

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson One

Today there is an abundance of books about children, written from social, educational, spiritual and psychological viewpoints. Many of them provide useful information. Many of them contradict each other. Many of them become outmoded. The Christian, concerned about the spiritual welfare of children, need not be confused. God has not left us in the dark on this important matter. In the Bible we find clear teaching about boys and girls. This teaching does not become outdated; it must always mold our whole approach to children. It is vital to have a Biblical perspective, for that will determine our message and our methods, as we endeavor to minister to the rising generation.

### Children Need to be Saved

Philip had been playing with his friends for hours in the hot sunshine. When he appeared panting, with damp hair and glowing cheeks, his mother knew at once what he needed—a glass of water! When you know a child has a need, you can do something to satisfy it. If he is hungry, he needs food; if he is tired, he needs sleep. The nature of the need determines the remedy you offer. Usually physical needs are easy to see, but spiritual needs are not so easily identified. If we are guided by the subjective conclusions of different people, we will be confused. But, if we turn to the Scriptures, we find there clear statements about the spiritual condition and needs of children.

The Bible clearly teaches that Adam was the head of the human race, and represented all men. All mankind was, therefore, in Adam when he sinned and fell. “. . . in Adam all die . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:22). “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). All have inherited a sinful nature from Adam. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). This nature shows itself in the sinful actions of all. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The result is that physical and spiritual death have come to all. “. . . so death passed upon all men. For all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). So all mankind is under the just condemnation of a holy God; “. . . by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation” (Romans 5:18). “We all . . . were by nature children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3).

The great emphasis on the universality of sin and its consequences is so clear in the Bible, that we dare not conclude that children are exempted. On the contrary, the Bible makes it very clear that children are included in the “all” who are sinners.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).

“The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3).

In Matthew 18 the Lord Jesus spoke about the condition of children. He had “called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.” He said: “For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:11-14). The implication is obvious: children are lost and need to be sought and found. This is why we must evangelize them.

Most commentators believe that children who die as babies go to heaven and that the grounds of their acceptance by God is the death of His Son for them rather than any inherent “innocence” on their part. They are “persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand” (Jonah 4:11); so God does not hold them accountable for their sin. The age at which an individual child moves out of this stage is a secret known only to God. When we observe children it is obvious that they sin knowingly at a very early age. They need to be evangelized.

### **All mankind, outside of Christ, is spiritually dead**

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” (Colossians 2:13). When children are born into this world they are spiritually dead, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). They will remain in that condition unless, or until, they trust Jesus Christ personally as Lord and Saviour. In John 1:13 we see something of the nature of spiritual life. This spiritual life is “not of blood”; it is not inherited. A child is not a Christian because his parents are. No one can do anything to acquire this spiritual life, it is “nor of the will of the flesh”. Nor can another human give this life through rites or ceremonies; it is “nor of the will of man”. This spiritual life is “of God”. So no child, whether born into a Christian home or not, is in the kingdom of God by natural birth. There is no other way into the kingdom except by the new, or second, birth.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5).

### **Children therefore need to be regenerated**

A radical change must take place within the child so that he is no longer dead in sin. Only God can make this complete transformation, giving a child spiritual life. When a child is “born from above” he is a new creation with a new nature. The control of sin is broken and the child wants to obey God.

## Children need to be justified

Sinners by nature and practice, children stand guilty and condemned before God. They need to have this position changed. They are justified when they personally trust Christ: “By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39). Justification deals with their guilt and condemnation and gives them a right standing before God.

In considering the spiritual condition of children, there is no room for speculation or mistaken ideas, for we are dealing with the never-dying souls of boys and girls. If they are already in God’s kingdom, they do not need to be evangelize. But if, (and we have seen that this is the clear teaching of the Scriptures) they are sinners under God’s just condemnation, they need to hear the message of salvation. If they are dead in sins they need the spiritual life that only God can give. It is when our eyes are opened to their spiritual condition, that we will begin to have a burden to see them evangelize.

## Children can be Saved

True Biblical conversion involves a turning from sin (repentance), and a turning to Jesus Christ (faith). Salvation is promised to all who repent and believe (Acts 3:19; 16:31). Can a child turn from sin and have true saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Some people think that children are too young to be able to turn to Christ, that they have to wait until they are older. But in fact all people, young or old, are incapable of saving faith without the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts:

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: because they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). At whatever age someone responds to the Gospel, it is not because he himself has developed a certain “capacity” to do so, but because God the Holy Spirit has worked in his life. The Bible teaches that a child can have true saving faith. “And that their children which have not known anything may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God.. .” (Deuteronomy 31:13). “That they (i.e. the children) might set their hope in God.” (Psalm 78:7). “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

All of the words used in these verses “fear”, “set their hope” and “believe” indicate the possibility of a saving relationship with God. The Bible teaches that where there is true faith—

at whatever age—there is salvation.

Experience shows that children can trust Christ. Many Christians date their conversion from childhood. While this has usually been followed by a deepening understanding and a growth in faith and repentance, they have no doubt that justification and regeneration took place at that moment, when as children, they truly believed and were saved. This is the vision we need for child evangelism. We need to see that God can use His Word in the lives of children. He can bring them to repentance and faith. He can bring them into His kingdom. So there are only two kinds of children—those who are saved and those who are lost. There are those who are in God's kingdom and those who are not, those who are spiritually alive and those who are spiritually dead. Children who have personally trusted Christ as Saviour and Lord need to be built up in their faith. Children who have not trusted Christ need to be evangelize.

### **God Loves children**

God showed His deep concern for children by giving many instructions about teaching them in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:9, 10; 6:5-7; 11:18, 19; Psalm 34:11; 78:1-8; Proverbs 22:6; Joel 1:3). There are examples in the Old Testament of the Lord at work in the lives of children, like Moses (Exodus 2), Samuel (1 Samuel 3), the little girl in the house of Naaman (2 Kings 5), the widow's son (1 Kings 17), the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4) and Josiah (2 Kings 22). One of the reasons for the institution of the Passover and the Redemption of the first-born, (as well as the placing of the 2 memorials of stones at Jordan) was to allow parents to teach their children (Exodus 12:26; 13:14; Joshua 4:6).

The Lord Jesus showed this deep love and concern for boys and girls. He welcomed them (Mark 10:13); He took them in His arms (Mark 10:16); He accepted their praise (Matthew 21:15, 16). He cared for their physical needs, healing the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), raising Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:38-43), and then instructing that she should be given food. He did not want them to be offended (Matthew 18:6), rejected (Matthew 18:5), or despised (Matthew 18:10). He invited them to come to Him (Mark 10:14). He wanted them to be saved (Matthew 18:11). He expressed the Father's will in no uncertain terms "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish, , (Matthew 18:14) What assurance this gives us as we go and teach God's Word to boys and girls!

### **Children are Open to the Gospel**

Children are open to anything! They are sensitive, vulnerable, impressionable. This fact is widely recognized. The world knows it and tries to win children to a worldly life. The advertisers develop techniques to influence children. The communists concentrate on indoctrinating children's minds during the early years of their education. The cults and false religions take every opportunity to influence children at a very early age. Unfortunately, the church of Jesus Christ is not always so alert, and opportunities to bring the Gospel to children are often missed.

When an open-air meeting for adults is organized, they will usually show great reluctance about attending. But children will come; they will listen. These are their formative years—the teaching of the Word of God can have a lasting impact on their lives. No doubt, this is why the Bible stresses, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Paul recognized that Timothy’s early instruction in the Scriptures was very significant in his life. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). There is no doubt that as the years pass people become more hardened, more wayward and more rebellious (Psalm 78:7, 8).

The Psalmist was aware of this. He made a solemn promise to teach the children the Word of God, so that they might not become as their fathers, “a stubborn and rebellious generation” (Psalm 78:8). Humanly speaking, the older a person becomes, the less likely it is for that person to come to Christ.

Furthermore, impressions and influences implanted in childhood are lasting. That is why so many forces are at work to “get the young” Win a child and you win an adult. The Bible recognizes this fact: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” (Proverbs 22:6).

Evangelize children and the results will be far reaching and positive. Neglect child evangelism, and there will be lasting repercussions which are devastatingly negative. The fact that children are open to the Gospel, and to any other influence whether for good or bad, does not contradict the fact that they are spiritually dead. There are no degrees of death; so they are as spiritually dead as unsaved adults. Undoubtedly, there is an openness, interest and responsiveness which is not found in most adults. But this should not be confused with spiritual life or saving faith, which come only as God the Holy Spirit works. It takes the same grace to save a child as it does to save an adult.

If we have the opportunity to leave a lasting impression on children, because they are more open, then we must do all we can to reach them with the Gospel. The formative years pass very quickly. This consideration puts urgency into our child evangelism. If we wait, many of those who are children today will have left behind those impressionable years.

### **A Child Saved is a Life Saved**

Child evangelism is not only a question of laboring, and praying that the souls of children will be saved. Its goal is also the salvation of lives—whole lives to be lived for the glory of God. Many believers who trusted the Saviour in later years have one regret—that they did not do so earlier. As we read in Lamentations 3:27, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth”. The Bible includes testimonies of those who began to walk with God while they were young. David said, “Thou hast taught me from my youth”. “Thou art my trust from my youth”

(Psalm 71:5). Obadiah declared, “I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth” (1 Kings 18:12). Daniel, Samuel, Joseph, Josiah and Isaac all seem to have started walking with God when still young. Think of the influence and value of such lives, and of many since then who were converted in childhood.

Common sense and experience agree that it is better to come to Christ early in life. It is better to know Christ as Saviour during the years when habits and personality are being formed, rather than after they have been formed. It is better to learn and absorb the Word of God when the mind is open and learning is easy, rather than to try to do so afterwards. This does not mean, however, that we panic if children in our care become older and still do not trust the Saviour. We should continue to bring the Gospel message with urgency, but resolutely resist any inclination to pressure them into a profession of faith. We will be concerned when we see children growing up still not saved. We will be deeply burdened for them. But we must leave them in the hands of our Sovereign God.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson One Test

- (1) What must always mold our whole approach to children?
- (2) The nature of the need determines (?)
- (3) List two verses that teach we are born with a sin nature.
- (4) Why must we Evangelize children?
- (5) When we observe children it is obvious that they knowingly sin at a very (?) age.
- (6) A child is not a Christian because (?)
- (7) (?) deals with their guilt and condemnation and gives them a right standing before God.
- (8) Biblical conversion consist of two things. What are they?
- (9) Give a couple examples where God worked in the lives of children in the Old Testament.
- (10) What does Proverbs 22:6 say?
- (11) There are no degrees of death. Children are just as lost as (?)
- (12) It is better to come to Christ (?)

# **Youth Evangelism 101**

## **Lesson Two**

World evangelism is the task entrusted to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Every believer must take this commission seriously and be involved in fulfilling it. World evangelism involves bringing the Gospel to every tribe and nation and also to every age group. Children are included in “every creature”. Every kindred and tongue, every class and age group, need to hear the Gospel. But in order to communicate the message, we must be sure what it is and how to communicate it.

### **The Need for Evangelism**

Children are lost. They need salvation. Children are dead. They need life. How can they be saved? How can they receive eternal life, and a new nature? This is the work of the Holy Spirit, but He works in and through the preaching of the Gospel - as we evangelize the children. Our ministry is not to entertain the children, nor even to educate them, but to evangelize them.

### **The Meaning of Evangelism**

What does it mean to evangelize children?

It does not just mean the telling of Bible stories. Many Sunday School teachers feel that their responsibility each week is just to tell a Bible story to the boys and girls under their care. This is good and necessary, but it is only the first step in the process of evangelism. The Bible story is not the end; it is the means to the end. It is the foundation upon which we base our evangelism.

