

1. “Become like little children”—Matthew 18:1-6 (Did you know, that in Jesus’ day, children—in general—had a different status than they do today. In most case they would have been considered “the others.” While children were honored and desired in Jewish communities and in some Roman households, in the greater culture they were less valued and often exploited—especially girls. A common practice was something called “exposure” which was the abandonment of infants deemed unsuitable or unwanted by parents. They would just leave them somewhere exposed to the elements—most did not die however, but were claimed—primarily reared as slaves or exploited in some other way. As Christianity grew however, Christians led the way in rescuing the abandoned babies—no doubt remembering the teaching of Christ in these texts and valuing the little children as Jesus did—and as we have done today. Yes, we are certainly blessed through our children. Through their innocence trust and faith we catch a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven, Christ says. To all of our young families I say “thank you” for being here and entrusting your children to Christ and his church family. Our Celebration of Life is our way of honoring you—and committing to you as a church: to pray for you, support you and help you in any way we can.)
2. (But I want us to move away from this moment—to imagine the world 18-19 years from now when these little ones will have grown into young adulthood and getting ready for college or the workplace. It is wonderful to celebrate together now, but let’s think ahead. Let’s think about our commitment to you as a church and our commitment together to follow God. It is not necessarily good news that we face. The obstacles seem to be many in bringing our young people to mature faith in Christ. As we look forward—let’s also consider some) Stats (right now—found on the website coldcasechristianity.com—are the young people really leaving the church. I will highlight just some of the data collected there. This data speaks to the challenge we have to bring our kids to mature faith as well as the significant role we as parents have in that)
3. (Kind of overwhelming and a little bit alarming—but we must be up to the task. Going back to our text that means) Welcoming children in the name of Jesus (or doing everything we can within our family and our church family to teach, support, share and reinforce the values of Christ to our children. And yes it may seem daunting; we as parents may feel as if we are somehow not equipped or do not know exactly what to do. Here is what I think of when I feel that way—a commercial for adopt-a-kids program about perfect parenting)
4. **(PLAY VIDEO)**
5. You Don’t Have To Be A Perfect Parent—Deuteronomy 6:4-9
 - a. Love unconditionally (both God and your children)
 - b. Be present
 - c. Prioritize faith (if we do these things, I think both God and our kids will forgive us our mistakes and we will go a long way in building a solid spiritual foundation for them that one day can turn into mature faith of their own)
6. Matthew 19:14