

Coffee Talk

Conversation Starter Sheet for Children's Bible Study Leaders

Leading a Child to Christ

Leading a child to Christ is a great privilege and responsibility. Care must be taken to not "rush" a child into making this decision. Children naturally want to please and it is easy to "persuade" a child to make this decision when he knows it is what someone important in their life wants them to do. This Coffee Talk will focus on when a child is ready to receive Christ and how to effectively share the Gospel with a child.

Use the following True/False test to determine your understanding of children and salvation.

T	F	1. You should never share your personal testimony with your class.
T	F	2. Jesus taught that an adult is of greater value than a child.
T	F	3. Jesus taught that we should not look down on a child.
T	F	4. It is a good idea to make an example to the group of a child who has made a decision.
T	F	5. Some children are too young to make a faith commitment to Christ.
T	F	6. A child is safe until the age of accountability.
T	F	7. A child must be saved by faith just like anyone else.
T	F	8. A child reared in a Christian home does not need to be converted.
T	F	9. Spiritual conversations between a child and an adult should always be initiated by the adult.
T	F	10. The plan of salvation should not be presented to a child younger than 10.
T	F	11. Children should be dealt with as a group rather than as individuals when making decisions for Christ.
T	F	12. When counseling with a child, let the child talk and express himself.
T	F	13. Children think concretely and can become confused by words and phrases such as "give your heart to Jesus."
T	F	14. Salvation is the only decision for which children seek spiritual counsel.
T	F	15. The plan of salvation must be presented to a child in terms he can understand.

Answers:

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|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. T | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. F | 13. T |
| 4. F | 9. F | 14. F |
| 5. T | 10. F | 15. T |

What are some common signs of a child's interest in becoming a Christian?

- They will ask questions. The first question is usually, "When can I be baptized?" Ask: "What do you think that means?" Questions do not automatically mean a child is ready to make a profession of faith but it may indicate a growing awareness of his need for God.
- There may be a shift in the child's level of activity. For example, a passive child may suddenly become very active or vice versa.
- The child may experience exaggerated fears. This may be due to the child's awareness of his sinful condition and the fear of going to hell.
- The child may show a new and intense interest in Bible study.
- Spiritual conversations may be initiated by the child.
- The child may become more quiet and thoughtful than normal (as though something is bothering the child).

Discuss these principles in dealing with questions children ask.

- Each question deserves an answer. Treat all questions seriously without pushing to a premature decision.
- Give attention to questions as soon as possible. Answer the questions when they ask them because putting them off can indicate to the child that the question is not important.
- Find out WHY the child is asking the question. For example: Question: "Why do you want to be baptized?" Answer: "Because Johnny said his parents gave him a party when he was baptized!"
- Be open and available. Children always know when adults care and when they can talk.
- Refrain from making an example to the group of a child who has already become a Christian. Others in the group who are not yet responsible may respond similarly to win your approval before the group.

Review the following guidelines in talking to a child about salvation. How are these guidelines being used in your classroom?

- Learn to ask questions to which the child has not memorized the answers. Some questions to include are, "Why are you asking about...?" "What made you start thinking about this?" "What do you think one has to do to become a Christian?"
- After asking a question, let the child answer. And, listen to the answer!
- Use the child's answer to your question as the beginning place for sharing. (This lets them know you are listening to them.)
- Avoid using words children cannot understand (washed in the blood, ask Jesus to come into your heart, saved, lost, make a profession of faith...).

- Never assume anything. Don't assume the child knows anything about God or how to know Him. Don't assume that the child is ready to make a decision just because he has asked to talk with you!

How do you think your personal testimony fits into sharing with a child? Do you have a personal testimony? Would you be ready to share it at a moment's notice? Pray about how God would have you to use your story in your classroom.

Which scriptures do you think are appropriate to be used when sharing the Gospel with a child? Make a list of the verses you think are necessary to understand the doctrine of salvation. Discuss why you would or would not use them. Consider putting these verses on your list of ones to use when counseling with a child.

- **John 3:16** (substitute the child's name rather than the word "world")
- **Romans 3:23** Children need to understand that sin is something we do against God – not just against others. EVERYONE has chosen to sin. Sin is disobeying God and choosing to do what we want even when we know it is wrong.
- **Romans 6:23** What did Jesus Christ do? What was His purpose? God found a way to forgive me for my sins and avoid my losing eternal life in heaven. That way is Jesus.
- **John 14:6** Children need to understand that there is NO OTHER WAY to get into heaven apart from Jesus' death on the cross.
- **Romans 10:9-10** We must confess with our mouths.
- **1 John 1:9** If we ask God to forgive He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. Forgiveness is not automatic – we must ask for it!

Pray Together for each child in your class. There is nothing you can do that is more important than praying for each child out loud by name. Pray that the Lord will make them receptive to the Word. Pray that you will have wisdom as you talk with them to know if they are ready to accept Jesus as Savior. Pray that parents will partner with you as you faithfully share.

Question for the Pastor: Do you preach the Gospel in such a way that children can understand it? Do you share your testimony with your congregation? Are you ready to model for your leaders how to share the Gospel with a child? Is there a system in place within your church that ensures a child has a clear understanding of the Gospel before he is baptized?