



Altar Time in Children's Church

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As a child growing up in a small church in Pennsylvania, my time spent at the altar was life changing. During the course of my ministry I have witnessed children at the altar starting a new life with Christ, being filled with the Spirit, being healed, and being called into full-time ministry!

Preparation Guidelines

Set goals

Consider the aim of your teaching and prepare the altar call accordingly.

Allow time

Consider the time to ensure that you allow adequate opportunity for the children to participate at the altar.

Pray ahead

In your prayer time, ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in making this a significant part of the lesson. Remember: your spiritual preparation is essential to the quality of the altar experience.

Presentation Guidelines

Invite with passion

Explain to the children that a personal prayer time has helped you in your spiritual development.

Encourage them to respond. Certainly your level of energy and

your demeanor at this time will enhance or detract your children from responding.

Invite with purpose

Use concrete words to explain why you want the children to pray. Your purpose may be salvation; it may be healing; it may be broken relationships; it may be guidance. Clarify to the children the purpose of the prayer time.

Invite with perspective

Not every child will respond. Be prepared to speak to the children that are still seated without making them feel uncomfortable for not responding.

Altar Guidelines

Pray with the child

In certain situations children can pray alone. But I have found it best if an adult prays with each child.

Listen

Take time to listen to the child. This will mean a lot to him and will give you focus for the prayer time.

Use the Word

If possible, use your Bible to give the child direction.

Pray with others

Encourage children to pray for one another.

After the Altar

Develop a follow-up plan

Perhaps someone on your team could keep track of decisions made at the altar. Children could also be asked to help participate in following up. This might be an opportunity to encourage them to create a journal in which they record significant occurrences in their spiritual lives.

Inform parents

It is always a good idea to communicate with parents in regard to their children's faith walk. This will encourage further ministry on their part in the home.

Build a prayer team

Create an enthusiasm for your altar ministry by having those in spiritual leadership praying for you. Share with them the needs and the answers to prayer that you experience.

As you incorporate these guidelines into your altar time, be flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Don't let time pressure cause you to rush through what will often be the most meaningful part of your children's service. Instead, give time for the Holy Spirit to complete His work, expect to see God work, and then praise God for the victories you will see accomplished.

Questions For Further Study—

1. How would you rate the quality of your children's church altar time?
2. What improvements can be made to your children's church altar time?
3. How do you follow up on children who make life-changing decisions at the altar?

This article originally appeared in *Young Explorers: Jesus' Names Kids Club*. Young Explorers is a grade-school children's church program that utilizes environmental themes for a fun learning experience. For a complete theme chart and order form, call 1-800-641-4310.

