

Leading Children to Christ



(Practical Pointers for Children's Workers)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig
Jethniel Wyler (children ministries)



Our goal in this study is to provide guidance and ideas to children's workers in leading young people to Christ. Great care must be taken when witnessing to children, so the worker can be sure that children understand the Gospel message. Children need to respond to the Gospel from a rational standpoint, understanding their spiritual plight and need to be saved. If this study provides assistance in leading children to Christ, then it will have been worth it all!

I. PREPARATION - The worker's understanding of how children think

1Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Like anyone else, children must fully understand the Gospel, that they have offended God because of their sin, and that they need to place their own faith (trust and confidence) in Jesus Christ so He can become their own personal Savior.

Here are some practical points to remember. **First, not every child has grown to the age of accountability before God (Jonah 4:11).** They may not yet understand that they are sinners before God or that they need to be saved. If this is the case, the Christian worker must recognize this and not try to impose where God has not yet convicted or given understanding. There is an unknown line that separates a child from the age of innocence (Mark 10:14) and responsibility. We must remember this when dealing with children. If children have not passed the “innocence” stage they are not ready to be saved.

Second, deal with children on a one-on-one basis. This is because no two children are at the same place in their spiritual understanding and need of the Gospel. Remember that we are *conversing* and *interacting* with the children – not simply presenting historical facts to them. We want to get their feedback on spiritual matters, as we speak to them, so we can gain a better understanding of where the child is at in relationship to understanding spiritual things (sin, salvation, eternal life).



A general raising of hands and a quick group prayer is generally not effective in seeing children saved. In fact, this approach likely creates confusion and misleads children. *Children raise their hands for many different reasons and may not understand what you are asking them to do until you probe deeper into their thinking.* There needs to be personal encounter with children about their salvation. It takes time to feel out children and see where they have grown in relationship to their own sinfulness and understanding of the Gospel.



Suggestion: Distractions are very real when dealing with children and can interfere with directing a child to Christ. Satan is all too ready to steal the seed from their hearts (Matt. 13:19). When dealing with a child on a one-on-one basis it can be profitable to take and counsel them in another room or some other quiet area where there are no distractions. Of course, great care

should be taken when doing this in light of our changing culture. Women should deal with girls and men should deal with boys. If personal counsel is given in a separate room, doors should remain open at all times.

Third, we must remember that every child is different, each possessing different degrees of maturity and understanding. We must therefore be careful to clearly present the Gospel to them in such a way that they can understand. Furthermore, before a child is invited to accept Jesus as his/her personal savior, we must first ascertain that he/she understands these fundamental ideas concerning salvation.



- **The concept of sin.**
- **He/she has sinned.**
- **Sin displeases God.**
- **Sin separates us from God.**
- **Jesus died to take the punishment for our sin which was hell.**
- **We must each put our faith in Jesus.**

If the child is unable to grasp any of these fundamental points, the worker should NOT ask the child for any decision. The most important thing for now is to reassure the child that God loves him/her.



Most children workers don't realize the amount of unclear statements that have crept into our language. When we ask children to "**open their hearts to Jesus**" or tell them that "**Jesus paid the price for your sins,**" we often leave them victims of confusion.

We **MUST** explain what words mean, even Biblical words. Too often we assume children understand our Christian vocabulary. To effectively get the

Gospel message across to children, special care must be made to avoid the barriers and distractions that unclear statements or difficult words often create. Here are some suggestions.

Unclear or Difficult: Ask Jesus into your heart.

Child May Think: How is Jesus going to fit in my heart?

Clearer Alternative: Ask Jesus to save you from hell.

Asking Jesus into your heart is not a Biblical response to the Gospel. It's not a synonym for faith. What does this concept really mean to a child? It could mean many things. Stick to the Biblical words of "faith" and "belief" in/on Jesus Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to draw a child to Jesus Christ (John 8:44; 12:36).

Unclear or Difficult: Jesus paid the price for your sins.