Evangelizing children does not just mean the teaching of Bible truth. It is necessary to teach the Bible story, as well as teaching Bible truths. Often Bible stories are told without Bible truth being taught. The teacher has taken a big step forward, when he realizes that the Bible story is the vehicle which he uses to teach the Bible truths, which the children need to hear.

But this is still not enough.

Evangelism involves the presentation and explanation of those Bible truths which an unsaved child needs to be saved, and the clear and definite application of those truths to his mind, heart and will.

(1) You need to be saved, because God is Holy, and your sinful nature and acts separate you from Him.

(2) You can be saved, because Jesus Christ died for the sin of the world, is risen again, and

rules as Lord.

- (3) You will be saved, if you are willing to turn from your sin, and trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

### **The Excitement of Evangelism**

Evangelism, and especially the evangelism of children, is the most wonderful, thrilling and exciting ministry in the world. Someone has said that evangelism is simply “One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” The “beggar” who has found bread is excited about what he has found, and this excitement shows as he shares with those who have not yet found it.

There is special joy in evangelizing children. We have the privilege of being able to show them the way of life. We have the thrill of being with them, watching their faces as they listen to the Gospel, and witnessing their interest in the greatest message in the world. The greatest joy of all is that of introducing them to the Lord Jesus Christ and seeing them trust the Saviour.

### **The Bible is our Source Book**

The starting point in considering the message we should teach is not, “What can children understand?” or “What do children enjoy?” Our first consideration must be “What does the Bible say we must teach?” The Word of God is our manual for evangelism. The Bible is God’s message to mankind, to every age group.

In the Acts of the Apostles, especially, we see what the Apostles taught and how they evangelized. On the day of Pentecost, Christ was the central theme of Peter’s great sermon. Christ’s death, resurrection, messiah ship and exaltation were clearly and fearlessly preached. When Paul evangelized in Athens he “started where the people were” by referring to that with which they were already familiar, their altar to the unknown god. We should search for examples like these and learn about evangelism from them. We do well to make a careful study of the message of salvation as it is revealed throughout the Scriptures.

### **There is Only One Message**

In a world where children are becoming more and more aware of different religions, where absolutes are unacceptable, where “one faith is as good as the next”, we must be convinced that there is only one message of salvation. It does not change according to the age group being evangelized. We do not have a short list of truths which are “suitable for children”, a longer one for teenagers and an even longer one for adults. We should endeavor to know and teach that fixed body of truth revealed to the apostles. They were very aware that they must teach this one message in all its purity:

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Paul instructed the young evangelist Timothy to guard the Gospel, defend it against attack and never allow it to be changed or modified. “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:14).

Of course, the evangelist will consider the age group and background of those to whom he speaks, and this will influence his presentation and application. The message, however, must not be altered or diluted in any way. When working with children we must be careful not to sacrifice truth in the interests of so-called “simplicity”.

### **The Gospel is an Extensive Message**

We have been entrusted with the Gospel, and it is our responsibility to teach it to boys and girls. What is the Gospel? Usually in the New Testament the word “Gospel” means the Good News about Jesus Christ. This is absolutely true. The Gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ. He is the Gospel, because of who He is and what He has done for sinners. This must always be the theme and goal of our Gospel preaching, just as it was that of the Apostles.

The Apostle Paul reminded the church at Corinth of the Gospel he had preached to them, that they had believed and by which they were saved. “I delivered unto you first of all... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

But if you begin to teach children who know nothing of the Bible, about the death of Jesus Christ, or the fact that He is the Saviour, you will find that they have great difficulty in understanding these truths. The Good News should be preceded by teaching about sin from which the Lord Jesus is the Saviour.

Since sin is rebellion against God, and the breaking of His Law, it cannot be understood without knowing something of the character of God. In addition, the message of salvation must include God’s invitation to come to Christ in repentance and faith. It was this wider view of redemptive truth which Paul had in mind when he told Timothy to “guard the Gospel”.

The message of salvation is an extensive message. It is good for us to think it through systematically and to formulate it so that we can understand it and teach it better. But we should not try to make it into an irreducible minimum. Children can feel that they “know it all” simply because we have reduced the message and use the same stock phrases over and over again.

### **The Gospel is a Powerful Message**

Today’s children are constantly being bombarded with anti-Christian, unbiblical concepts. Sometimes it seems that we are fighting a losing battle in trying to bring them the Gospel. From a human standpoint it appears unlikely that any impact can be made, because of the little time and influence we have with them. This is not a new problem. Corinth seemed an unlikely place for the Gospel to find entrance, yet it did. The reason is that the Gospel is not on a par with other messages; it is in a category of its own. The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16). When this message is brought “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1

Corinthians 2:4), lives are transformed. That is why we need not be hesitant or apologetic. We have the greatest and most powerful message that boys and girls can ever hear.

### **The Gospel is a Doctrinal Message**

“Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine” was Paul’s instruction to the young evangelist, Timothy, in 2 Timothy 4:2. Many of us are alarmed at the prospect of having to teach doctrine, we feel that is a subject for the experts. But this reaction is based on a misunderstanding of what doctrine is; it is simply teaching the great truths of the Scriptures. It is impossible to truly evangelize without teaching doctrines. The apostles preached Christ and in doing so taught the great truths about Him: His humanity (Acts 2:22, 23); His death (Acts 2:23); His resurrection (Acts 2:24); His exaltation (Acts 2:32 - 36); the fact that God has appointed Him the judge of mankind (Acts 17:31). The apostles often taught about God: the Creator (Acts 14:15); the Sovereign One (Acts 17:26); the One who planned salvation (Acts 3:18); the kind and just One (Acts 14:17; 17:31). They urged their hearers to repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 3:19; 16:31). They taught forgiveness, justification, and the gift of the Spirit for all who would believe (Acts 13:38, 39; 2:38). The evangelism of the apostles certainly was doctrinal. It was not academic theorizing but a bold proclamation of glorious truths.

The doctrines of the Gospel message should be taught to children. It is unwise and unbiblical to urge children to come to Christ, when we have not explained to them “Why?” and “What for?” The answers to these questions are the doctrines that must be included in our teaching. It is not sufficient to tell children little stories, and then tag on an evangelistic application. Rather, we should teach doctrine as we evangelize. In other words, we should engage in a teaching evangelism.

### **There are two extremes that we need to avoid:**

(1) Believing that it is possible to evangelize without teaching.

The truths of the Gospel are not just truths to be stated with the hope that such statements are effective, even if they are not understood. It is the evangelist’s responsibility to explain and clarify these truths as well as he can - praying and trusting that the Holy Spirit will enlighten the child spiritually. The child is led to Christ on the basis of Gospel truths that were well taught to him, as he was being evangelized.

(2) Believing that an unsaved child must understand all the truths of the Gospel before he can be saved, that his conversion must always be preceded by an extensive period of teaching Gospel truth.

This is not so! The Holy Spirit can save a child without an extensive period of teaching; and to insist on this is denial of His Sovereignty, the experience of several people in the new testament, and the experience of a number of Christians today.

### **Evangelism Should Aim for the Mind, Emotions and Will**

An evangelism which aims only at the mind is dry and sterile. An evangelism which aims

only at the emotions is superficial and temporary. An evangelism which aims only at the will is premature and hasty. As you evangelize children, instruct the mind, praying that God will enlighten it. Involve the emotions, praying that God will stir them. Challenge the will, praying that God will change its direction. Follow the pattern of evangelism to which the believers at Rome responded “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Romans 6:17). These people had heard the doctrine. Their minds were instructed, through it their emotions were stirred and in turn their wills were moved.

If you omit any one, or two, of these from your evangelism, one of two results may follow: Children may respond, but because the message was inadequate, or the emotions were attacked directly, or the wills bombarded, the results could be spurious.

Children may be truly saved, but because the evangelism was inadequate they could be confused and discouraged, especially in the early days of their new found faith.

### **We Do Not Know How Much a Child Needs to Understand of the Whole Message of Salvation**

We are not told in the Bible how much a child, or anyone else, needs to understand before they can come to Christ. Obviously there must be some sense of need and conviction of sin. There must also be some understanding of what Jesus Christ has done for them and of how they can come to Him. But some who have very little knowledge are saved, while some with much knowledge remain unsaved: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). God is sovereign in salvation. But the fact that some children with a very limited understanding trust the Saviour is not a reason for teaching very little. Our responsibility is to teach children as much as possible of the message of salvation in the time available. When children come to Christ, it is in response to the Word of God.

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

“...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).  
We must not do minimum sowing and expect maximum reaping, but rather faithfully sow and depend on God for a harvest.

### **Only God the Holy Spirit can Regenerate**

It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates and gives spiritual life to a child. When a child receives Christ, he is born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). The evangelist cannot give life to spiritually dead children. This is a work that only God can do. No teaching techniques, however perfect; no visual aids, no matter how attractive; no personality, no matter how consecrated, can do anything to bring about spiritual regeneration.

Unless God speaks and works in the child’s life, absolutely nothing can be accomplished. The task of teaching is entrusted to the evangelist. We know that the Spirit uses the Word. But

if God does not speak and bless, nothing genuine will happen. There can be human effort, and even human results, but without the gracious, convicting, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, nothing of spiritual significance will happen.

### **God is Sovereign in Evangelism**

“No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44).

One child can be deeply convicted of sin, and another remain totally unconcerned, after listening to the same message. One conscientious, faithful teacher may see several children in his class come to Christ; another who is just as faithful may see none trust the Saviour. We need to recognize God’s sovereignty in this. It will save us from sinful pride when children do find the Saviour. It will save us from despair if we do not see results. It will keep us dependent upon the One who is sovereign in evangelism.

### **God has Committed the Ministry of Evangelism to You and Me**

The wonderful truth of God’s sovereignty should never make us complacent about evangelism. The Bible plainly teaches that God’s purpose is to use people to bring the Gospel to the world. He “hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:19,20).

Paul was very conscious of his responsibility to bring the message of reconciliation. He took it seriously, saying, “we pray you” or “we implore you”. This was no half-hearted obedience. It was the ready, caring response of a man who had seen that the purpose of God included world evangelism through human messengers.

### **We Need to Know the Message**

Our ministry with children can easily slide into sentimentality, entertainment or professionalism:

“The congregation streamed out of church. It had been a special children’s service, and many were commenting on the speaker.

- ‘He really held their attention.,
- ‘He has such a good sense of humor—just what you need for children.,
- ‘Well, there wasn’t a dull moment this morning!,
- ‘Weren’t his visuals superb?’”

The speaker was obviously a success. The criteria for measuring success were the level of

laughter, the sophistication of the visuals and the personality of the speaker. This is far removed from New Testament evangelism. Surely we should be asking, “What did he teach?” If we are personally involved we should ask, “What did I teach?” If the answer is hard to find, there is something wrong with our evangelism. As we evangelize children, it is vital that we take a careful look at what we should teach and the way we should teach it.

Our desire, as we evangelize, is that children would come into a personal, living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is impossible to introduce them to the Saviour without explaining who He is. Children need to be taught why He can save. We urge them to come to Christ; but they must understand to whom they are to come. It is impossible to “preach Christ” without teaching about both His Person and His Work. These great truths must be taught in any effort which claims to be evangelism. It is vital that our evangelism is Christ-centred.

No matter where we start, no matter which path we follow, the end goal of all our evangelism must be to bring to the children the great truths concerning Jesus Christ. This was always the practice of the apostles when they evangelized; it has also been characterized by all the great preachers of the Gospel throughout Church history. For example, rarely did Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher and evangelist of the 19th Century, finish a sermon without somewhere bringing the Lord Jesus Christ before his listeners.

