

**PRINCIPLES FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH CHILDREN**

**Understand the emotional, mental, and spiritual development of a child.**

1. The gospel is the same whether a person is 6 or 60. However, it is important to use words and concepts that are appropriate for the age of the child.
  - Define words/concepts as needed: for example, sin, believe and death.
  - Children are concrete thinkers, so avoid symbolic language and analogies.
2. Children are individuals – just because they are at a certain age or have been raised in a Christian home does not make them automatically ready to become a Christian.
3. Children learn by repetition. A child will likely need to hear the gospel message more than once for the message to be fully understood.
4. There are four stages that children typically travel through in their decision to become a follower of Jesus.
  - Discovery Stage**
    - The child asks lots of questions.
    - They are curious and inquisitive.
    - They are “downloading” information.
  - Discerning Stage**
    - Begin to be concerned about spiritual things.
    - Begin to ask questions about death, heaven and hell.
    - Begin to realize that their sin is actually against God.
  - Decision Stage**
    - Becomes convicted of his sinfulness and need for a savior.
    - Understands and is willing to make God Lord (or boss) of his life.
    - Realizes it's time to make a decision.
  - Discipling Stage**
    - An ongoing plan to continue building on the child's foundation.
    - New Christian Classes for Children are important.
    - With every blessing comes responsibility.

**Understand what is going on in the head and heart of the child.**

5. The gospel can be presented to a group of children. However, when a child indicates that they are ready to become a Christian, want to know more or have questions, then follow-up is best done one-to-one.
6. Remain conversational. Don't let this occasion turn into a lecture/presentation or a quiz.
7. Ask open-ended and follow-up questions. Avoid yes/no questions. Children need to an opportunity to express their own thoughts.
8. Listen carefully to the child. This will give you insights into the child's understanding and will help you know if you need to reword your explanations.
9. Avoid giving more information than a child asks. Remember, the child might just be “downloading” information.”

10. Give time for thought. Don't rush. Don't be afraid of silence. This is arguably the most important part of the conversation. Give the Holy Spirit room to work and for the child to process what they are thinking and feeling.

11. Use the Bible (preferably the child's). Use post-its or guide the child to mark important verses like John 3:16.

12. Involve parents when possible, but remember that the conversation is with the child!

**Understand that the child and the Holy Spirit need to guide the conversation.**

13. Don't jump to conclusions. Just because a child asks about baptism or says he loves Jesus doesn't mean he is ready to become a Christian. Make a distinction between baptism, coming to church and becoming a Christian.

14. Refrain from offering rewards or using "scare tactics". Let the conversation remain focused on the child's relationship with Jesus.

15. When talking to a child about the gospel, listen for the child's conviction of sin. When a child expresses a conviction of sin in a conversation, then they are ready to become a Christian.

Does the child:

- ◆ Know what sin is.
- ◆ Know that they have sinned.
- ◆ Know that sin is against God.
- ◆ Know that sin separates them from God.
- ◆ Express a desire for God to take care of the sin problem.

16. Pray with the child, no matter the outcome of the session.

17. If a child accepts Jesus as Savior & Lord, give her the opportunity to tell someone right away. Let her express the important thing that just happened.

18. Plan to follow-up. Again, do this no matter the outcome of the session. If the child became a Christian during the session, you'll want to help him begin his journey as a new Christian. If he did not, continue to show an interest in him and let him know you are there for him.



*Remember that today's gospel conversation may only be one step in a journey. It also may be the very step that begins a child's spiritual life.*

**I planted, another watered, but God gave the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:6**