Child May Think: How much money did Jesus pay? I should start saving my allowance to help Jesus pay for my sins.

Clearer Alternative: Jesus allowed Himself to be punished instead of you.

Unclear or Difficult: Jesus is knocking on the door to come into your heart.

Child May Think: What door? Does a sound need to come from my heart?

Clearer Alternative: Jesus is trying to get your attention. He wants to be your Savior from hell. If a door illustration or picture is used (Acts 16:14) it must be explained clearly as the child accepting (opening the door) or rejecting (closing the door) Jesus' invitation to salvation.

Unclear or Difficult: Jesus rose again.

Child May Think: Did Jesus fly through the air in a balloon?

Clearer Alternative: Jesus became alive again after He died.

Unclear or Difficult: God is a holy God.

Child May Think: Does God have holes in Him?

Clearer Alternative: God is good and perfect (He makes no mistakes).

Unclear or Difficult: Man has sinned.

Child May Think: I'm not a man. I'm a girl.

Clearer Alternative: You have sinned or done wrong things.

Unclear or Difficult: You can have eternal life.

Child May Think: I will never die like my grandpa?

Clearer Alternative: After you die you can go to Heaven and be with God forever.

Unclear or Difficult: Grace saves you.

Child May Think: How can a grace save you?

Clearer Alternative: God is very kind and giving. He wants to give us salvation; something we do not deserve.



Mark Twain once said:

“The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

Fourth, it’s best for the worker to ask “content questions” that require a specific answer instead of simple “yes” and “no” answers. Children will eagerly say “yes” and “no” to many simple questions about Heaven, hell, and their spiritual condition without proper understanding. Below are some practical questions you might ask which will help the worker know if the child understands about his own sinfulness, salvation, the Gospel, and future destiny.

Sample Questions

- Why did you raise your hand?
- What happens when you die?
- Where will you go when you die?
- Why do people go Heaven or hell when they die? (a follow up question)
- What do you want to do so you don’t go to hell?
- What can you do about your sinful condition?
- How can you have your sins forgiven?
- What do you think you should do about this?
- Have you ever been saved before?

If the child says “yes” or “I did that before” the worker should ask “What did you do?” At this point, the worker should probe to find out whether the child

understands about salvation, needs assurance, or a better understanding that he needs to be saved only once.

We simply cast out the net and go fishing (Mark 1:17), but the Lord fills the net with fish (Luke 5:6). Let's remember this in all of our child evangelism and outreach ministries. We do not do the convicting work in a child's heart; God does (Acts 16:14). We are to be seed-sowers like Jesus (Mark 13:37) and soul winners like Jesus (Luke 19:10), but the Lord is always the One who gives the actual increase (1 Cor. 3:6). God is the true Soul Winner, since He is the One who takes the truth and applies it to the hearts of the children, bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ.



A final note: Don't be afraid to mention hell when evangelizing children. Children need to know *what* they are being saved from and *why* Jesus needs to be their Savior. *A child needs to realize that he is lost before he will get saved.* You can convey the subject of hell in this way during any of your Gospel presentations and methods that you might choose to use.

- Yes, the Bible tells us that hell is a real place.
- Hell is a place that is separated from God. It is where bad people go when their sins are not forgiven.
- Hell is place of fire and punishment for the sins that we have done against God.
- God does not want us to be separated from Him. God does not want us to go to hell. He wants us to go to Heaven instead, where we can be with Him.

Matthew 25:46

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Many children understand the concept of punishment for doing wrong things. Therefore, this is a good verse that can be used, since it deals with punishment in hell for doing wrong things versus the promise of Heaven for those children who ask Jesus to save them from hell.

II. PRESENTATION – Approaches to Sharing the Gospel

- The ABC's of God's Plan of Salvation

Admit to God YOU are a sinner.

Romans 3:23

“For **all** (insert child's name) have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

It's vital the child understands that he or she is a sinner. Here are some questions a worker might ask the children. Have you ever lied? Have you ever cheated? Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Have you ever done anything that was bad? This is sin.

