

LEADING CHILDREN TO JESUS; HOW TO HAVE ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITH

Linda Mei Lin Koh, GC Children's Ministries
(Handouts)

Children's Leaders' Needs

- How to talk about God, Jesus, salvation, and other key spiritual topics in manners that make sense to a child.
- Find appropriate terms and expressions to talk to a child about Jesus that will win him to Jesus.

Probability of Accepting Jesus

5-12 yrs	32%	Accept Jesus
13-18 yrs	4%	Accept Jesus
19 +	6%	Accept Jesus

Salvation at An Early Age

- The Bible dispels any skepticism about the validity of a kid's matter-of-fact faith. Read Acts 2:39 in which Peter says, "The promise is for you and your *children* and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."
- The criteria for salvation: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 400

"Children of eight, ten or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ."

One-on-One Requirements to Talk to Kids about Faith

- Don't defer to someone more qualified or experienced to explain salvation when a child asks.
- Don't give kids a heavy load of theology.
- Describe your own faith journey of how you become a Christian.
- Prepare to say the right words when-ever the right opportunity arrives.

What's Said vs What's Understood

"The only meaning a sequence of language has is the meaning the listener understands it to have...It doesn't matter what you say; what matter is how a child interprets what you say."

(Suzette Elgin, The Gentle Art of Communicating with Kids, p. 9)

Key Dynamics of Communication with Kids

Dynamic 1: Children Understand Concrete Terms And Language Better Than They Understand Abstract Terms And Language.

Some Confusion-causers?

- "Ask Jesus into your heart." They wonder how Jesus can physically fit into such a small space.
Use: "Start a personal relationship with Jesus today."
- "Pay the price for your sins." A young boy once told us he would try to save his allowance to cover the payment himself?

More Confusion-causers . . .

- "Laying my sins at the foot of the cross."
Use: "telling God I'm sorry for the wrong things I've done."
- Paul's model in 1 Corinthians 2:1, "When I came too you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom?"

Key Dynamics of Communication with Kids

Dynamic 2: Children Are At Different Developmental Levels.

Key Dynamics of Communication with Kids

Dynamic 3: Children Are Most Receptive to Stories and Terms They Can Relate to or Picture.

Key Dynamics of Communication with Kids

Dynamic 4: Children May Focus On, or be Distracted, by a Single Detail in a Story.

Starting Points

- Actively listen to the descriptive language kids use in your locale.
- Listen closely while kids interact with one another in church and nonchurch settings.
- Ask a child to describe his or her relationship with Jesus for you.

Share Your Story

- “The greatest gift you can give someone is the story of Jesus and how He changes lives—especially yours.” (*Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church*)
- Personal testimony is a powerful way of helping children understand their need for personal relationships with Jesus.

Coaching From An Apostle

1. **BC (before becoming a Christian)**
2. **The Cross (conversion)**
3. **AD (after becoming a Christian)**

1. BC (before becoming a Christian)

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

2. The Cross (conversion)

1. What realization did you come to that finally motivated you to follow Christ?
2. Specifically, what did you do to become a Christian?

3. AD (after becoming 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?

The 4 Components of the Gospel Message

1. God
2. Us
3. Christ
4. You and me

1. God

- He is a holy God, perfect in every way. He created people to be like himself, along with an expectation of holiness or perfection.
“Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” Leviticus 19:2
- He is a loving God, who loves each of us more than we can imagine.
“We love because he first loved us.” 1 John 4:19
- He is a just God, so he doesn’t turn the other way and ignore sin.
“For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing.” Isaiah 61:8

2. Us

- All people have committed sin.
“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

- Sin results in death—both physical and spiritual. This spiritual death is complete separation from God.
“The wages of sin is death.” Rom. 6:23
- No matter how hard we try, we could never offer enough of a sacrifice to clear away all our sins. But someone has to.
“The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me? says the Lord.” Isaiah 1:11

3. Christ

- Jesus Christ is God who became man and lived on earth.
“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” John 1:1, 14.
- Even though he never committed any sins, Christ died as our substitute on the cross. But Christ was resurrected, showing he has power over death.
“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8
- Christ our Savior offers us complete forgiveness for our sins as a free gift.
“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this is not yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8

4. You and Me

- The free gift of salvation must be accepted through our response to the gospel. We must ask Jesus into our heart as Lord and Savior.
“If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9
- At that moment, we become adopted into God’s family.
“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12.
- With Christ in us, transformation takes place.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Child-friendly Terms

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Sin | Things we do wrong, naughty stuff, when we disobey, make bad choices |
| 2. Punishment | Get in trouble, time-out, spanking, be disciplined |
| 3. Crucified | Died on a cross because that person was in so much trouble, hurt bad and killed |
| 4. Savior | Forever friend, helper, agrees to be in trouble instead of you, took your place |
| 5. Resurrection | Alive again, came back from being dead, didn’t stay dead |

More Child-friendly Terms . . .

