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**BLESS THE CHILDREN: THE VOICE OF A SCHOOL BOY**

*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).

Is it possible that a little Apache boy ultimately was responsible for saving not just one but dozens of babies? It was 1914 or 1915. After supper, Missionary E. E. Guenther and his wife Minnie were ready to retire for the night when they heard a knock at the door. The tall missionary opened the door and looked down at a small Apache boy from the mission school. The out-of-breath lad, who obviously had been running, blurted out, **You come quick!** (M. Guenther 1956:40).Guenther threw on his clothes and, thinking the Indian camp was nearby, stepped into his slippers and left with the boy. As it turns out, the missionary and the youth ran at a trot for two miles.

The scene at the camp was one of confusion. Apaches were talking back and forth. The center of their attention was a newborn baby who happened to be born with six fingers on each hand which was “very bad medicine.” One forceful grandmother was persuasive in her argument that the baby be killed in accordance with Apache custom.

Guenther acted quickly and decisively. He picked up a butcher knife, held the blade in the fire, wiped it clean and then sliced off the two extra tiny fingers. He then tore his handkerchief in two and wrapped each tiny hand. The life of the baby girl was spared. She was now “normal.”

Apaches at this time practiced infanticide. A baby born with a deformity or the weaker one of twins was all too often put to death or set out to die. In the years which followed, the Guenthers started receiving into their home such helpless Apache babies as well as babies who had lost their mothers. Other missionaries and their wives did the same. By 1922 the number of dispossessed babies had grown so great that the Guenthers started the first orphanage in the American Southwest, the East Fork Orphanage, or Nursery as it was called (W. Kessel 1987:20). And to think one young Apache boy from the mission school was responsible for saving the first baby by uttering one small sentence—**You come quick!** He knew Jesus and right from wrong. And THE WORD OF THE LORD GROWS.

**QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED**

1. What compelled the boy to act and seek help?

2. Why did the little boy run to the missionary for help instead of someone else?

3. By cutting off the fingers and making the baby “normal” was Missionary Guenther playing along with the Apache notions of infanticide?

4. Should an underfinanced world mission get involved in a humanitarian undertaking like an orphanage?

**THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE**

1. Read Psalm 51:5 and Isaiah 49:5. When does life begin? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Read Psalm 139:13-14 and Acts 17:25,28. Who gives life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Read Psalm 31:15 and Psalm 139:15-16. Who has the right to end a life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Read Genesis 9:6 and Romans 13:1, 4. Who also has the right to end a life as punishment for a capital offense?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Read Jeremiah 19:3, 5-6 and Exodus 20:13. If someone willfully takes the life of a baby, God considers that person to be a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Read Isaiah 55:6 and 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2. Why is it so important that a child live? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT/CHILD BASICS**

1. Parents have responsibilities toward their children.

a. Read 1 Kings 17:12 and 1 Timothy 5:8. Parents have a responsibility to see to their children’s basic \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ needs.

b. Read Deuteronomy 6:6-7 and Proverbs 22:6. Parents have a responsible to see to their children’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_needs.

c. Read Psalm 127:3-5 and Psalm 128:3-4. Parents should consider their children to be

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

d. Read Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21. Parents are not to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ their children.

2. Children have responsibilities toward their parents.

a. Read Exodus 20:12. Children are expected to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ their parents.

b. Read Leviticus 19:3. Children are expected to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ their parents.

c. Read Ephesians 6:1. Children are expected to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ their parents and

superiors.

**EXCURSIS ON JESUS AND CHILDREN**

1. Christ has left us with wonderful teachings and examples of love toward children.

* Jesus observed children (Luke 7:31-32) and family life (Luke 11:7; Matthew 7:11).
* Jesus tended to children’s physical needs by feeding them (Matthew 14:21), by healing them (Matthew 17:14-18; Mark 7:24-30), and even resurrecting them from the dead (Matthew 9:18-25).
* Jesus tended to children’s spiritual needs (Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:13-16).
* Jesus approached children with sensitivity and deep emotion (Mark 10:16, Mark 5:41) and was concerned for their well-being (John 21:15, Luke 23:28).
* Jesus warned people not to mislead or despise children (Matthew 18:6-10).
* Jesus noted that children are under the supervision of God and his angels (Matthew 18:10).
* Jesus used children as examples for adults (Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 9:33-37).
* Jesus included children in Baptism (Matthew 28:19) and taught that little children can have saving faith (Matthew 18:6, 14). See Kessel 1991 for more details.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. What are Christians, therefore, to do?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED**

1. Question. What compelled the boy to act and seek help?

a. Did his parents send him?

b. Did the boy understand the 5th Commandment as it was written into his heart (Romans 2:14-15) and taught to him in the parochial school?

c. Other ideas?

2. Question. Why did the little boy run to the missionary for help instead of someone else? Keep in mind that the missionary was also his teacher in the school.

3. Question. By cutting off the fingers and making the baby “normal” was Missionary Guenther playing along with the Apache notions of infanticide? Consider the urgency and motivation.

4. Question. Should an underfinanced world mission get involved in a humanitarian undertaking such as an orphanage?

a. Read Isaiah 1:17 and James 1:27. Is care of widows and orphans of secondary importance for the Christian? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. Read Psalm 68:5. Who identifies himself as the “father to the fatherless” (orphans) and

“husband” of the widow? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

c. “The heart of the believer, overwhelmed with gratitude to the Lord for salvation and His proffered grace, reflects outward to the most needy. This the church-at-large acknowledges in liturgical prayers and hymns. It prays for widows and orphans and intones the God-given call for support. It applies and relives the words of God in James (1:27), ‘Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress . . . .’” (Kessel 2012)

CLOSING THOUGHT

To comfort and to bless, To find a balm for woe,

To tend the lone and fatherless, Is angels’ work below.

The captive to release, To God the lost to bring,

To teach the way of life and peace—It is a Christ-like thing.

(Christian Worship 485)

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