The Bible says “**the wages of sin is death**” (separation from God in hell). You must admit that you are a sinner (have done wrong) and are going to hell because of your sin.

Believe that Jesus died for YOUR sins and rose again.

Jesus died on the cross to be punished in your place. He took your judgment for sin. He also became alive again after death so you can go to Heaven. Through Jesus you can have your sin's forgiven and can escape hell.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the **world** (insert child's name), that he gave his only begotten Son (Jesus), that **whosoever** (insert child's name), **believeth** (depends fully on Christ for salvation by asking Jesus to save you) in him should not **perish** (go to hell), but have **everlasting life** (live with God forever in Heaven).”

Choose by faith to make Jesus YOUR Savior.

This is an important part of what it means to believe on Christ and must be emphasized. The child must make a personal decision to trust in Jesus Christ to be his or her Savior. A child must know that he or she cannot go to Heaven by default (automatically) but only by expressing personal faith in Jesus Christ to become their Savior (John 1:12).

Faith in Jesus is like placing faith in a **boat** (it keeps you from sinking), placing confidence in a **chair** (it provides support), like flying in an **airplane** (it will take you to your destination).

- **Roman's Road**

Romans 3:23 - All children are sinners (explain sin).

Romans 6:23 - Sin results in death (separation from God in hell).

Romans 5:8 - God loves sinners by allowing Jesus to die in their place and take the judgment (hell) the sinner deserves
*(Explain why there is a hell and what it's like).

Romans 10:13 - Faith must be expressed in Christ to receive salvation from hell
*(Explain faith by using illustrations as stated above).

- **Wordless Books**

Wordless books (picture books) can often promote more discussion than books with just words and can lead to better comprehension. Of course, the children's worker must order or create this type of booklet so a visual can be displayed when sharing the Gospel to children. One example of a wordless book involves colors.

The Wordless Book was first used by Charles Spurgeon in 1866. It was comprised of only 3 colors - black, red and white. The **black** page represented sin, the **red** represented Christ's blood, and the **white** page represented the cleansing of our sins through Jesus' sacrifice. Today,

several other colors have been added to this popular child evangelism tool. Today's version of the Wordless Book typically includes **gold** to represent heaven as well as **green** to represent growth in our relationship with Jesus.

Explain the colors in this way:

Black reminds us of sin. Because we have all sinned, we cannot get to heaven on our own.

Red reminds us of the blood of Jesus. Jesus came to earth to take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross.

White reminds us that we can be made clean from sin by believing in Jesus.

Gold reminds us about Heaven (the streets of gold and golden city). When we believe in Jesus we can have a relationship with God and will one day be with him in Heaven.

Green reminds us of things that grow. It is important that we grow in our relationship with Jesus after we are saved from hell.

• Seven Questions that Lead to Heaven

Below are some helpful questions that a Christian worker can use which can lead them into the invitation phase - when they ask the child if he or she wants to be saved. These questions can be viewed as a *preparatory* step that will allow the Spirit of God to work in their hearts, which can result in the child's salvation. The questions might serve as a DOORWAY into the invitation and demonstrate if REPENTANCE is occurring in their hearts. These questions are only examples and any or all of them might be used.

1. How many holes does it take to sink a boat?

2. How many rocks does it take to break a window?

It takes one hole to sink a ship, one rock to break a window. **This means it only takes one sin to send a person to hell.** The Bible tells us everyone has sinned or done wrong things. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned

(done wrong), and come short of the glory of God.” Since we have all sinned, we must go to hell.

3. What is hell?

Revelation 20:15, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Hell is a bad place called a Lake of Fire. This is a place of punishment for sin or for all the bad things that we have done.

4. Do you need to be saved from hell?

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin (what we deserve) is death”
(separation from God in hell)

5. Can you go to Heaven without Christ saving you?

Romans 6:23, “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus died on the cross so you can be saved from hell and go to Heaven when you die.