It does not automatically follow that we will teach children about Christ before we teach them anything else. They must be taught why they need a Saviour. This necessitates teaching about God. He is the One against whom they have sinned; He is the One to whom they are responsible; He is the One to whom they must be reconciled. When they understand something of who God is, they will better understand the seriousness of sin and its consequences. Often these truths will be taught in preparation for imparting the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. In practice, these truths are not taught in any strict or particular order. We would not, for example, omit all teaching about Christ until we had taught everything about sin. Rather we teach something about God, something about sin, something about Christ. Over a period of time the children should have an increasing understanding of these areas of truth.

There is another essential area of truth: the way of salvation. It is important that children know what God does for those whom He saves. He makes them new creations (regeneration). He makes them right with Himself (justification). Also, children must know that they should respond to the Gospel message and how they can do so. They need to be taught often that God commands them to turn from sin and to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Thus, taking a very simple, basic approach, it is obvious that there are four areas of truth: God, sin, the Lord Jesus Christ and the way of salvation. This would seem to be the logical order. The extent to which we teach them and the order in which we teach them will vary according to circumstances. Our aim, however, will remain the same. It is not only that children should come to understand truths, it is that they should come to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since we need to understand the message we are going to teach, we will examine it in the following chapters. Paradoxically, we must know the message and yet continue to learn it! The message of salvation is so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound that

even at the end of his days a great saint may feel that he is not even beginning to plumb its depths. As our understanding of the message deepens, we should become better teachers, for we can teach only what we know.

## Youth Evangelism 101

### Lesson Two Test

(1) World evangelism is the task entrusted to the (?)

(2) Holy Spirit works in and through (?)

(3) The teacher has taken a big step forward, when he realizes that the Bible story is the vehicle which he uses to teach the Bible (?)

(4) Our first consideration must be “What does the Bible say we must teach?”

(5) Please quote Galatians 1:8.

(6) In your own words, what does Galatians 1:8 mean?

(7) What are two extremes that we must avoid?

(8) Evangelism Should Aim for the (?)

(9) No matter where we start, no matter which path we follow, the end goal of all our evangelism must be to bring to the children (?)

## **Youth Evangelism 101**

### **Lesson Three**

#### **Teach about the Lord Jesus Christ**

Christianity is not just another religion, a code of conduct or an alternative lifestyle. Christianity is Christ. The Gospel is a message about a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who saves boys and girls, men and women. Salvation is having a personal vital relationship with Him.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” John 17:3).

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:28, 29).

The Christian is one who has come to know, love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ and has a deepening relationship with Him.

Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no Gospel. So our evangelism must always be Christ-centered. He is the central theme of the Scriptures, and this should be reflected in our ministries to children. They should not only hear us often teach about Him, they should sense that we speak of One we know and love. Paul and the other apostles, and all great evangelists throughout church history have always taught various truths, but the preaching of Christ was always their main goal. Jesus Christ is the only way to God, the final revelation of truth about God, and the only source of spiritual life. He must therefore be the vital breath of every Gospel presentation, and not some kind of postscript message.

This does not mean that we leave out basic doctrines concerning God and sin. Paul knew he was called to preach Christ among the Gentiles (Galatians 1:16). But he recognized that he must also teach about God and man’s rebellion, in order to fulfill his calling and, at the same time, to prepare the way for the good news of Jesus Christ.

#### **The New Testament Evangelists Preached Christ**

This was the great characteristic of apostolic evangelism. All their preaching led to Jesus Christ. While they had different approaches, depending upon the people to whom they were speaking, they always arrived at the great truths concerning Jesus Christ.

These men knew Christ as Lord and Saviour, they were eyewitnesses of His majesty, and their burning desire was that others would know Him too.

When persecution scattered believers in Jerusalem they did not stop their evangelism. “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). In Acts chapter 10 we find Peter preaching to Cornelius and his household. His message is about Christ “Lord of all”.

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree; Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:38-40, 42).

In the synagogue in Thessalonica, Paul expounded the Scriptures, “Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:3). Whatever the background of the hearers, Paul preached Christ. “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:22, 23).

The apostle’s message contrasted sharply with the dead legalism of the Jews, the endless philosophies of the Greeks, the multiplicity of religions of the Gentiles. Today’s world is filled with different ideas, religions and values. Our children need those who will teach the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not merely another religion.

### **Teach about the Person of Christ**

It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who saves. Salvation involves coming to know Him

personally. It is impossible to separate Christ from the truths which Scripture reveals concerning Him. There is no other Christ but the One revealed through the truths and doctrines of the Bible. So we must give these careful attention, learn them and make them a vital part of our evangelism.

### **The Christ we teach must be the Christ of the Scriptures.**

#### **Jesus Christ is God the Son**

Children who have heard of Jesus Christ often think of Him as “a good man who lived long ago”. To many, He is one among other good men. If that is all He was, He could not be our Saviour. The Bible clearly teaches His deity. This was the reality that Saul of Tarsus had to come to grips with when he encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

John wrote, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him”  
(1 John 4:15).

This title, “the Son of God”, so often used by the apostles, was obviously understood by them to teach the deity of Jesus Christ. But because we have so many people and cults today which teach that Jesus was a Son of God but not truly God, it is good and wise for us, in our teaching, to use and explain the names “God the Son” and “the one and only Son of God”.

He is both God the Son and the Son of God.

What’s in a name? The name of the Son of God is very significant. After the resurrection the Apostles usually called Him “Lord”. “Jesus” was His earthly name, and it was not often used on its own after His resurrection. Rather, He was generally called “the Lord Jesus”, “the Lord Jesus Christ”, or “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. We would do well to follow this pattern and emphasis His deity even in the Name we call Him.

Children need to know who it is that we are inviting them to trust! How often the Christmas story is told to children in a sentimental way. The fact that the child in the manger was God, is often lost among the glitter and trappings of Christmas. Avoid this mistake and explain carefully that the birth of this baby was different:

“You and I had a human mother and a human father, but the Lord Jesus had only a human mother. God was His Father. He had always been and will always be God; but God worked a miracle so that the little baby born to Mary was God and man.”

Often we miss the golden opportunity of a Christmas lesson to teach that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God . . . “Before He became a baby, the Son of God had always lived in heaven with God, His Father. Even at the beginning of the world He was there, for His life had no beginning.” We want children to know that the Child in the crib was the Creator of the universe.

Many New Testament stories are comprehensible only if we see this great truth at the heart of them. He healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed the storm, fed 5,000, knew the thoughts of His enemies, accepted the worship of others, forgave sins, gave eternal life. Why? Because He is God—God the son! Sometimes the children are far more familiar with the details of these stories than they are with the great central truth of who Christ is. This is something we must endeavor to put right. Some will hear the miracles “explained away”, so we must try to lay foundations which cannot be undermined. It is even more vital that children realise that the One who died on the cross was the Son of God, for only He could bear the sin of the

### **Jesus Christ is man**

In the age of Superman, Spider man, E.T. and Doctor Who, it is vital that children realize that Jesus Christ is not fictional like any of these. The Son of God became a man. This is no make believe—it is fact. The clear teaching of the New Testament is that He is completely, yet sinless, human.

“The Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). This truth was regarded as essential to the Christian faith.

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:2, 3).

As we teach children about the birth of Christ, it is important that they know He was a real baby needing to be fed and cared for like any other. Show them that He was once their age--6, 7, 8 or whatever. In lessons where Christ is tired, hungry, thirsty, sad, we should use these opportunities to teach His humanity.

But the Man who walked the shores of Galilee was unique. He was sinless Man. His enemies, His friends and His associates could find no fault in Him. He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He lived a life of perfect obedience to the law of God, resisting all temptation. This is an essential part of the Gospel message, for it is only as Perfect Man that He could be our sacrifice. Man had sinned and only a man could die for men. He is God so He could die not only for one man, but for many. He, the God-Man, could be a perfect sacrifice for sins for ever. He is still Man—there is a Man at God’s right hand. He is the One who fully understands the problems, feelings and temptations of children as well as of adults.

### **Jesus Christ is both God and Man—our Mediator**

Teach about Jesus Christ, the God-man, being careful to show that He is One person—not two! Children will accept this. You might put it like this: “He is truly a man and also God—at the same time. The Bible doesn’t explain this because it is too difficult for us to understand.

But it tells us that it is true.”

Only the God-man, Jesus Christ, could accomplish what He did when here on earth. It is because of who Christ is, and what He has done, that He can save. His Person and His Work should be closely linked in our teaching and our preaching. We will consider His Work in the following chapter.

## **Youth Evangelism 101**

### Lesson Three Test

- (1) Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, there is (?)
- (2) The Christ we teach must be the Christ of the (?)
- (3) In the age of super hero's, it is important that children understand that Jesus Christ is (?)

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Four

### Teach about the Work of Christ

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”  
(Philippians 2:6-11)

This is a magnificent summary of the work of Christ, which is an essential part of the Gospel message.

Teaching about His work could include Christ’s incarnation, His sinless life, His perfect obedience to the Father, His victory over Satan and sin, His miracles, His teaching, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation, His intercession and His Second Coming. All have an evangelistic application, but there are four aspects of the work of Christ which you ought to emphasize in particular.

### His Sinless Life

It is important to teach this truth, for only a sinless man could die for sin. In the Scriptures we meet one Man “who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Don’t be content with occasional references to “the perfect Son of God”. Carefully teach His perfection. You might do it like this:

“The Lord Jesus was a boy, just like you. I’m sure He played games with His friends in Nazareth. What happens when you think your team is going to lose? Do you try to cheat, or do you lose your temper or think angry thoughts about those on your team who don’t play as well as you? But the Lord Jesus never cheated, or lost His temper, or thought unkind thoughts about others. He never once did anything wrong.”

In this way you “bring home” to the children the perfection of Christ’s life, and at the same time show how far short of God’s standard they come. Show them Christ’s perfect obedience to the Father in the face of fierce temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13).

In the Old Testament God had instructed His people that the animals offered as sacrifices for sin were to be perfect. For example, in Leviticus 4:3 “Let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bull without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering”. These sacrifices were types of Christ’s sacrifice—He being the One who was sinless and without spot. This can be taught to children through several Old Testament stories, for example the Passover Lamb

(Exodus 12) and lessons on the tabernacle (Exodus 26-40).

Make sure the children understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only sinless one and that, because He was sinless, He could die for the sin of others.

### **His Death**

Christ's death is the central theme of the whole Bible.

The Old Testament Scriptures foretold it, the sacrifices prefigured it. In the New Testament we have the historical details of it, and the Epistles look back to it. In the New Jerusalem as seen in the book of Revelation, the theme of our song, the One we will worship, will be the Lamb who was slain.

### **Christ taught His death**

In the earthly ministry of Christ we see that He had a clear knowledge of the fact that He was going to die at God's appointed time. He taught His disciples about this, but they were slow to learn. Not only did He teach the fact that He would die, but also of the meaning of His death. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

### **The apostles preached Christ's death**

The death of Christ was preached in all the Gospel sermons found in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter told the Jews that they "killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15). "But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:18).

### **The meaning of Christ's death**

We need to give careful attention to the meaning of Christ's death. Why did He die? We must have some understanding of the answer to this question if we are going to evangelize children.

In the Bible there are several different "pictures" or "ideas" used to explain what happened at Calvary. A theme which runs through the whole of the Word of God is that of propitiation—averting God's anger by an offering. For those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ the wrath of God has been quenched through His Son's death.

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation" (Romans 3:24, 25).

If we teach carefully about God, the children will understand God's consistent reaction to

sin and the need for propitiation. To be a propitiation, Christ had to be a sacrifice and a substitute. Both of these words need to be carefully explained to children. When you teach Old Testament stories in which there are sacrifices for sin, you can show that these are pictures of Christ's sacrifice. Show them that God had said that blood must be shed if sin was to be forgiven. In the meantime, animal sacrifices were to be made, but they only pointed forward to the death of Christ. It is important that children know something of this Old Testament background in order to understand how Christ's death was one sacrifice for sin for ever.

