

Sharing the Gospel with Children

"Bringing Into Clear Focus What Really Matters"

(Taken from Fowler, Larry. *Rock-Solid Kids* (2004). AWANA CLUBS International. Gospel Light, Ventura, CA.)

I. The Gospel Defined

- q Romans 1:16 (NIV) – "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."
- q The Gospel is God's power to save us from our sins and bring us into right relationship with Him
- q NO Gospel, NO Power – that simple!!

II. What Makes Up The Gospel?

- q All three aspects below are necessary for a child to come to salvation



- q All three MUST be communicated well
- q All three MUST be communicated accurately
- q All three MUST be communicated repeatedly
- q Trust in the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is essential
- q Prayer in God's Work to change child's spirit is vital

III. Foundational Truths

- q Who God Is (creator, holy, loving, just, etc.) – Exodus 34: 5-7
- q What God Demands (sinless perfection)-Habak. 1:13; Matt. 5:48
- q Who We Are (created, God's image, sinful)-Gen. 1:26,27; Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:8
- q What Will Happen to Us All (eternity in heaven or hell)-John 14:1-4; 2 Thess. 1:8-9
- q Who Jesus Is (Creator, God's Son, sacrifice for our sins)- John 1:1-4, 14; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 2:2, 4:10; Rom. 3:25-26; Heb 9:26-28

III. The Gospel

- q Jesus Christ is the Gospel!! John 3:16; 1 John 2:11-12

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

- I. God loved us –Gave His Son
- II. If We Believe in Christ –Eternal Life
- III. Know Jesus, Know Life; No Jesus, No Life
- IV. His Death (His Sacrifice for Our Sins)
- V. His Burial (His Humanity)
- VI. His Resurrection (His Deity)
- VII. According to the Scriptures (God's Plan)

IV. How MUST a Child Respond?

- q Its NOT a formula – but a response of TRUST in Jesus
- q Faith that saves MUST be in the Person and work of Jesus (John 3:16; 3:36; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9,10,13; John 14:6, Acts 4:12; John 5:24)
 - I. Cannot be belief in God – James 2:19
 - I. Cannot be faith in Action – Ephesians 2:8,9
 - II. It IS TRUST in Jesus – Trust is active verb of faith; trust is reliance and confidence in Jesus to take away our sins and place us in heaven with HIM
 - III. Requires repentance as aspect of that TRUST – Acts 3:19; Acts 2:38
 - q Repent=absolutely change mind/direction
 - q Repentance defines saving faith further
 - q Real sorrow and remorse for rebellion/sins
 - q Like meat-eater makes life conversion to vegetarian or Communist becoming Libertarian
 - q Repentance leads to changed spirit, trust in Jesus

Sharing the Gospel with Children

- q Rarely is there "single contact" evangelism – they need to hear the message repeatedly, accurately, and completely
 - q Clean up your Vocabulary – What words we use are taken literally by children who are concrete thinkers. If you ask a child to have Jesus come into their hearty, they may wonder if they need surgery to get Him in there! For phrases to not use, see accompanying handout from bible.org.
 - q Don't forget to talk about Calvary and the Cross – "We are all sinners and lost from God. Would you like to accept Jesus now?" –No death on cross for our sins
 - q Hiding Gospel with unclear invitation methods – "Pray right now and have Jesus come into your heart" –What should the child do? Pray? Open mouth?

- q Hiding Gospel by connecting faith with specific actions – “Raise your hand if you want Jesus” –What child would not raise his/her hand? What does raising hand have to do with repentance and faith/trust in Christ?
- q Make sure you share the following eight truths repeatedly and accurately, then let the Holy Spirit do the work of conversion:
 - I. God is holy (perfect and without sin)
 - II. We are sinners
 - III. There is punishment for sin –death and eternal separation from God’s love
 - IV. God loves us
 - V. Jesus dies on the cross and rose again
 - VI. His death paid our punishment for our sin

 - VII. If we trust in what Jesus did on the cross, our sins are forgiven

 - VIII. God will give us eternal life.
- q Practical Guidelines:
 - Be Biblically accurate in choice of terms
 - Never let a physical actions or set of words/phraseology be considered part of salvation to child
 - Let the child tell you and seek you out to let you know what he/she wants to do
 - Watch for responses that might be motivated only by desire to please adults/peers

Leading Kids to Christ

- I. Why do we bother with trying to lead children to Christ? Aren't they too young to understand?