6. Does God want to save you?

Romans 5:8, “But God commendeth (demonstrates or shows) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

7. Do you want to ask Jesus to save you?

Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Salvation is by faith (trust or dependence upon Jesus Christ to save you from hell). When you place your faith (confidence) in Jesus Christ God gives you eternal life.

III. INVITATION (drawing in the net)

When a child responds favorably (with understanding and conviction) to the plan or method of evangelism that you are using, it's then that the children's worker can give them an invitation as Philip did.



Acts 8:37 says, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (be saved). At one point we must see if the fish are biting!

Phrase your invitation to a child in such a way as this: “**Raise your hand if you want to talk to someone about your salvation.**” If a hand is raised, it will give opportunity for the worker to investigate the child’s knowledge and understanding about the Gospel on a one-on-one basis.

Remember: The raising of a hand does not save any child. Knowledge of the Gospel facts and a personal response of faith in these facts is what brings salvation into a child’s life (John 6:47). Anything else results in a misunderstanding or misconception of salvation, which not only confuses children, but leads them to false hopes.

Leading a Child in Prayer



If a child through the process of counseling seems to understand his or her need to be saved, then opportunity will arise to give an invitation to the child for salvation. Care must be taken in this matter. The worker can ask a child if he should lead them in a prayer that will help them to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation. Many younger children prefer this method or approach.

Note: When asking a child to repeat a prayer after you, remind them that this **MUST** be their own heart speaking to God. As workers, we must remember that a prayer does not save anyone; faith in Christ saves a person (Eph. 2:8-9). It’s not their *feeling* or *prayer* that saves them but their *faith* in Christ.

IV. CONFORMATION

After leading a child in prayer, or having an older child pray for his or her salvation, there can be some follow-up questions.

1. What did you just do?
2. If you died today where would you go?
3. What are you relying on to get to Heaven?

The workers should listen to make sure the child fully understands what he did, why he did it, and what he is relying on for his salvation. The answer should reaffirm to the worker that the child truly understands his newfound salvation and relationship with God.

If the child's answers to the above questions suggest that he is still confused after praying for salvation (and it does happen on occasion!), then it may be necessary to find out where the confusion lies and seek to correct it with the Bible answers about sin, salvation, and Heaven.

The worker may also discern that it's better to wait for another opportunity to deal with the child if the particular child is not ready to respond at the present time. Names might be given to the pastor or those who will be able to deal with the child later.

If it's determined by the worker that the child understands what he or she has done, and the child seems confident and sure of their salvation, then you can rejoice in a new profession of faith in Christ (Acts 2:47).

At this point, it's important and recommended to give the child some assurance verses.

John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

John 6:37 adds, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Romans 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Expressing salvation: If a child has fully understood the Gospel and makes a profession of faith in Christ, the worker can sometimes take the child to another worker or helper and ask the child to tell this person what they just did. This helps them to learn and express their decision with

others. This also will give additional confirmation of the child's understanding of their faith and salvation through Christ (1 Thess. 1:8).

IV. IDENTIFICATION

Baptism follows salvation and is one's identification with Christ and living the Christian life. If the truth would be known, countless numbers of children, who have raised hands to be saved, have been herded into the baptismal waters without any true knowledge of their salvation and what baptism actually means. *This becomes a black spot on any children's ministry.* It takes time to explain to a child about following Christ, wanting to live for Jesus, and witnessing his true desire to become a disciple of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

First, the child must possess the assurance that he is saved. Second, the child must understand that baptism demonstrates his desire and willingness to follow what Jesus tells him to do and live a life that is pleasing to God. When it comes to children, rushing them into the waters of baptism is not recommended. A period of reassurance and waiting is sometimes necessary to see the confirmation of their salvation (2 Cor. 13:5).

Jesus had a special place in His heart for children (Mark 10:16). May we possess this same tender heart of compassion as we seek to reach out to them!



“Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.”

V. Practice Writing out Your Approach