The Bible says that Christ died as our substitute. We deserved to be punished for our sin by being separated from God forever. Christ took that punishment in our place!

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

When explaining “substitute”, you could use a story of a school boy who took the punishment someone else should have had. Then show how Christ was punished in our place.

Christ's death on the cross was also the paying of a ransom. He came “to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This was the paying of a price to set another free. Children have heard stories of people being kidnapped and a ransom price being paid. You could tell them about slavery in olden days, and how “redemption money” was paid to free a slave.]

Another picture is that of reconciliation. Christ made “peace through the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20). The context is that of two warring parties, the rebellious creature against his Creator. Christ's death dealt with the cause of the “war”: sin. In Christ, God and man are reconciled or brought together.

Obviously, it would be unwise to confuse the children by using all these pictures, either at the same time, or one after another. But they could be taught over a period of time. Do not be satisfied with saying “Jesus Christ died for you,” “the Lord Jesus died to save us,” “Christ poured out His blood.” Go deeper, and really teach the children these truths. Surely the greatest theme in Scriptures is worthy of careful, thorough explanation in our evangelism! Several Old Testament stories are clear pictures of Christ's work on the cross, and should be used to teach it. For example, the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12), the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) or the Brazen Serpent (Numbers 21:4-9). Also, children should often hear about Christ's crucifixion. They should be taught about how Christ died and about the suffering He endured.

But as you tell the story of the crucifixion, be as discreet as the Gospels are in describing His physical sufferings. These details should never be used to play on the emotions of children. Teach them that the worst suffering of all was the separation from God when the Lord Jesus suffered God's judgement on sin.

Children must never have the impression that the Lord Jesus was just the victim of a plot, caught and unable to escape. Help them to see that He willingly gave His life. He was not just ‘sent’ and given by the Father. He gave Himself.

Another word of caution—be careful about phrases like “believe that the Lord Jesus died for you, and all your sin will be taken away.” Just believing this with the mind never saved

anyone. It is the Christ who died who is the object of saving faith. Remember that His saving work must not be separated from His Person. To be saved the child must put his trust in the One who died for him.

Carefully, earnestly, prayerfully, frequently teach about Christ's death, but do not stop there—the Apostles didn't!

### **His Resurrection**

Once the risen Christ had been seen, the news spread like wildfire, and from that time on the certainty of a risen Saviour has been sounded forth in Christian evangelism. In almost every Gospel sermon recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was preached, starting with Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24).

### **The fact of the resurrection**

Sooner or later some of the children we teach are going to hear that Christ's bodily resurrection did not take place. We should have prepared them for this. As you teach the resurrection story, point out the evidence for the resurrection: the impossibility of the story that the disciples stole the body, the way in which the grave clothes were left, the fact that Christ was touched by Thomas, the fact that He ate fish and bread, and that the risen Master was seen by more than five hundred people. Also some children will come from a religious background where they often see crucifixes. They need this emphasis—He is risen!

### **The results of the resurrection**

The resurrection is visible and glorious proof that His death on the cross completely satisfied the righteous demands of God. “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him . . .” (Philippians 2:8, 9). You might express it like this:

“Do you ever wonder if what the Lord Jesus did on the cross was enough to take away all our sin for ever? The answer is a big YES! God showed that His Son had paid completely for sin when he raised Him from the dead!”

Or, “ If your mother buys something in a shop she gets a little piece of paper to show she has paid for it. That's the proof that she paid. God has given us proof that the Lord Jesus paid completely for our sin. The proof is that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead.”

The resurrection made forgiveness, justification and salvation possible. He was “raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). A dead Saviour could do nothing for us, but all the blessings of the Gospel can be offered in our Risen Lord.

The resurrection assures of an interceding High Priest in heaven: “He ever liveth to make

intercession for us” (Hebrews 7:25).

Because He lives, we shall live also. All who are Christ’s will be given a body like His glorious body and will live with Him for ever. “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

All of these blessings, and more, are ours because He lives. We cannot but share these with the children. So we teach children about One whom they can know personally. But it should not only be a matter of telling—this is a reality that should show forth in our lives. The children should see that we know Him, love Him and that the Risen Lord is real to us.

### **His Exaltation**

Teaching the children that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that He is exalted, is an essential part of our evangelism.

Dominant in apostolic evangelism

There was nothing apologetic or half-hearted about the evangelism of the early church. They knew that the Christ they preached was the Exalted One. He had been given a position of absolute lordship by the Father.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

It is not a matter of His becoming King at a later date, He is King now. He is no longer in the place of humiliation, where he allowed His enemies to mock Him, beat Him and spit on Him. He has the place of honor and authority, at the right hand of the Father.

Little wonder the early evangelists spoke with boldness. They served the King, they proclaimed the King: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”(Acts 2:36).

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

This glorious theme continues throughout the Epistles—both in relation to the Gospel, and to the instruction of believers. The emphasis was “Jesus Christ is Lord”. Indeed this was one of the earliest Christian confessions of faith.

Paul wrote in Romans 10:9: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (literally Jesus as Lord), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12, 13).

Paul described his ministry as preaching “not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

### **Essential for today’s evangelism**

We too, must teach the children that “Jesus Christ is Lord”, He is King. We are not presenting a weak Christ, whom the children can make happy by asking Him into their hearts! They come to a risen, exalted Christ. He is the King of kings, before whom they are to bow the knee. They are to submit their wills to Him. If people do not bow before Christ as their Lord and Saviour in this life, one day they will bow before Him as their Judge in the life to come.

“Every knee should bow,...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10, 11).

You might say, for example, “Can you think of some of the famous rulers we have? These men think they decide what happens in their countries, when to start wars or stop wars. They think they are in charge—but they are not. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is King over all kings, and they can do nothing but what He allows.”

This great fact should be taught as you teach many of the incidents recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, for example: Peter’s imprisonment and escape (Acts 12); the healing of the lame man (Acts 3); Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16); Paul’s trials before Felix, Festus and Agrippa (Acts 24, 25).

We must ask ourselves, “Is the Christ I teach, the Christ of the Scriptures?” Sometimes children hear only of “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” (and He is gentle and meek), but we must teach that He is King, Lord of all. If children realise who He is, they will realise that when they trust Him as Saviour, they take the first step of submission to Him as King. They will know that He will take charge of their lives, and that He will make changes in those lives.

Christ is the Lord of Glory, the King of kings, yet He desires that children should come to Him. Listen to His gracious words, “Suffer the little children to come unto me” (Mark 10:14).

May the children whom we teach come to realise who He is, and enter into a living relationship with Him.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Four Test

- (1) Who's death is central to the whole Bible?
- (2) Name two people mentioned in this test who taught about Jesus' death.
- (3) Name three things that 1 Peter 3:18 mentions about Christ death.
- (4) Why should we be careful about saying phrases like “believe that the Lord Jesus died for you,?”

## Youth Evangelismv101

### Lesson Five

#### Teach about God in Evangelism

“When I was little I wondered who would be God when God died, I thought I might be God.”

“God has black hair and a black beard; he is old, very old. He has brown eyes and wears a striped cloak like a dress. He has great power.”

These comments from children show that the average child has no conception of the God of the Bible. He is never mentioned at home; most of the adults he meets in his family, neighborhood and school, live as if God did not exist. Society generally regards those who worship Him as objects of humor and scorn. Even children who attend Sunday school can have a distorted view of Him. Sometimes they have gleaned a little knowledge about Him, and put their imaginative mind to work to interpret these gleanings. Of course, their imaginings are often far removed from the truth:

“God is a great person. He is all white. He created everything, He created the cars, the houses, the trees.”

“God is a Spirit, He has a beard and a cloak.”

#### Teaching about God is the Basis of Evangelism

Man is prone to idolatry; he constantly fashions a god according to his own ideas. Often we hear people say, “I can’t imagine God being like that.” Paul pinpoints this idolatry at the beginning of Romans.

“And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever” (Romans 1:23, 25)

People in every age group imagine a god. God’s charge “thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psalm 50:21), is applicable to all. Children, unless taught the character of God as revealed in the Bible, will have a “false god”.

Salvation is turning “to God from idols” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). So it is imperative that children know something about the God to whom they should turn. How tragic it would be if they turned to a god whom they imagined.

Salvation is knowing God, being in fellowship with the true and living God of whom the Scriptures speak. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom thou hast sent” John 17:3).

The primary goal of the Gospel and of the work of Christ is to bring us to God. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

So teaching about this “living and true God” is essential in our evangelism. We must teach boys and girls what He has revealed of Himself.

Remember, too, that the whole plan of salvation began with God. Paul speaks of “the Gospel of God” (Romans 1:1). God took the initiative to save sinners; He gave His Son. Often children get the totally unbiblical idea that God was going to punish us for our sins, and the Lord Jesus intervened to save us. The Gospel begins with God and our evangelism should begin there also.

### **The Lord Jesus and the Apostles Taught about God when Evangelizing**

Teaching about God the Father is very evident in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the woman of Samaria, who had obviously a very limited and inadequate understanding of God, He made that very significant declaration:

“God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit  
and in truth” (John 4:24).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught both His disciples and the unsaved multitudes that the Father sends sun and rain to both the just and the unjust. He sees in secret, He answers prayers, He rewards, He provides for His children. Time and time again Christ taught that He was sent by the Father. Not only did He teach about God the Father, but He revealed Him:

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

We must remember that most of the people whom Christ taught were well acquainted with Old Testament teaching about God; so He did not have to start teaching the very basics. Most children today have no such knowledge. It is our responsibility to endeavor to provide them with it.

It is very interesting and helpful to examine the evangelism carried out by the Apostles in the Acts. When they spoke to Jews they assumed, as their Master had done, some basic knowledge of the Old Testament teaching about God. When they ministered to Gentiles, however, they found it necessary to teach them basic doctrines about God.

When Paul and Barnabas visited Lystra, it was obvious the people were devoted to false gods like Zeus and Hermes, for this is who they thought Barnabas and Saul were! The evangelists’ message was we “preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and

the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:15).

The emphasis was the same when Paul encountered the worshipers of the “unknown god”, the intellectuals of Athens: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23). The first three chapters of Paul’s masterly exposition of the Gospel in his letter to the Romans, are full of teaching about God: Creator, Judge, holy, righteous and faithful. If we follow the example of these early evangelists, our evangelism among children will include teaching about God.

### **There are many Truths to Teach About God**

What should we teach them about Him? Just about all the attributes of God have an application to unsaved children; so we should never feel that some should necessarily be excluded from evangelism. God’s attributes are ways in which He reveals Himself; we must be careful not to teach them as vague abstractions. Children need to have these truths taught in the context of concrete situations. They will understand God’s omnipresence much better when they see the futility of Jonah’s efforts to escape from Him. As we teach how Nebuchadnezzar discovered that God is the Almighty One, they will come to some understanding of that great truth. Do not assume, however, that children will learn these great truths if we simply tell them Bible stories. They need to have their attention focused on God and what He does, in these narratives of Bible history. The teacher must take time to explain the particular truth which is central to the lesson. It is not enough just to say “God is everywhere”. Spell out what this means; explain it. Where is “everywhere”? Why can God be everywhere?

Also, these truths should be applied to the lives of the children. Yes, God is everywhere. But what difference should this make in the lives of the children? Answer that question as you teach.

- God is holy (Isaiah 6:3)--you must be made pure before Him
- God is love (John 3:16)--if you turn from sin and come to Him, He will forgive you
  - God is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12)--do not try to get away from Him
  - God is all-knowing (Psalm 139:1-6)--be careful about what you do in secret
- God is faithful (Hebrews 10:23)--take heed to His Word for He will always do what He says.

