

Child Protection/Safe Environment Student Inservice Prayer Service and Lesson *Grades 7 -12*

✦ **Opening Prayer:** *Leader reads each line and asks students to repeat each phrase:*

We praise you, so wonderfully you have made us! (Psalm 139: 14)
God has made each of us unique and special.
We are created in God's image and likeness.
We deserve respect and we must give respect.

✦ **Scripture:** *Matthew 19:13-15.*

✦ **Reflection: Our Dignity as Children of God**

The familiar New Testament picture of Jesus taking children in his arms and receiving them with love portrays an attitude of care and concern for children found nowhere else in the ancient world. Children, along with women, old men, and slaves, were viewed as physically weak burdens on society who added little value to the wider life of the community. In Greece and Rome, it was an accepted practice to abandon unwanted children along the roadsides to die.

Jesus, however, seemed to always find time for youngsters; he told his disciples that unless they became like little children they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. He warned his followers not to despise children nor to cause them to stumble. Children were valuable and were to be treated with love and care.

✦ **Lesson**

Leader: Every human person is created in the image of God. This amazing dignity bestowed on the human race was raised even higher when God became human and died for love for every person. Because of the dignity with which we were created and the love by which we were redeemed, all people deserve to be revered and treated with dignity. We have an obligation to uphold our own dignity and that of one another, especially the most helpless among us.

Introduce the presenter or video program.

After the program, review the information presented with the students and ask if they have any questions.

✦ **Closing Prayer:**

Jesus our brother,
When you walked this earth, you showed that you love all children and we know that you love us as your own.
It is hard for us to know that some people do not respect children and do not treat them with dignity and love the way you did: they hurt them by their words and actions.
Help us to learn how to protect ourselves, and others, from harm.
Help us to forgive those who have harmed children and youth in the past.
Bless all those who teach us and work to keep us safe. Amen.



"Whoever
welcomes
one of these
little children
in my name
welcomes me..."

Mark 9:37