



Leading a Child to Christ, part 1 of 2—

Reaching Children

by Verda Rubottom

He's just going through a stage," the frustrated mother explained to her friends. Many of us have said the same thing about our children. As parents and teachers, we recognize that children go through stages in their growth and development. Growth stages are predictable and sequential, but the rate of growth varies according to each child's unique timetable and is influenced by external factors such as nutrition and environment. Children grow spiritually at varying rates, just as they do physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Speak Their Language

Effective teachers recognize the importance of teaching children at their developmental levels, using language they can understand. We cannot require children to grasp adult theological terminology before they can have a Christian experience.

It seems evident that children raised in strong Christian homes have an advantage in their spiritual development. Many receive Christ at an early age. Dr. James Dobson testifies

that he was just 3 years old when he accepted Christ, and the experience is still vivid in his memory. However, most children don't have such a rich spiritual heritage and may need to hear the gospel many times over before they understand it. Others open their hearts in simple faith the first time they hear the salvation



story. In his book, *Teaching for Decision*, (Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 1989) Richard Dresselhaus states:

"Children who have grown up in a Christian home often are better able to comprehend the plan of salvation because of

family devotions and regular Bible instruction in the home.

"However, the Holy Spirit's ways are not the ways of men. Many testify of true conversion experiences at a very early age, even without having been carefully taught. While these instances may be exceptional, we must accept the Spirit's sovereign work."

God's Part / Your Part

Whatever a child's spiritual background, it is our responsibility not only to teach about salvation but to give opportunities in our Sunday School and children's church classes for children to receive Christ. While only God knows the heart and when a child is ready, our part is to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and be ready to show the child the way to salvation.

The first converts of the great evangelist D.L. Moody were children in his Sunday School class. We have the same opportunity in our Sunday Schools today.

(Part 2 contains points to remember the next time you have an opportunity to lead a child to Christ.)

Questions For Further Study—

1. What percentage of children from unchurched backgrounds are currently in your congregation?
2. What steps do you take (or can you take) to reach those children at their level of understanding?
3. What improvements can be made among your children's workers to better reach children at their different levels of understanding?



Leading a Child to Christ, part 2 of 2—

Points to Ponder

by Verda Rubottom

The next time you have the opportunity to lead a child to Christ, remember the following points.

 **Use a Bible when explaining salvation, even if the child does not read.**

Children need to understand that salvation is based on what God says, not just our personal opinion.

 **Use a few key Scripture verses with illustrations to explain the plan of salvation.**

Illustrations need not be elaborate to be effective. A picture of Jesus, a wrapped gift (salvation is a gift), or a picture of a birthday cake and a baby are a few examples of simple ways to illustrate salvation and what it means to be born again. You can also use symbols such as a cross, a heart, the tomb, and clouds representing Jesus' ascension. Use construction paper, simple objects, drawings on index cards, felt-board materials, or a story bag. Very young children may not be able to understand metaphors and symbols, so be sure you are presenting the meaning you intend. Keep your materials in a handy place in your classroom,

ready to use whenever the opportunity arises.

 **Underline key salvation verses in your Bible.**

One easy way to recall the verses is to use the ABC's of salvation.

 Admit that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

 "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

 Confess. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

John 3:16 explains God's plan so completely one can use this verse alone for personal evangelism for people of all ages. Second Corinthians 5:17 explains the change that takes place in our lives: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

 **Use an illustrated gospel tract.**

Select a tract written especially for children and attach it to the inside cover of your Bible for a handy reference.

 **Look for examples to which children can relate.**

The stories of the Lost Coin; the good Shepherd; the Prodigal Son; Zaccheus, the Tax Collector; Saul, the Persecutor; and Jesus Calls His Disciples contain examples of behavior and relationships that children can understand. Add current examples of people who have accepted Christ.

 **Pray with each child individually.**

If possible, have him repeat the words of the prayer after you. Many children don't know where to start or how to express their deep feelings in prayer. You can gently guide and teach them how to pray. It may be helpful to share your own experience of asking forgiveness and receiving Christ. Children need assurance that God loves them even when they misbehave and make mistakes. They need to know they can talk to God in prayer, and He will forgive them.

 **In a large group setting you may need to have a group prayer.**

Ask children to raise their hands to let you know they want to accept Christ. Invite them to