In the following chapters we will deal with attributes of God which ought to be emphasized. This does not imply that others ought to be excluded. But it would be impossible to deal with every attribute in detail! The truths which will be discussed are foundational when teaching the message of salvation. The apostles emphasized them as they presented the Gospel.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Five Test

- (1) Teaching about God is the (?)
- (2) According to John 4:24, God is (?)
- (3) God's (?) are ways in which He reveals Himself.
- (4) List five truths that need to be applied to the lives of Children.

# **Youth Evangelism 101**

## **Lesson Six**

### **Teach that God has spoken, and that He is the Creator**

The reason why we can know about God and know Him is that He has chosen to reveal Himself. He has shown something of His character through creation and our conscience. This is revelation which all mankind hears. He has, however, spoken more clearly and directly:

#### **God has Spoken to us Through the Bible**

Establish the authority for your message

Young children accept everything the teacher says. If “teacher” says it, it must be right! In our evangelism it is important that children do not accept our teaching on that basis alone.

They should see and understand that we teach the Bible, the Word of God. The Apostles preached the Gospel from the Scriptures. Peter said, “Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled” (Acts 3:18). In the epistles there is great emphasis on the fact that God’s plan of salvation was according to the Scriptures.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; ...and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

Children need to see that the message we bring is not our ideas, or someone else’s ideas, but that it is based on the written Word of God. Use phrases like “God says in the Bible” and “the Bible says”. When questions are asked, answer them from the Bible, rather than saying “I think...” The child needs to know that the answers are “God’s answers” rather than just “teacher’s answers”. It is good to teach from an open Bible. This is a continual visual reminder of your authority. Include short quotations from the Bible in your teaching. As children become older you should involve them in finding answers for themselves in the Bible.

#### **Explain that the Bible is God’s Word**

We should explain that the Bible is different from any other book. It is not just a book about God, it is God’s Word, God’s message to us (2 Timothy 3:16). All the words in the Bible, although written down by men, are exactly the words God wanted them to write. The Bible is God speaking to us, just as much as if He were to speak in a loud voice from the sky.

He doesn’t do that, of course, for here in the Bible we have all God wants to say to us. Children will hear the Bible ridiculed and its reliability brought into question. It is important that we prepare them for this. In a regular ministry you should at some time explain how we

obtained the Bible. Show the children how to treat the Bible and where necessary, correct them if they are abusing it.

There are several Bible stories which teach the authority of God's Word: the giving of the Law (Exodus 19, 20); the discovery of the Law during Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22); the prophecies concerning Christ (Micah 5:2; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53); Ezra reading the Law to the people (Nehemiah 8); King Jehoiakim burning God's Word (Jeremiah 36).

**Teach children a song, or songs, which clearly show that the Bible is God's Word; for example:**

“My God is bigger than I am” (verse 2)

“I have a precious book, it's the Word of God, It's the only book that God has given. As I read, God speaks to me, I see Christ and Calvary, The wonderful Word of God.”

(Visualised choruses published by CEF)

Another song, especially suitable for very young children is “I believe the Bible” (Salvation Songs 4 No. 14)

From time to time select and teach a memory verse on the same theme. For example, the first part of 2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 24:35 and “Thy word is truth” from John 17:17.

Our goal and prayer is that the children will realise that the Bible is the Word of God, and that they should obey all of the Bible all of the time.

### **Exemplify what you teach**

Without ever being told, children will sense that you love the Bible, that you believe it is God's Word, that your life is moulded by it. This will make a deep impression upon the lives of the children you teach. It will speak even louder than what you say. Set them an example in your obedience to and your love and reverence for the Scriptures.

### **God is Creator**

One of the great fundamental truths of evangelism is the fact that God has created boys and girls, and that they are therefore responsible to Him. This is a truth which has often been neglected in present day evangelism; and we need to be sure that we do not omit it.

### **Reasons for Teaching about the Creator**

This is where the Bible begins

“In the beginning God created...” These are the very significant opening words of the revelation of God. Sometimes we are in such a hurry to teach the heart of the message of salvation, or to apply the Gospel message, that we omit this important foundational truth. He is the One whom we have a responsibility to worship and obey. As we read on through the

Scriptures, the call of the Gospel comes from a position of strength, from the Almighty Creator. God is our Maker and so He has a claim on our lives: we are answerable to Him.

This is what the Apostle Paul taught the Gentiles

The Jews already knew that the Lord God was their Creator, so the Apostles did not have to include this in their message to them. But listen to Paul as he preaches to those who, like so many adults and children today, were ignorant of this truth:

“Ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God which made heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:15).

“He did good and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons” (Acts 14:17).

“Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth” (Acts 17:23, 24)

“He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25).

“In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

This is what today’s children need to know

The quiz was in progress. “In whose image was man made?” the teacher asked.

Immediately a child raised his hand. He was confident he knew the answer to this question. “He was made like an ape!” was his reply. Children are being taught various evolutionary and humanistic theories. Many of the books they read and the television programmes they see assume acceptance of these theories. The results are very serious. Evolution eliminates man’s accountability to God. If the beginning of things started with a “Big Bang” (or whatever other unbiblical ideas are suggested), God is not our Creator, so we are not responsible to Him.

There is an urgent need to teach children that God is Creator. We must begin when the children are very young and continue to teach this great truth in more and more detail as they grow older. They need to know that Almighty God created them; therefore He is the One to whom they must give an account. He is the One they must worship and obey.

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psalm 95:6).

Often we bemoan the fact that children are irreverent. Perhaps we are partly to blame, for the God we have taught them about is too small! Children need to see how great their God is before we can hope to see them having awe and reverence. As we teach them about the Creator, they will see how small and dependent on Him they are. As they see His greatness, they will learn that the One who made the universe can be trusted completely for everything.

“Our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8).

We should definitely include this truth in our evangelism. We must teach it, and teach it well. Children need to be introduced to their Creator, a fact underlined in Ecclesiastes 12:1.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1) .

## **How to Teach This Truth to Children**

Teach the truth about creation as found in the early chapters of Genesis

Make sure the children know and understand Genesis chapters 1-3. Emphasise that God created the universe from nothing. You may find it helpful to ask them “Have you ever made anything?” Discuss the materials they used and how it all turned out in the end! Then show how God made something far more wonderful, out of nothing. As you explain that God made man, it is important to explain that this was the most wonderful part of God’s creation. What does it mean that man was made “in the image of God”? It means that in some ways man was like God. God gave man a mind to think. He gave man a soul, so that he could know, love and obey God. Man’s soul would live for ever.

### **Know your facts**

It is good if you know fascinating little details about God’s creation. You can use these occasionally to show how great our Creator is. You might say something like this: “Did you know that every spider has about 600 silk glands, and is just like a complicated silk making factory?”

The spider can make several different kinds of silk and knows when to use each one for making a web, wrapping up an insect she has caught, protecting eggs or parachuting through the air! We can’t fully understand even a little everyday spider. Doesn’t it show us how great and wonderful her Maker is?”

From time to time a child may come and ask you to prove that there is a God, or say “My Uncle says there is no God”. You could take off your watch and ask the child how all those little parts came together to make a watch. The answer is obvious; someone made the watch. Similarly new models of cars don’t just “happen”; someone must design them. Our universe is far more complicated, and yet every little part is perfect. Wherever we look in the world, we see clues that everything that exists has infinite power, thought and care behind it.

### **Memories and sing**

Ask the children to memorize Bible verses, which teach that God is the Creator—Genesis 1:1; Psalm 95:6; Psalm 102:25. Also carefully select songs or hymns which teach this truth and express worship and reverence for the Creator. For example, “Thou art a wonderful God”; “I sing the mighty power of God”; “My God is bigger than I am” (All visualized and published by CEF)

### **Apply the truth**

This truth should be carefully and thoroughly applied to the children, as in the following examples:

“Do you make fun of other boys and girls who are not the same as you are? Do you make fun of someone in school because they are not as clever as you, or because they are a different colour from you, or because they are not as good at sports as you? Remember God made you

the way you are, and He made your friends the way they are. Therefore it is sinful for you to make fun of others who are different.”

Or “You may have heard people say ‘It doesn’t matter about God., “ Perhaps you are refusing to let God be in charge of your life. Don’t forget, that because God made you, you must answer to him for everything you do. You might disobey Him, and try to forget about Him, but one day you must meet Him.”

Or “It is a very, very serious thing to disobey the One who made you. He is your Maker, and you should love and obey Him.”

Or “You have heard how God could make the universe from nothing. He can also make disobedient boys and girls into different people...into a new creation. He can change you, and make you into the kind of person He wants you to be.”

Or “Doesn’t God look after everything He has made? He cares for everything in a very wonderful way. And He cares for His children. When you trust Jesus Christ, God the great Creator becomes your loving Heavenly Father.”

In our world more glory is given to the creature than to the Creator. Many children will never know of the One “in whom we live and move and have our being”, unless we tell them. The Creator has revealed Himself through His Word. God has spoken; so we can go to the children with confidence. We know that what we tell them is true, for it is written in His Word.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Six Test

- (1) Teach that God has (?), and that He speaks to us through (?)
  
- (2) What are a couple ways mentioned in this lesson that you can teach that God is the creator?

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Seven

### Teach the Holiness and Justice of God

God's holiness means that He is completely pure and perfect. He is apart from all that is impure, all that is false, all that is sinful.

God's justice means that everything He does is right. The demands he makes on mankind are righteous demands. His rewards and punishments will always be consistent with His holy nature: He rewards the good, and punishes the evil.

God's justice is the outworking of His holiness. The two truths are closely linked, so we will consider them together. This does not mean that they will always be taught together.

### Reasons for Teaching the Holiness and Justice of God

God's holiness and justice are taught throughout the Bible

These doctrines are often neglected in evangelism. Yet in the Bible more emphasis is probably placed on the holiness and justice of God than any other of God's attributes. Time and time again God is called "The Holy One of Israel".

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15).

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3).

Peter explained why believers should live holy lives: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

The holiness of God will be an eternal theme of the redeemed in the New Jerusalem. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8b). The reality of divine justice shines out from page after page of Bible history. "He cometh to judge . . . the world with righteousness and the people with his truth" (Psalm 96:13).

In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle and the different kinds of sacrifices reminded God's people of the absolute holiness and justice of God. This emphasis is not restricted to the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself often warned of judgement. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Modern man does not want to hear these truths, but this is no reason for omitting them from our evangelism. Remember, the Bible is our handbook of evangelism. If the holiness and justice of God are emphasized there, that emphasis should also be found in our teaching.

Perhaps some object that these truths are "unsuitable for children". It was the Law, reflecting very clearly both the holiness and justice of God, which God instructed His people to "teach . . . diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6:7). The first Old Testament book which Jewish children are taught is Leviticus, the book of the Bible where the word "holy" is most mentioned. God's instruction to His people through the prophet Joel, was that their

children were to be told of the judgement that had taken place (Joel 1:3). Obviously, we will be careful how we teach these truths, but teach them we must, for God does not cease to be God because of the age group involved.

#### God's holiness and justice were preached by the Apostles

When the Apostles preached to Jews, they often implied these truths. Implication was sufficient, for the Jews knew what the Old Testament Scriptures revealed of the character of God. When Paul evangelized Gentiles, he taught these truths, for they knew nothing of them.

Paul must have regarded these truths as a vital part of his evangelism.

“God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:30, 31).

When Paul wrote to the Romans, he wrote to a church which he, himself, had not founded and visited. This church probably consisted of, for the most part, Gentile believers with a minimum of Old Testament background. He began the letter by emphasizing the holy character of God, and the righteousness and justice which were the outworking of God's holiness. He does not present the death of Christ until chapter 3:22.

#### God's holiness and justice show man his sin

When children learn something of the purity of God, they will see how impure they are. They will begin to see sin as something serious—rebellion against a holy God. It was when Isaiah saw the Lord in His holiness that he said, “Woe is me!...because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). This was also the experience of Moses (Exodus 3), Peter (Luke 5:8) and John (Revelation 1:17).