Because the call of God for salvation is for all He will call, not just adults!

- God wants all people everywhere, including children, to come to a saving trust/faith in Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3: 9; 1 Timothy 2: 4; 1 John 2: 2; John 3: 16)
- God's call is open to all people, including children (Acts 2: 39, Grk. for children is *teknon*, lit. "child" as in sons and daughters –thus promise for them also)
- Children most likely to accept their need for Jesus due to humility, simple trust, teachability, and innocence (Matthew 18: 3, 4)
- We do not know when or how the Holy Spirit will move/convict a person's heart to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (John 3: 5-8), soooo...we must be ready!
- Therefore, we must be ready and put kids in the best possible position to place their faith in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3: 15). That is what today's training session is all about: equipping you to help a child find Christ!
- **What's at stake? Everything!** John 1: 12 (children believing and receiving Christ), 1 John 5: 11-12 (children having eternal life), John 5: 24; Colossians 1: 13 (children crossing over from death to eternal life), Luke 15: 10 (rejoicing in heaven), John 15: 8 (glorifying God), John 10: 10 (abundant, joyful, purposeful living for children the rest of their lives with a God who is always there for them)

II. The Golden Window of Opportunity (Barna, G. (2003). *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*)

- Children ages 5-13 have the single greatest chance of receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior as any other age group, a 32% chance, or 1 in 3 chance of accepting Christ
- Youth ages 14-18 have only a 4% chance of accepting Christ, or a 1 in 25 chance
- Adults, ages 19-death, have only a 6% chance of



accepting Christ, or 1 in 17

- VBS is one of the primary times that children put their faith in Jesus Christ – and one of the best outreach programs of our church. We may lead a child to Christ that we will never see again until heaven!!

III. So, since this is such a critical time, what's needed?
KNOW HOW!!

- ✚ Prayer – Prayer moves God's agenda for children's souls forward and cultivates the soil of their hearts. This makes their hearts ripe for the Holy Spirit to plant salvation!
- ✚ 1:1 relationships with children is the key, usually not mass evangelism
 1. Rapport building begins with good eye contact, listening, gentleness, appropriate touch, enthusiasm, & energy
 2. Kids spell Love TIME
 3. Kids can spot acceptance and love a mile away
 4. Keep your promises... THIS BUILDS TRUST WITH CHILD
 5. Ask questions... and answer them, no matter how inconvenient
 6. Say what you mean...mean what you say (be authentic!)
 7. Participate with them in their world...play, crafts, games, snacks

8. Floor time for preschoolers, play with older kids
9. Know their names & use their names often
10. Be "Jesus with skin on" – children connect to God by connecting to a godly adult or peer
11. Be kind and fair!

***Remember: *Relationship is the fertile soil that the Holy Spirit can use to convict the child of his or her need for Jesus!!!*

- ✚ Know the Gospel so clearly, so completely, that you can share it with a child in a moment's notice!
- ✚ Remember that God chooses to bring children to Him in His timing, not ours! God will let the child know when it's the right time (pressure evangelism ruins children & losses souls through inoculation!

