

# DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS

## Infinity in the Palm of a Child's Hand

Intuitional and experiential consciousness is crucial for children's spiritual lives. Spiritual insights come in gentle, mundane moments—a young child inspecting a flower or staring into the night sky. Experiences with nature are charged with wonder and a sense of connectedness to something greater than the self—ineffable experiences beyond description that teach us in ways deeper than any words.

The Christian story is yoked intimately with the natural world. Genesis tell us that God created the *natural* world first. God's kingdom started with the *wild* kingdom. Jesus used the natural world to teach his disciples. Jesus redeemed creation along with its people. A healthy Christian account of children-in-nature is two-fold: striving to use nature as a teaching tool while emphasizing genuine respect for creation, and enjoying romantic ideals of children in nature while also considering the reality of a fallen world and nature's power.

Take a child outside. The sky is there . . . always. It changes but surrounds us through the changing rhythms of the day, the season and the year. Darkness follows the day, yet the sun also rises, again and again. Nature is the living theater in which children learn of their connectedness to what is vast and beautiful . . . and right under their feet.

— Adapted from *"A World in a Grain of Sand, Infinity in the Palm of a Child's Hand"* (Chris J. Boyatzis, *The Christian Citizen*, Vol. 1, 2009)



Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

— Matthew 18:4-5

**April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.** Tragically, churches are not always safe places. Child abuse occurs in congregations across geographical, economic, cultural and racial ethnic lines. It is important to develop an education plan and strategies for prevention. Workshop #301, "Child Abuse Prevention in Churches," provides guidelines for developing policies that protect both children and churches. Download at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources > Workshops for Church Life and Leadership.



*Jesus used the lowliness of the marginal child to serve God by clarifying what God's way is like.*

— K.J. White & H. Willmer

**In "Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church"** (Zondervan, 2004), author and faith formation specialist Ivy Beckwith reminds us that: *Family is everything to a child. Family is the first place a child forms and experiences relationship. It is a child's first experience of community. Family is where children develop their first view and understanding of the world. . . . With that in mind, I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that family is the most important arena for a child's spiritual development and soul care.* Workshop #603, "Gracious Parenting," reviews biblical foundations and the most recent research on child development to present a parenting approach that honors children as children, develops personal responsibility, and lays the foundation for lifelong faith. Download the workshop at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources > Workshops for Church Life and Leadership.



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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.