

# Leading A Child to Christ

Many adult Christians look back to their elementary years as the time when they accepted Christ as Savior. Not only are children able to understand the difference between right and wrong and their own personal need of forgiveness, but they are also growing in their ability to understand Jesus' death and resurrection as the means by which God provides salvation. In addition, children at this age are capable of growing in their faith through prayer, Bible reading, worship and service.

However, children (particularly those in early elementary grades) can still be limited in their understanding and may be immature in following through on their intentions and commitments. They need thoughtful, patient guidance in coming to know Christ personally and continuing to grow in Him.

## 1. Pray.

Ask God to prepare the children in your life to receive the good news about Jesus and prepare you to effectively communicate with them.

## 2. Present the Good News.

Use words and phrases that children understand. Avoid symbolism that will confuse these literal-minded thinkers. Discuss these points slowly enough to allow time for thinking and comprehending.

- a. "God wants you to become His child. Do you know why God wants you in His family?" (See 1 John 3:1.)

- b. "You and all the people in the world have done wrong things. The Bible word for doing wrong is 'sin.' What do you think the Bible says should happen to us when we sin?" (See Romans 6:23.)

- c. "God loves you so much, He sent His Son to die on the cross for your sin. Because Jesus never sinned, He is the only one who can take the punishment for your sin. On the third day after Jesus died, God brought Him back to life." (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 John 4:14.)

- d. "Are you sorry for your sin? Tell God that you are. Do you believe Jesus died to take the punishment for your sin and that He is alive today? If you tell God you are sorry for your sin and tell Him you do believe and accept Jesus' death to take away your sin—God forgives all your sin." (See 1 John 1:9.)

- e. "The Bible says that when you believe in Jesus, God's Son, you receive God's gift of eternal life. This gift makes you a child of God. This means God is with you now and forever." (See John 1:13.)

As you give children many opportunities to think about what it means to be a Christian, expose them to a variety of lessons and descriptions of the meaning of salvation to aid their understanding.

## 3. Talk personally with the child.

Talking about salvation one-on-one creates opportunity to ask and answer questions. Ask questions that move the child

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beyond simple yes or no answers or recitation of memorized information. Ask what-do-you-think? kinds of questions such as:

“Why do you think it’s important to . . . ?”

“What are some things you really like about Jesus?”

“Why do you think that Jesus had to die because of wrong things you and I have done?”

“What difference do you think it makes for a person to be forgiven?”

Answers to these open-ended questions will help you discern how much the child does or does not understand.

## 4. Offer opportunities without pressure.

Children are vulnerable to being manipulated by adults. A good way to guard against coercing a child’s response is to simply pause periodically and ask, “Would you like to hear more about this now or at another time?” Lovingly accepting the child, even when he or she is not fully interested in pursuing the matter, is crucial in building and maintaining relationship that will yield more opportunities to talk about becoming part of God’s family.

## 5. Give time to think and pray.

There is great value in encouraging a child to think and pray about what you have said before making a response. Also allow moments for quiet thinking about questions you ask.

## 6. Respect the child’s response.

Whether or not a child declares faith in Jesus Christ, adults need to accept the child’s action. There is also a need to realize that a child’s initial responses to Jesus are just the beginning of a lifelong process of growing in the faith.

## 7. Guide the child in further growth.

Here are three important parts in the nurturing process:

- a. Talk regularly about your relationship with God. As you talk about your relationship, the child will begin to feel that it’s OK to talk about such things. Then you can comfortably ask the child to share his or her thoughts and feelings, and encourage the child to ask questions of you.
- b. Prepare the child to deal with doubts. Emphasize that certainty about salvation is not dependent on our feelings or doing enough good deeds. Show the child verses in God’s Word that clearly declare that salvation comes by grace through faith (i.e., John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:11).
- c. Teach the child to confess all sin. “Confess” means “to admit” or “to agree.” Confessing sins means agreeing with God that we really have sinned. Assure the child that confession always results in forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9).