IV. Keep Your Language Clean! 4 Dynamics of

Communicating with Kids (Staal (2004). *Leading Kids to Jesus*)

- ✚ KICK rule –Keep It Concrete, Kiddo! (Kids understand concrete terms and language better than abstract terms and language)
- ✚ Not everyone can swim in the same pool! (Kids learn at different developmental levels-age, SES, education, life experiences, and health all factors in their spiritual understanding)
- ✚ "Teacher, tell us a story!" (Kids are most receptive to a story they can relate to, that connects to them in word pictures)
- ✚ "Teacher, my... ." (Kids may focus on, or be distracted, by a single detail in a story, so don't get too wordy!)
- ✚ Exercise: Church Talk Wordsmithing 101 (Handout)
- ✚ Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His Love... But Help Me Understand! (Handout)

V. Methods

- Ø Play to Your Strength – Your own testimony!
 - a) There is no substitute for your story! Experience sells!
 - b) Make it clear, use right terminology, keep it short
 - c) Acts 26 –Three parts of Paul's Testimony
 - d) BC -  - AD (Handout)

Simply the A's

e) Four Sentence rule –short & sweet, one minute rule

Ø Tell a good old story – HIS STORY!

a) Basics: God, Us, Christ, Jesus and You Together

b) The Need to Know (Just like kids, You must do your homework!)

Roman Road: John 3:16 –God Loves all of us

Romans 3:23 – All have sinned

Romans 6:23 – Payment for sin

death...gift of eternal life

Romans 5:8 – We are sinners, but Christ died for us anyhow

Romans 10:9-13 – If confess, believe...we are saved from sin

c) Remember: It's His Story, so tell it well!
(Brief & Clear, but Complete)

d) Never let a physical action be part of salvation – no raising hands, etc.

e) Watch for responses that might be motivated by desire to please

f) Let a child tell you what he or she wants to do-not the other way around. No yes or no questions!! Instead, open-ended questions.

g) A-B-C's of sharing Jesus with a child- The PRAYER of faith

A- Admit to God your sins and repent (turn away from) them

B- Believe (trust) that Jesus will take away your sins

C- Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord (in charge)

*** Make sure the child knows that he or she is saved because of what Jesus did on the Cross and what they trust about Him, not because of a prayer or words they say or anything they do!

VI. How Do I Know When a Child Might be Ready to Accept Christ? (5 S's)

a) Does it make sense?

"If a friend of yours wanted to become a Christian what would you tell him? (diagnostic ?'s)

"If your friend asked you how to become a Christian what would you say?" (diagnostic ?'s)

- b) Is there brokenness over sin?
- c) Is the child serious about her commitment?
- d) Is the commitment self-made or strongly connected to someone else's decision? (friend, relative, teacher, parent, etc)
- e) Has the commitment been sealed? (Holy Spirit-evidence of new life)

(Murphy, Art. (2005). *Step by Step: Leading Your Child to Christ*. Moody Press.)

VII. Today's children may require more time to come to Christ

- q Children today receive many mixed messages about Christianity and religion
- q Children today have many hurts that toughen their spirits
- q Children today are hurried children –pushed into the adult world
- q Children today are desensitized –thus less sensitive to spiritual things (prayer)

VIII. Answering Tough Questions (Discussion)

WordSmithing 101

Common terms Ki d-fri endl y terms

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Sin | A. Someone who agrees to be in trouble for us |
| 2. Punishment
trouble | B. Killed on a cross because we're in so much trouble |
| 3. Crucified
to do the right thing | C. Follow what Jesus says, ask him for help |
| 4. Savior
your friend | D. Asks Jesus to forgive you and always be |
| 5. Resurrected
we think | E. Not nice, wrong things we do, bad things |
| 6. Ask Jesus into your heart | F. Get in trouble, time-out, spanking,
"busted" |
| 7. Let Jesus be Lord | G. Didn't stay dead, came back to life |

Telling Your Story (Testimony)

B.C.

1. What were you like, personally and/or spiritually, before becoming a Christ-follower?
2. What caused you to begin considering a move toward God/Christ?

The Cross

A.D.

1. What realization did you come to that finally motivated you to follow Christ?
 2. Specifically, what did you do to become a Christian?
1. How did your life begin to change after you began to follow Christ?
 2. What are clear differences in your life now that you follow Christ, compared with your BC life?

Personal Exercises

1. Write your Story:

My Story

1.

2.

3.

4.

2. Read your four sentences aloud and time yourself. If it is longer than one minute, cut down your sentence length.

3. Share your four sentences with at least two other adults. Ask for feedback on clarity. Make changes as needed.