have come into Sprouts carrying the stress of the adults in their lives, and this stress spreads to other kids, creating an environment that's hard for one person to change (like me). Stress is contagious, but so is CALM. I'd like to see calm spread more than stress.**



- vii. I sense that within Tallgrass, adults by enlarge still expect kids to be seen and not heard, and we have a lot of kids who naturally make noise, so there's tension there for sure. Goes back to "what is a reasonable expectation in this area?"
- viii. It's almost always unintentional. The good new is, the more aware we are of the things we are bringing into Church, the better we will be and the better our kids will be too.
- ix. We, by in large, don't know what that looks like, because it's not a part of our own stories. Most of us have a lot of sadness in this area, especially related to our church story.
- x. Sadly, the American Church has been a place of image management, not a place of safety and transparency, especially for our kids. So we need to give ourselves grace, and acknowledge that. The good news is we get to rewrite our own stories in church through providing this kind of environment for our kids.
- xi. "As children develop, their brains "mirror" their parent's brain. In other words, the parent's own growth and development, or lack of those, impact the child's brain. As parents become more aware and emotionally healthy, their children reap the rewards and move toward health as well. That means that integrating and cultivating your own brain is one of the most loving and generous gifts you can give your children." (Whole Brain Child, xii)
- xii. Its said somewhere that "it's hardest at the beginning, messiest in the middle, and most fruitful at the end". I think we are still in the beginning of creating a culture that truly values children, and doesn't just feel like they are an inconvenience for adults.

**e. Q4: How can we CARE FOR SPROUTS in this coming season?**

**i. Q4a: How about engaging kids personally. What tips do you have for TGians to practice engaging our children well?**

1. *I desire every adult to see their role in our kids lives. Resolve to talk to at least 1 child per Sunday. Say their name, and notice something about them that's good. This is the key to everything.*
  - a. Kneel down to a child's level and look them in the eye
  - b. Say their name and notice at least one positive thing about them.
    - i. "I notice you really like to color."
    - ii. "I notice you love to play with your friends."
    - iii. "I noticed you made a good choice. I'm proud of you."
    - iv. "I enjoy seeing you on Sunday. You're a great kid."
2. We can all set healthy limits for our kids.
  - a. If something is unsafe, or damaging please say something. need to shout or be mean. A CALM and firm voice is powerful, and honoring. Have soft eyes, and a firm voice (is this even possible?! Yes, but it's not easy).
    - i. "Joey, stop, you cannot touch people that way."
    - ii. "No, you must stay out of the street."
    - iii. "The office is off limits. You may play in the gym."
    - iv. "you are a great kid having a hard time, you can't do xyz."
3. *Ask them to help you do something (with their parents permission), and be willing for it to be less efficient!*
4. *Choose to pray for a TG kid by name during your next prayer or quiet time*
  - a. *Crazy how praying for someone gives you a heart for them*

ii. **Q4b: Helping with the Sprouts ministry**

1. *Serving in Sprouts on a regular rotation (helpers are great!). I love teaching your children, but I'd love to teach you to teach children even more!*
2. *Serving this summer with summer camp –*
  - a. *Elisha give quick vision and deets?*
    - i. *This summer I have a hope for lots of outdoor FUN. Sprouts is going to continue their way through the Old Testament. Each week is usually a new story, and new Bible character. Right now we are studying Abraham, and your kids have loved singing Father Abraham as it's funny, goofy, and is reinforcing of the story. I hope to carry on that same vibe all through the summer. I'm still thinking through the logistics of space and location. It's possible we may use the field that we did the Easter egg hunt in for many of our outdoor activities. If you've never served in Sprouts before, I'd love to have you jump in and see what we are all about. The summer tends to be much more casual, which can be a great place to dip your toes in if a classroom setting is a little intimidating.*
    - b. **BE GOOD TO HAVE A PRACTICAL WAY FOR FOLKS TO RESPOND IN THE MOMENT IF THEY WANT TO SIGN UP TO HELP/SERVE**
      - i. **SIGN UP SHEET – in person, also link online (bottom of sprouts pg)**

**26. BY 10:57am Application Questions:**

27. The disciples struggled to live out a Kingdom ethic toward little children
  - a. Failed multiple times.
  - b. These things can be rooted deep. And play out in subtle ways in the way we relate to children.
28. Q1: What does the way you interact with TG children show them about God?
  - a. How might it be consistent with God's actual heart in some ways
  - b. And how might it be inconsistent with God's heart in other ways?
29. Q2: What's one thing you can do to better engage personally with children in our church?
30. Q3: Are you willing to serve in perhaps our church's most strategic ministry, Sprouts in this new season?

by 11am:

**31. Invite up MATTHIAS for another application opportunity: LCM WFL (4min)**

**32. (by 11:04am) PRAY -- ME**

**33. Second Set**

- a. **Jesus Loves Me**
- b. **The Blessing**