**Vision Document #9 - Children-Honoring**

The sixth and last of six core values at The Well is that we are children-honoring.

We see in Scripture that every child is created in the image of God and is precious to our heavenly Father. God loves children more deeply than we can imagine, and He does not consider them secondary to adults. The adults in Jesus’ day did not esteem children, which made Jesus an anomaly. The adults were rebuked when they assumed that Jesus did not desire little children to come close to Him. Jesus taught that His kingdom belongs especially to children. Jesus taught that we must learn to be like children in the humility of our hearts and the simplicity of our faith if we want to be great in His kingdom. Investing in the next generation is a major theme for the people of God throughout Scripture. Children are not an inconvenience to Christians; they are essential.

Many heroes of Scripture encountered God and served Him at a young age, including Joseph, David, Samuel, Josiah, etc. Jesus demonstrated how miracles could be done by multiplying a little boy’s lunch to feed 5,000 people. Paul was rescued from death because God used a little boy to overhear an ambush plot. Timothy was young when he received a spiritual gifting as Paul laid hands on him. The prophet Joel foretold that God’s Spirit would be poured out on young and old, leading to powerful manifestations such as young people prophesying. The Holy Spirit only comes in one size – and kids do not get a junior Holy Spirit.

We seek to value, esteem, and honor children in everything we do as a church family. We want to *receive* individual children by making space for them in our hearts and lives (Matthew 18:5). We remember their names, establish rapport, pray for their growth and destiny, and encourage them along the way. We look them in the eyes, approach them on their level, and learn to connect with them in a way that they (and their parents) appreciate. Kids find spiritual fathers and mothers and uncles and aunts at The Well. We include children in worship time and teach them to respond to God while being mindful of others. We train them through the Word of God to grow close to Jesus, turn from sin, hear God’s voice, serve God fearlessly, love people, expect miracles, and obey their parents in the Lord. We help kids mature into young men and young women. We help young people become godly adults. We also pray for them soberly, realizing the spiritual war for their soul and destiny.

We make children’s ministry a priority at The Well by strategically investing in the nurture and development of children who will change the world for Jesus. We prioritize partnering with parents to empower and encourage them for the huge task they have of teaching and raising their children.

We seek to make church and our lives a safe place for children. Jesus warned us about grave judgment and consequences for causing children to stumble. Children are trusting, vulnerable, and impressionable. Therefore, we are careful about what we say and do around children because we must steward our influence. We educate and expose them to the realities of life on earth, being careful to protect them when appropriate without sheltering them in a way that is crippling.