#### God's holiness and justice explain the cross

God is holy and therefore a sinner cannot enter His presence, or go to Heaven when he dies. But Jesus Christ became the sinner's substitute and God, in His justice, poured out His wrath and punishment for sin upon His Son. Therefore the death of Christ was necessary for our salvation. If God is not holy, there is no need for salvation. If God is not just, there is no need for the death of Christ.

#### Children today do not understand about holiness and justice

In the world today, there is very little understanding of what holiness and justice really are.

Children are growing up in a world of low moral standards. They see impurity, dishonesty and profanity. Sin is glamorous, crime pays. Biblical standards, which were once respected in Western society, have been warped, trampled on or thrown to the winds. We cannot assume that children already know these attributes of God—they don't! We dare not omit them from our message; if we do, we are less than Biblical.

Even in the home, the child's grasp of what justice is may be warped. In this present age of materialism, parents spend less time with their children and are not so aware of what they get up to. It's easier to “turn a blind eye” and not punish the child's wrong doing. Many children learn to expect this when they do wrong. Mum or Dad most probably will not carry out the threatened punishment. So they learn to think about God's justice in the same way: “God loves me, He won't really keep me out of heaven!”

Children must see that being a Christian involves living a holy life  
“Be ye holy, for I am holy” saith the Lord. When we teach that God loves what is good and hates what is evil, that He is pure, that He always does what is right, then there are obvious implications for the children, when they come to faith in Christ. When they are born again into God’s kingdom, one of the results will be a desire to live a life pleasing to a Holy God.

## **How to Teach God’s Holiness and Justice to Children**

### **Teach it simply...**

Saying “God is holy” or “God is just” is not teaching these truths. First of all, we need to think of other words and phrases which will help communicate this truth. Phrases like “pure”, “perfect”, “everything He does is right”; “God is different from us, God is far above us, God never does anything wrong”; “He loves what is good, He hates what is bad”; “Sin cannot be where God is”. “Sometimes we watch things on television which we would never dream of doing ourselves. We like to watch fighting, or we listen to bad language. But God hates those things. He is so good and pure that He cannot allow sin to be near Him” (Habakkuk 1:13)

We must also illustrate the truth. The following illustration may help. Have three “white” handkerchiefs—one that is grubby and soiled, one that has been washed and washed and has lost its dazzling whiteness, and a new bright white one. Say to the boys and girls, “Maybe you are like this handkerchief (2nd one); your life looks quite good and when you think of some boys and girls in your class your life seems very good (hold up grubby handkerchief with the other). They use bad language and you don’t; they steal from the shop if they have a chance—you wouldn’t do that; they never go to church and you do. But it’s different when you think about you and God. He never, never told a lie, but you have. He is always good and kind, you’re not. He can’t have sin near Him, but you like to watch some sinful things or listen to tales about someone. He never, never sins and you sin every day. When you think of how good and pure God is (hold up pure white handkerchief), your life (hold up appropriate one) seems sinful and bad. How different you are from God. The Bible says “All our righteousness’s are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

What about God’s justice? We can explain to children that God is absolutely fair. When He punishes it is the right punishment, when He rewards it is the right reward. No one will ever be able to say to God, “It’s not fair”. Unlike Moms and Dads and teachers (who are not always fair because they do not know all the facts) God always knows all the facts. Also He always has the power to punish and reward; no-one can escape His justice.

### **Teach it thoroughly**

It is best to explain the truth step by step using this simple kind of language in the context of a Bible story. These truths are so much taught throughout the Bible that it is not difficult to find stories which teach them naturally and forcefully. There are the stories of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3); Noah (Genesis 6, 7, 8); the giving of the Law (Exodus 19, 20); Achan (Joshua 7); teaching about the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (Exodus 36 - 40); the worshiping of the golden calf (Exodus 32); Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 6). These are but a few of the many Bible

lessons which teach these truths. Throughout the narrative, focus the children's attention clearly on the truth you are teaching—rather than on some little details in the story.

When you teach about the death of Christ, it is important that children realize that God's justice demanded that sin must be punished. Because He is holy He had to forsake His Son, because He "became sin for us". Explain that God does not stop being holy and just when He forgives. The sin which He forgives has already been punished in His Son.

### **Teach it frequently**

Choose memory verses which teach these truths. For example, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalm 145:17). Other verses which teach this truth include Isaiah 6:3; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 24:3-5; Matthew 5:8; Psalm 19:9. Unfortunately, there are very few children's songs which teach them. Surely this is evidence that this kind of teaching has been neglected! You should, however, carefully select a hymn which teaches this truth in a fairly simple way. The first and third verses of "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (found in most hymnbooks) could be used.

### **Teach it by Example**

The example of a teacher who has caught a glimpse of the holiness of God will make an impression on children. This does not mean being sanctimonious or giving the impression that God is so remote that He is not interested in boys and girls. But as the teacher prays, the children should be aware that he is speaking to the Holy One. As he teaches these great truths it should be from a heart that has been gripped by them. A teacher who lives a holy life will certainly be a living testimony to a Holy God.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Seven Test

- (1) God's holiness means that He is completely (?)
- (2) Children must see that being a Christian involves living a (?)
- (3) Teach it (?), teach it (?), Teach it (?), and teach it by example.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Eight

### Teach the Love of God

Without God's love, grace and mercy, there would be no Good News. It was love that sent the Son of God to earth, to be our Saviour. It was love that led Him to die for us on Calvary's cross. It was love that saved us, when we were unlovely and had no thought for God and His Word. "He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

The love of God is seen in His care for all His creation. This is sometimes called the goodness of God. "The Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm 145:9).

Unlike human love, God's love is not the result of something attractive in the one loved. God loves sinners, those who are utterly unworthy and have forfeited all right to His love. The love of God is always bound up with His grace, His favor, undeserved by us.

The mercy of God is an aspect of His love. It describes His feeling and action towards those who sin and suffer. In mercy He restrains and withholds the penalty deserved by the sinner.

### Reasons for Teaching the Love of God

#### God's love is taught in the Bible

In the Old Testament we see God's love primarily in His special relationship with His people, His care, protection and provision for them. Even when they were rebellious and ungrateful, His love remained steadfast. We see this very much in those moving verses in Hosea:

"How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel...mine heart is turned within me" (Hosea 11:8).

Similarly in Jeremiah we find the same declaration of love for His people: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

The children of Israel experienced this love in many ways, not least in God's merciful dealings with them when they were stubborn, rebellious and wayward.

"For the Lord thy God is a merciful God" (Deuteronomy 4:31).

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22).

We see God's love in His gracious invitation to sinners, which is found in the Old Testament as well as the New. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

In the New Testament the love of God is seen supremely in His sending of Jesus Christ to die on the cross as the sinners' substitute. But it is also seen in the salvation of those who

believe. If love is measured by what is given, God's love is immeasurable!

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:8, 9, 10).

For the believer there is nothing surer than the love of God for him. This is the love of a Heavenly Father caring for His child. It is a love from which nothing can separate him.

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

### **The love of God makes salvation possible**

If God had not been loving and merciful towards us, there could never have been salvation and there would be no Gospel to preach. It is important that children realize how much we are indebted to God. In a world where so many are aware of their rights, children should see that salvation is not a right, but a gift of God's free grace. This is why John 3:16 begins, “For God so loved the world that he gave...”

### **Many children do not know that God is a God of love**

Many are totally ignorant of God—so the concept of a God of love is totally alien to them.

Some have been unwisely threatened with God:

“God will get you”. So their concept is of someone with a rod ready to strike when they step out of line. We must teach them that God is a personal God, One who hates sin but loves sinners, One who can be known, worshiped and loved.

### **Many children have no understanding of what love is**

In today's world, and on today's media, the very meaning of the word “love” is debased. It has come to mean getting rather than giving, self-gratification rather than wanting the highest good for the one loved. At a very young age children are listening to pop music which conveys what is only a perversion of love. Some experience over-indulgence, others suffer from neglect.

“Many suffer material over-indulgence at home as a substitute for the self-giving love of their parents. This kind of “love” fluctuates with the financial prosperity of the parents. If they are low on finances and there is a need for a new washing machine or a new car, the child cannot have something which he would normally be bought as an expression of the parent's love. They need to hear about the steadfast, sure, self-giving love of God.”

### **How to Teach the Love of God**

In the Bible Lessons

Many, many Bible stories show the love of God in action, and the children's attention should be centered on what God does, rather than on what certain individual characters do. Do not be satisfied with just saying "this story shows us that God loves sinners". Really teach the meaning of God's love and the various aspects of it that are evident in the story. We do not want children to assume that God's love is similar to the perversions of love which many of them encounter. The following lessons could be used to teach the love of God with particular emphasis on some aspects of it.

Life of Jacob (Genesis 27-33).....God's love is unchanging  
 Life of Joseph (Genesis 37, 39-47)..... God cares for His own  
 Deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12, 13)..... God's love is powerful  
 Provision in the wilderness (Exodus 16, 17) .....God is good  
 Christmas Story (Matthew 1, 2) ..... God's love is shown in the gift of His Son  
 Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) .....God is gracious  
 Samaritan Women (John 4:1-42) .....God loves the individual  
 Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)..... God loves the unlovely  
 Conversion of Saul (Acts 9) .....God is merciful  
 Peter's Vision (Acts 10) ..... God loves all kinds of people

As you teach the death of Christ show that it was because "God so loved the world that He gave." Emphasis the magnitude of the gift and what it cost God to save sinners.

### **Through memory verses and songs**

There are many Bible verses and passages which teach the love and mercy of God. The following are just a few suggestions of verses which children could memories: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The love of God is also clearly taught in Psalm 103:8-10; John 3:16, 17; 1 John 4:10, 19. When choosing hymns about the love of God, try to select those which teach some aspect of this glorious truth rather than songs which are only a subjective response to God's love. "I am so glad that our Father in heaven" (in most hymn books) and "For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son" (Salvation Songs 3 No. 38) teach something of God's love.

### **With balance**

"God is love" ( 1 John 4:8) is the best known, yet sometimes most misunderstood, Biblical definition of God. "God is love" is not the entire truth about God. The apostle John who wrote these words also wrote "God is light" (1 John 1:5). So God's acts of love will always be holy acts. His love is a holy love.

It is important to recognise the relationship between God's holiness, and His love in the plan of salvation.

The holiness of God makes salvation necessary, and reveals to the child his sinful heart and rebellion.

The love of God makes salvation possible, and reveals to the child God's answers to the problem of his sin.

The holiness of God therefore is very basic in the teaching of the Gospel, and is, in a real sense, the first and primary attribute of God to be presented to lost children. As the child sees

his sinfulness in the light of God's holiness, and is concerned and convicted about his need, he is ready to hear about God's remedy in the cross and resurrection of Christ. This is the message of God's love—the answer to a need created by a glimpse of God's holiness. It is therefore very important to teach the holiness of God and the love of God, with Biblical balance.

On the one hand, it is possible to teach the love of God to the exclusion of His holiness. Such teaching will often find a ready acceptance, even in unregenerate hearts. If God is only a God of love, He will overlook many things, and we do not need to worry too much about our sin. This can give a weak picture of God which is not the picture given in the Bible.

On the other hand, we should not swing to the opposite extreme and omit or lessen the wonderful truth that God is a God of love and mercy. This truth is especially taught as we teach the coming, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we teach that God is only a God of holiness, then we give an equally incorrect picture of God.

God is a God of love and mercy; but He is also a God of holiness and justice. To teach either truth to the exclusion of the other is to move away from the message of the Bible.

