

### Leading a Child to Christ

By Ty Woznek, Pastor of Children & Family along with Kurt Bruner, The Center for Strong Families

#### Defining success

Leading a child to Christ is simply taking the initiative to share the Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God. God does the saving, not us. Just as we cannot earn our way to Heaven, we can't earn it for others. Our God-given role in saving people is to share what Jesus did. We do the sharing; God does the saving; the child does the praying.

#### Relationship, not religion

Religion is "do," while Christianity is "done." Jesus died on the cross and rose again on the third day *once* as the perfect offering and payment for sin. Jesus did that so people can have a personal relationship with God. There is nothing we can do to earn Heaven or earn favor with God- that's religion. Christianity is about accepting what Jesus did on our behalf, and allowing God to work in our life to make Him known. God at work in your life is the most powerful tool you have to lead others to Him.

#### The child is the focus

Children more than anything want to please their parents and adults. As desperately as we desire for a child to know God, we must allow God to work. Do not push a child to a decision. There are three things we need to do:

1. We must be sensitive to what the Spirit is doing in the child's life. The child may ask a question, or you may be dealing with something that will give you opportunity to share the Gospel.
2. Ask open-ended questions. It is the child's heart and what they believe that is important, not whether or not they can pass a doctrinal exam.
3. If the child wants to accept Christ as their Savior, the child should do the praying. There is no God ordained prayer for salvation. To be saved there needs to be an outward confession based on an inward belief. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." Romans 10:9-10

#### Assurance of Salvation

Children often struggle with whether or not they are saved, especially if they accepted Christ as their Savior at an early age. Salvation is *demonstrated* by evidence of God working in their life, or what the Bible calls fruit. For instance, if a child accepts Christ and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is demonstrated more and more in their life, it is a sign that they are saved.

When a child asks, "Am I saved?" the key thing is to point to God's Word and see whether or not there is fruit in their life. Concern about being saved or conviction of their sin is often evidence of salvation. Do not answer the question for them, rather help them examine their life and Scripture to see if they have greater sadness for sin, a greater desire to know and pursue God, a desire to love and serve people, etc. Pointing to the date of your salvation or a prayer you've said is not assurance. Assurance of salvation comes from our faith in God's Word and the fruit that follows that choice.

People in the Bible who were saved were changed. They were different as they turned away from their sin and pursued God. Being saved does not mean we no longer sin or have become perfect. Being saved does mean there will be something different in our life- that we are demonstrations of God working in us. Children can be saved and demonstrate love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, as God works in their life, and they will still be the rambunctious children God designed them to be.

In walking a child through assurance of their salvation, I always present the Gospel. This shows what sin is and what Jesus did to remove that sin. Often a child remembers a time when they asked Jesus to save them. I then take them to Romans 8:38-39 and 1 John 5:11-13 which teach that we cannot lose our salvation because we have Jesus. If the child has no recollection of asking Jesus to save them from their sin, I would refer back to what was said earlier in this article. If the child does recall a time, or still is just not sure, as a last resort I have them ask Jesus to save them. Again, Jesus died and rose again *once* for sin. In being sensitive to the Spirit, sometimes being unsure of one's salvation is a sign that there is a sin issue that they need help with. In either case, it is always good to present the Gospel. The greatest joy is when they look at Scripture and see for themselves, 'God saved me!'

#### Examples of clarifying, open-ended questions:

What is sin?

Who has sinned?

Why does God hate sin?

What is the result of sin?

Who is Jesus?

What did Jesus come to Earth to do?

What do you want Jesus to do for you right now?

## Going Further - Resources

### Recommended DVD:

- *Leading A Child to Christ* features Lead Pastor Steve Stroope explaining how to lead a child to Christ in language he or she can understand. (Complimentary copy available upon request.)

### Recommended Books:

- *God's Great News for Children – Leading Your Child to Christ* (by Rick Osborne and Marnie Wooding) is a picture and text-driven guide designed for parents to read with a child age 5-9 to understand the gospel and trust Christ as his or her savior. (Complimentary copy available upon request.)
- *The Family Compass* (by Kurt and Olivia Bruner) offers principles and practical suggestions on how parents can nurture Christian faith and values in their children—including guidelines for leading a child to faith in Christ.