6. Ask Jesus into your heart	Follow Jesus, become a Christian, tell Jesus you're sorry and ask him to always be your friend.
7. Let Jesus be Lord	Follow what Jesus says, ask him for help to do the right thing
8. Ask for forgiveness	Say you're sorry, apologize
9. Forgiveness	Not in trouble anymore
10. Confess	Admit you did wrong, tell what you did
11. Eternal life	Live forever in heaven with Jesus

More Tips ...

- When explaining the salvation plan, add a reference to joining God's family. Children possess a universal longing to belong, so the opportunity to be part of a family appeals to many kids.
- Consider word changes to explain prayer, baptism, communion, church attendance, volunteerism, and other aspects of church life.
- Even though we deliver the message, true comprehension and conviction comes solely as a result of the Holy Spirit.

Pair and Practice

- Explain the salvation plan with at least 2 other adults.
- Ask for feedback on clarity and child-friendliness.

The A-B-C's of Salvation for Children

A dmit your sins and ask for forgiveness

B elieve in Jesus and that He died for your sins

C hoose to follow Jesus the rest of your life

Leading a child into a relationship with Christ requires

- That you have a relationship with Christ first.
- You can only give away that which you have.
- A relationship with Jesus is more than knowing the Bible, going to church, teaching children's class, or being baptized. Your life needs to change.

How to Effectively Reach a Young Child

1. Positively Connect the Child's World to God Through the Children's Sensory Experiences.

* Tell a baby who's enjoying a banana, "God made this banana."

* While holding a little one in your arms, sing songs to him that clearly and frequently use the names of God and Jesus.

Reaching young children. . .

2. Clearly Communicate God's Truth and Love.

* Include simple thoughts, plain words, and short sentences.

- * 4-word statements of God's truth are effective for 2-3 year-olds.
 - God made the animals
 - God will help me
 - The Bible is true

Reaching young children. . .

3. Actively Reinforce the Message.

- * Take time to demonstrate the message you teach.
- * Hold them close, touch them and hug them if you are teaching about love.
- * Jesus put his hand on children to bless them (Matt. 19:13-15).

Four Seasons, Four Skills of Leadership

- Spring: Growth
- Summer: Fun
- Fall or Autumn: Change
- Winter: Warmth

Spring: Growth

- Make statements that plant seeds of spiritual truth
- Ask open-ended questions
- Offer words of affirmation

Summer: Fun

- Exhibit a good attitude
- Plan fun-filled activities ahead of time
- Personally engage in group activities

Autumn: Change

- Watch closely
- Listen closely
- Respond carefully; be silent when needed

Winter: Warmth

- Create group warmth
- Create personal warmth
- Use vocal warmth

A Special Gift for Leaders

“Ministry is, first of all, receiving God’s blessing from those to whom we minister. What is this blessing? It is a glimpse of the face of God....We can see God in the face of Jesus, and we can see the face of Jesus in all those who need our care.”

Because ... (poem)

*When I laugh with a child at something silly,
When I comfort a child and the crying stops,
When we marvel together at something amazing,
Or when a child feels loved by me...
If I look in that child's eyes,
If the child looks back at me,
If I look at just the right angle,
And if I really let myself...
I can see the eyes of Christ,
only for a split second,
but there they are.
It's hard for me to fully understand how,
and even tougher to explain why,
but there they are.
And every time this happens,
this brief glimpse of Jesus in a child's eyes,
I know I'm forever changed.
Because Jesus is looking back at me.*

Quick Reference Guide to Approaching Kids' Questions

1. Direct Response

- a. Refer to the Bible either verbally or physically whenever possible.
- b. Consider whether the question asked is the real issue.
- c. Be sensitive to the emotion behind the question.

Quick Reference Guide to Approaching Kids' Questions

2. No-Answer Response

- * I don't know
- *The Bible is silent

3. Ask a Question

- * Explain, please
- * You know
- * Different angle

The Power of Everyone

- **Strong Ministry Expectations**
 - * Present & discuss clear, creative salvation explanations to the group.
 - * Shepherd the kids—commit to be there all the time to know the kids.

- * Make salvation the mission.
- * Offer the right environment.

- **Involve Other Key People**

- * Pastoral Support – pastors occupy the best platform to deliver the message to parents to bring their kids to church and other programs.
- * Parental Involvement – build good rapport with parents, and encourage them to be involved in their kids' activities.

Conclusion

Yes, when children's leaders work together with parents and the church leadership and share a commitment to stand should-to-shoulder, they unleash the power of everyone