### **By example**

The teacher needs to have experienced the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost and this love must show in his life. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 13 and ask God to make this love more and more evident in your life. The teacher's life and message must consistently say to boys and girls, "God is love"

### **Conclusion**

It is important that we should give careful thought to this matter of teaching children about the character of God. Once convinced that this is part of Biblical evangelism, we must endeavor to include it in our evangelism. Our prayer should be that God will give our children an awareness and fear of Himself and, above all, a knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Eight Test

- (1) Without God's (?), (?) and (?), there would be no Good News.
  
- (2) List two bible stories that teach God's love, and what these two stories teach ABOUT God's love.

# **Youth Evangelism 101**

## **Lesson Nine**

### **Teaching about Sin in Evangelism**

“Have you ever done anything wrong?” asked the teacher. One or two children dropped their eyes. One was thinking of a vase which had fallen and broken as she helped her mother with housework. Another thought of the day he had been caught taking money out of his brother’s pocket. One little girl, with big, wide, innocent brown eyes, looked straight at the teacher. “Oh no! Mummy says I’m a good girl!”

All of these children had an inadequate understanding of sin. One felt guilty about something which had actually been an accident, another remembered being caught, another had no consciousness of sin.

We want children to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, but before they can trust Him as Saviour, they must be aware of the sin from which they need to be saved. So, careful Biblical teaching about sin is an essential part of the evangelist’s message.

### **Sin is Against God**

Society regards sin as a breach of accepted standards of decency, selfishness, hurting other people or harming yourself. Children are molded by these values and reflect them. Many children don’t know to ask “Is it right?” They have been conditioned to ask “Does it pay?” or “Will I get caught?” They may have a vague awareness that it is wrong to steal, but have no understanding of why it is wrong. Take the following example of a teacher’s explanation of sin. “As mother left the house she told Bobby that he should not take any of the biscuits which were in the container in the cupboard. She knew that Bobby liked biscuits very much! Bobby looked at her with wide open eyes and said that he would certainly not take any of them. After his mother had left, Bobby thought longingly of those biscuits. Then he decided to take a look at them, and see how many there were. As he opened the lid of the container, the smell of the biscuits drifted up to his nose. He could not resist it any more. He took one, and then a second, and then a third. But he heard footsteps coming up the path; so he hurriedly put the lid on the container and put it back in the cupboard.

His mother entered the room. Her first question was, ‘Bobby, did you take any of those biscuits?’ Bobby looked at her with an innocent expression. ‘No mother, I did not. You told me not to, and I obeyed you.’”

“Boys and girls, what has Bobby done? Yes, he has sinned. What do you mean? How did he sin? Yes, he disobeyed his mother, he took something that did not belong to him, and he told a lie. It is wrong to do these things. They are sin. You and I have done things like this also, haven’t we? We all have sinned! “

Is this an adequate illustration? Of course not. Everything is dealt with on a horizontal level. The fact that sin is against God has been omitted. In such an illustration it needs to be pointed out that when Bobby disobeyed his mother, he was breaking God’s command which said “Honour thy father and thy mother”. When he told a lie, he was disobeying God’s command, “Thou shalt not bear false witness”. He had broken God’s Law. Breaking God’s Law is sin.

In our teaching we must not underestimate the gravity of breaking God’s Law, or teach views that are very far removed from what the Bible teaches. We read in the Bible about “transgressions” (Isaiah 43:25), which means rebellion against God; “iniquity” (Isaiah 59:2), which means depravity, something which is warped and twisted; “guile” (Psalm 32:2), which

means deceit or hypocrisy. The word translated as “sin” in the Bible means “failing to hit a target”, or “failing to reach a standard” (Romans 3:23). It also means “failing to obey an authority” (Nehemiah 9:26), “failing to keep to the correct path” (Exodus 32:8). It is God’s target which is missed, God’s standard which is not reached, God’s authority which is disobeyed, and God’s path which is not kept to.

Now we see how vital it is that children know something about God. You could point out that they might not worry too much if they don’t do what a classmate wishes. But if they don’t do what the headmaster wishes, it is more serious because he is in a position of authority.

Then think how serious it is to rebel against God, who is almighty, holy and just!

Incidentally, all these pictures of sin are concrete enough to use when explaining sin to children. They could even be visualized. Do not use them all at once, but take one at a time. The Bible teaches that sin is primarily against God. When King David committed adultery he sinned against Bathsheba, against Uriah and against his people. Yet in his repentance we see that he acknowledged his sin as being primarily against God—

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (Psalm 51:4).

Sin is turning one's back on God. It is the weak, little creature shaking his fist in rebellion against the Almighty Creator. It is exalting yourself against Him. It is withholding the worship due to Him, putting yourself in His place. All people including children, are guilty, for unregenerate man is hostile to God.

### **Sin is Transgression of the Law**

One of the most Biblical and effective ways of showing that sin is against God and that it is serious, is to teach God's Law, given in Exodus 20 and His commandments, given in the New Testament.

“. . . Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4)

“...by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20)

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19).

“I had not known sin, but by the law” (Romans 7:7).

In James 1:22- 25 the Word of God is compared to a mirror. A mirror cannot wash your face but it can show you where it needs to be cleaned. In the same way, we cannot be saved or made clean by keeping God's commands, but they can show us what is wrong and against God's will in our lives.

In a regular ministry it is good at some stage for the children to memorise the Ten Commandments. The “Ten Commandments Song” (published by European CEF) teaches the law very effectively and includes a gospel application. God's standards are summed up in the Ten Commandments, as given to us in Exodus 20. Of course, other commandments are also given by God in the New Testament, in addition to the Ten Commandments. The Lord Jesus took each of these ten and restated and even deepened their significance.

When we teach about specific sins, we should show the children why they are wrong. We will not be content with, “You know when you cheat, or tell lies about someone, the Bible calls that sin.” Rather, we will say something like this, “Remember that day you copied the answers from someone else? You didn't get caught and it helped you pass the exam. But listen to one of God's commands ‘You shall not steal’. You stole the answers, didn't you? You disobeyed God. “ When you talk about specific sins always relate them to God's standards to show why they are sin. It is especially good in this concept to teach the Ten Commandments. Avoid always referring to the same commandment. The 5th and the 8th are easy to use, but

they are not the only commandments which children break! Be comprehensive in this aspect of your teaching.

“God commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength—that just means with every part of us. But just think of the last few days; you thought about your bike, your toys, your T.V. programs, your friends. You didn’t think about God at all! Many, many times you have disobeyed this command of God.”

Or “The boy next door has a gleaming new bicycle. This morning he flashed past you as you pedaled your rusty bicycle. Do you like that boy? No! Deep inside you wish you had a bike like his, and you don’t like him because he has one. The Bible calls that ‘coveting’, and God’s law says, ‘You shall not covet’.”

In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus made it clear that the law is spiritual. God’s law can be broken in our thought life, for example; angry and hateful thoughts are breaking the 6th commandment (Matthew 5:22). Refer to sinful thoughts which children have, and show that these, too, are rebellion against God.

You can show what sin is as you teach the perfect life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Explain that He always kept God’s Law. As the children look at Him they can see the standard God demands. You might say, “If you want to live a life that pleases God, you need to be as good as the Lord Jesus was, but you aren’t, are you?” We want children to be convicted of sin so we must appeal to their consciences by teaching God’s law and His standards as given in the Bible, praying that the Holy Spirit will use this “sharp needle” to bring about real conviction.

The law also helps explain the cross of Christ: the broken law of God demanded the penalty of death. There on the cross the Lord Jesus paid the penalty of a law which was broken by us, when He died as our substitute.

Teaching God’s commands also indicates what kind of life the child will live if he trusts the Saviour—“If you love me, keep my commandments”.

Certainly this must be part of our evangelism. Teaching the Law is not an end in itself, but is essential preparation for the Good News.

“ . . . the law was our schoolmaster (custodian) to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

## **Sin must be Punished**

The clear teaching of Scripture is that sin deserves punishment and separation from God.

“...the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).

“...the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)

The Lord Jesus Christ taught more about hell than about heaven. Divine judgement on sin is very much a reality throughout Scripture. So we cannot omit it without detracting from and distorting the message of salvation to the extent that it becomes “another gospel”.

We must, however, be wise in the way in which we teach this solemn truth. We need faithfully and tenderly to warn children of eternal separation and punishment. But we should avoid graphic descriptions of eternal torment which may evoke a purely human fear in the child. This may lead him to a purely human, but false, profession of salvation. Explain what “death” is. You could, perhaps, explain it like this-”When a person dies he is cut off from everyone he knows. We cannot ‘ talk to him any more, have fun with him any more, or listen to him any more. When God tells us that sin brings death He means that sin cuts us off from Him. He not only means dying and being buried in the ground. He means that sin results in your soul—the real you—being cut off from Him. And if all your sin is not taken away, you will be cut off from God forever and ever.”

Remember those two words we used earlier—faithfully and tenderly teach about the consequences of sin, warn rather than frighten. \_

## **Sin is Universal**

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12)

“There is none righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10).

Sin is absolutely universal, encompassing every nation, age group and culture. Since Adam sinned, it is natural and inevitable for every man to sin. “There is no man that sinneth not” (1 Kings 8:46). Adam sinned and all his descendants have followed in his footsteps. You can show the children that if they button the first button of their coat wrongly—all the others will be wrong. So it was with Adam, he sinned and so we all sin.

Children need to be taught that they are included in the universality of sin. Sometimes their sins are regarded as unimportant, or as a source of amusement. Yes, they’re “naughty”,

some people think, but not sinners! Children can unconsciously adopt this false view of themselves, and it needs to be corrected:

“Everyone disobeys God’s commands. You may tell lies or take something which does not belong to you. But God has told you, “Thou shalt not bear false witness” and “Thou shalt not steal”. I find myself saying hurtful things about others and being jealous of someone who has God something I don’t have, although I know that God says, “Love thy neighbour as thyself”. All of us have sinned. I have done and said and thought many wrong things too, just like you. That’s why we all need the Lord Jesus Christ.”.

### **We are Sinners by Nature**

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?”  
Jeremiah 17:9).

Although sin is an act, it is not only that. It is a nature, and this nature is the root cause of the act. The child sins because he is a sinner. He is born with a bias towards wrong. We are by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). It is important that children grasp this truth. You might explain it like this:

“When you were little you may have tried to climb out of your high chair. Your mother said ‘No’, and made you sit down. But as soon as she looked away, you got up again! You were only little, but you knew how to be disobedient. No one had to teach you that, for you were born wanting to go your own way rather than God’s way.”

Or “The other day you and your friend were late for class. The teacher asked, ‘Why are you late?’ Immediately you said, ‘We didn’t hear the bell’. It was a lie, for you had heard the bell. Why do you find it so easy to tell lies to get you out of trouble? Why do you find it easy to put yourself before others, when God’s way is to tell the truth and put others first? The reason is that you were born wanting to go your own way, rather than God’s. You were born a sinner.”

If we teach only about specific sins and don’t explain why we sin we may, inadvertently, give children the impression that if they can put these specific things right, all will be well.

Sin has infected every part of human nature.

“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness”

(Ephesians 4:18, 19)

“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

This truth has been explained in the following way, which you might find helpful in teaching older children.

Take a glass of pure water to represent Adam as he was when God created him. Another glass of deadly poison (you could use black ink!) represents Satan. He is “as bad as bad can be”. Pour a drop of poison into the glass of pure water—this now represents Adam when he sinned, and all of us as individuals. The “poison” doesn’t just stay at the top—it spreads right throughout the water. So sin has affected every part of us—mind, heart, will. Because of sin we cannot understand God’s Word, we do not love God, and our wills are rebellious rather than submissive.

If we teach this to children, they will be less likely to think that there is something they can do save themselves. Some children are brought up in a religious background where they are taught that being good, saying prayers and other religious acts help make them right with God. If they see themselves as they really are, it will help them realise that this is a problem which only God can solve.

### **We are Sinners by Practice**

Sin is an act which is both the consequence and the proof of a sinful nature. Teach this to children and speak about specific sins. Rather than say, “We are all disobedient to our parents”, it is better to use a specific example:

“One evening you were watching television. Your mother came, ‘Now turn the T.V. off, it’s time for bed’, she said. Did you do it? No—you pretended you did not hear. You disobeyed God for He commands you ‘Honour your father and mother’.”

You do not know exactly what sins each child commits—but it is not hard to guess! Jogging your own memory may help! Use the word “you” in your examples. This makes your teaching much more personal. Try to use different kinds of examples—sins of thought, word and deed, not “doing what is right,” “doing what is wrong” As you talk about specific sins never make them appear funny—they aren’t!

It is interesting that the Lord Jesus pointed out specific sins as he talked with various people. He showed the rich young ruler his love of riches, and compelled the woman of Samaria to think seriously of her adultery. He listed the specific sins which proceed from the

heart of man:

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19).

When someone goes to the doctor with a pain, the doctor tries to put his finger on the sore spot. Why? So that he can provide the remedy. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the teacher points out specific sins in the child’s life, so that the precious remedy of the Blood of Christ may be applied. You are not leading the children to despair, but to find forgiveness and deliverance in Christ, as you have done. Do not leave the child under the guilt of his sin; point to the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

The following are examples of lessons which could be used to teach these different truths about sin.

Sin is against God .....Adam and Eve’s disobedience (Genesis 3)  
Sin is transgression of the law ..... The Golden Calf (Exodus 32)  
Sin is universal .....Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1- 9)  
Sin must be punished .....The Flood (Genesis 6, 7)  
We are sinners by nature ..... Life of Cain (Genesis 4)  
We are sinners by practice .....Achan (Joshua 7)

It is the evangelist’s responsibility to teach children about sin. But unless the Holy Spirit works and uses the Word which we teach, the children will not really understand the seriousness of their sin. So we must continually pray that God will bring about conviction.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Nine Test

- (1) Before a person can trust Jesus as their Saviour, they must first be aware of the (?) that they need to be saved from?
- (2) According to 1 John 3:4, sin is (?)
- (3) Sin must be (?).... Give a Bible verse to back up your answer.
- (4) According to Romans 3:23, sin is (?)
- (5) Although sin is an act, it is not only that. It is a (?)
- (6) Read the last three sentences again and then explain in your own words what is being said.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Ten

### Bring God's Invitation to Sinners

“ ‘He's alive’ ... the news spread like wildfire. Mary was excited, ‘I saw Him, He talked with me! ‘ Later the disciples could add, ‘And we saw Him eat.’ Thomas could say, ‘I touched Him.’ Over 500 people could say, ‘I saw Him for myself.’ So we can be sure that Jesus Christ is alive today.”

These closing moments of the teacher's Easter Sunday talk had summarized some of the evidences for the resurrection. But something was missing. He had not taught what difference the fact of the resurrection could make to those in his class. Teaching the message of salvation is more than teaching facts and doctrines (although that is involved). It is showing the children what response God expects from them on the basis of those facts and truths. It is teaching them how to be saved. As well as careful teaching of doctrine, there must be a clear presentation of the child's responsibility to repent and believe. The children should be taught what God will do for those who turn from sin and receive Christ. These are integral parts of the Gospel message. To experience salvation, the sinner must obey God's command or invitation and actually come to Christ and trust Him as Lord and Saviour.

Many questions are asked by workers among children about “the invitation”—“What is the invitation?” “Should child evangelists give it?” It is necessary to turn to the Bible to find the answers to these questions. When we find the Biblical answers, we must ensure that all we do and teach is in accord with these answers.

### What is the Invitation?

The invitation is a call from God to sinners to come to Him through Jesus Christ in repentance and faith for forgiveness and salvation. The word “command” can be used instead of “invitation”. Coming from God, a command and an invitation are practically identical in meaning.

This invitation from God to sinners, to come to Him, can be found throughout the Old Testament.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

“Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55.1).

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth He invited sinners to come to Him.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”(Matthew 11:28).

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” John 6:37).

This is how the Bible ends: “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). God is still calling the sinner to Himself.

God's invitation includes:

## What the person must do

### what God will do.

In other words, it includes man's responsibility (God's command to man) and God's gracious offer (God's promise). These two aspects come out clearly in the way the apostles presented the Gospel in Acts. The Lord Jesus had told the disciples: "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47), and they carried out this commission.

Peter preached this invitation on the Day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38, 39).

He presented it at the Beautiful Gate of the temple: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

In the house of Cornelius he said: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

Paul presented this invitation in his sermon in the synagogue of Antioch: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39).

To the Philippian jailer he said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

When the Apostles preached the Gospel they challenged their hearers to a heart response.

They never asked for a physical response; rather they urged them to repent (Acts 2:38), to believe (Acts 13:39), to come (Hebrews 7:25), to turn (Acts 26:20) and to call (Romans 10:13).

The apostles used these various terms, but each of the words described what a person must do to appropriate God's salvation. They also kept before the hearers the purpose of, and the results of response to God's invitation. It was an invitation to salvation, to deliverance from sin, to new life in Christ. This is the great offer of the Gospel—justification, regeneration, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a new inheritance through Christ.

This challenge, so obvious in apostolic preaching, is the invitation. This is very much part of the child evangelist's message. Children must be taught the response which God expects and they must be taught what God does for those who accept His invitation. So when you teach children that they must turn from sin, receive Christ, come to Christ, call on Him, and when you teach about what God will do for them, you are bringing them God's invitation.

The invitation is not something to be added on after the message has been given. It is part of the message and has nothing to do with method. It is correct to call it "the invitation" or "God's invitation" or "Christ's invitation" or "the invitation of the Gospel". This is the only invitation found in the Scriptures.

So the Gospel invitation is:

- from God
- through the teacher (who is only the bearer of it)
  - to the child
- to come to Jesus Christ for salvation
  - in repentance and faith.

### **It might be expressed like this:**

“Do you know that you’re just like that boy who went far away. You know you’ve gone your own way, but are really sorry about it. With all your heart you want to be different. You want to go God’s way. Will you tell the Lord Jesus how sorry you are, and trust Him today—right now—to take away all your sin? God says in the Bible: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

Giving this invitation involves therefore:

- letting the children know that they need to trust Christ and how to do so
- emphasising to the children what God will do when they trust Christ
- urging the children to trust Christ today.

The teacher or evangelist who has done these 3 things has given the invitation.

### **Should We Give This Invitation?**

Yes—it is a vital part of the Gospel message. It is impossible to evangelise without bringing this invitation. We know that sinful boys and girls may come to Jesus Christ and be saved. Therefore we have a solemn responsibility to include this in our teaching. The children who are listening to us should know of God’s invitation to them and how they should respond to it.

### **How Should We Give This Invitation?**

#### **Urgently**

Evangelism should never be a dispassionate, detached presentation of a message. We should seek with all our hearts, and in the power of the Spirit, to apply the truth we are teaching. The Bible uses words like dispute (Acts 9:29), reason (Acts 17:2, 18:4), persuade (Acts 18:4; 19:8; 2 Corinthians 5:11), warn (Colossians 1:28), pray (2 Corinthians 5:20) and beseech (2 Corinthians 5:20; 6:1). So there should be a note of earnestness, entreaty and urgency as we bring God’s invitation to children. There should be nothing half-hearted about it.

“We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Never forget that you are standing before children who are lost, who need to come to Christ now. You cannot force children to respond, but you can encourage them to do so.

#### **Simply**

Remember that the invitation is the application of the great Bible truths we have been teaching the children. The children need to have some understanding of these truths before they can see what the truths mean for them personally. Sometimes we make the mistake of telling children to “come to the Lord Jesus” or “ask Him to take away your sin” before we have taught the truths of which these statements are the applications. Children do not need to

understand everything, but they must see their need and the remedy, before they are shown how the remedy can be theirs. This evangelistic application, the invitation, usually comes at the end of your Bible lesson although it does not have to do so.

### **Naturally**

The invitation should be the natural application of your teaching, and not something tagged on rather awkwardly. There is something wrong if we always couch it in the same words no matter what our Bible lesson is! Different terms and expressions will be used in different lessons, according to the message of each particular lesson. The closing application of the lesson on the wise and foolish builders would be different from one on the Philippian jailer. If you always use the same words, the children will solve the problem for themselves by “switching off”! Try to use one concept throughout one lesson; do not talk about “coming”,

“receiving” and “believing” all in one lesson. Of course, the children must never think that these are different things which they must do at different times!

### **Authoritatively**

It is important to use a Bible verse as you teach about God’s invitation. There should be a clear link between the verse and the emphasis of your teaching throughout the lesson—it might even be the memory verse for that day. Choose a verse which expresses the invitation in the same way as you are teaching it. For example, if you are talking about receiving Christ, use John 1:12, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” If you are talking about trusting Christ, use Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” You may use a verse which helps the children to see that Christ is calling them: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:37).

You may use a verse which gives special emphasis to what God will do for those who trust Christ: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). These verses show both what the child must do and what God will do. Other verses which can be used as you bring God’s invitation include Mark 8:34; John 3:16; Acts 3:19, 10:43; Romans 10:9; Hebrews 7:25).

### **How Does a Child Respond to the Invitation?**

The response to the invitation takes place in the child’s heart. The invitation does not need, demand, or necessarily involve any kind of physical or outward response such as raising a hand, coming to the front, or remaining behind after a meeting. Indeed the great danger is that a child might feel that because he has responded in one of these ways, he is automatically saved. The invitation is addressed to the mind, heart and will of the child, and it is in the realm of the mind, heart and will that he turns from sin and trusts Christ. He can do this where he sits, in the counselling time after the meeting, or later in the privacy of his own home.

The following are examples of how God’s invitation to sinners might be taught to children.

“Perhaps you know that, like Zacchaeus, you are lost and away from God. You long for the Lord Jesus to save you and change your life. That is why He came into the world. ‘ For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost’ (Luke 19:10). God wants you to trust the Lord Jesus to save you. Won’t you tell Him now, in the quietness of your heart, that you know you are lost in sin? Ask Him to save you and to change your life. If you truly trust the Lord Jesus you will be saved, just as Zacchaeus was . “

Or “It may be that, for the first time ever, you see that your sin cuts you off from God. The Bible tells you what you must do: ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ (Acts 3:19). Are you willing to turn from everything you know to be wrong in your life? Will you come to the Lord Jesus now and ask Him to take away your sin? If you do, God promises that every sin will be blotted out.”

Or “Yes, the Lord Jesus died for sinners, but that does not mean that everyone has eternal life. God tells us very clearly in the Bible: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ John 3:16).

Everlasting life is only for those who believe in Him. That means that you must trust Him alone to take away your sin and make you right with God. You no longer think that saying prayers or trying to be good, help bring you to God. You depend on the Lord Jesus alone. Will you put your trust in Him now? If you do, God promises that you will not perish, but you will have everlasting life.”

It is essential to keep in mind the clear distinction between giving the children God’s invitation to come to Christ in repentance and faith, and making yourself available to help children who want further counsel. Making yourself available is not the invitation. It has to do with methods in evangelism, whereas the invitation is part of the message. Making yourself available is not part of your message, and is dealt with in chapter 16. It is important that in our thinking we see the difference between these two things. Only when we understand the difference will we keep them separate in our presentation. In addition, we want to make sure that the children do not confuse the two.

# Youth Evangelism 101

## Lesson Ten Test

- (1) As well as careful teaching of doctrine, there must be a clear presentation of (?)
- (2) Coming from God, a command and an (?) are practically identical in meaning.
- (3) The invitation is not something to be added on after the message has been given. It is part (?) and has nothing to do with method.
- (4) The Gospel invitation is... (?)
- (5) How should we give an invitation? (list all four suggestions)

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