



Praying With Children

by Faith Tyson

The little brown-eyed girl sat listening to the woman evangelist. The woman said if a person had sin in his life, he could not go to heaven. The little girl wanted very much to go to heaven. When the altar call was given, she knelt down and began to cry. The woman went to the little girl and asked her if she wanted to ask Jesus into her life. The woman then helped her pray a simple prayer, asking forgiveness for sin and for Jesus to be her Savior. She told the little girl to remember this special day when she had become a part of God's family.

The woman evangelist told me that 46 years ago, and I have not forgotten that day. Jesus is still my Savior and Lord!

Salvation

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). These words of Jesus tell us it is important to take time with children when we present salvation to them. We must help them understand that accepting Christ is a lifetime commitment. Also, we must help children comprehend that Jesus will be a part of their everyday experiences: happy times, scary times, at home, at school, at play.

In coming to Christ, children need time to pray individually and

to know the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Let the children pray in their own words and be careful not to hurry them. However, if a child is not familiar with praying, be ready to assist him by having him repeat the sinner's prayer.

After a child is through praying, ask him to tell you what has happened to him. This will help clarify the meaning of the experience in his mind and help you see if he had questions that need to be clarified. In helping children come to know Christ through



salvation, children's church leaders must focus children's attention on a lifetime commitment, spiritual growth through daily prayer and Bible reading, and determination to obey what the Bible teaches.

Other Needs

As part of their daily lives, children have prayer needs other than salvation. How do we pray with children for these needs? Here are a few things to remem-

ber when praying with children:

- **Create an opportunity for prayer during the worship experience.**

For example: Have children give prayer requests aloud; have children with needs come to the front for prayer; or have the children raise their hands if they have something to pray about, and let other children pray with them.

- **Children are very sincere.**

When they ask you to pray, they want you to take them seriously. We can address their requests as we would those of adults. Let the children know you really care about their daily lives and problems. Sometimes follow-up is necessary to let a child know you are taking his need seriously and that you care.

- **When children don't have specific needs, pray with them anyway.**

Since we never know when the Holy Spirit is moving in the hearts of our children, we must take advantage of opportunities to lead them closer to God.

In Psalm 8:2 we read, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise." Children have a natural instinct to praise God. Encourage them to do this by leading them in times of praise and worship as you pray. It is very important as lead-

ers to provide children with a specific role model.

Children's church leaders also need to encourage the children in their groups to develop private times of prayer at home. If a child develops a personal prayer life,

this habit will likely continue into adulthood.

Help the children think of prayer as an ordinary part of their lives. Let them experience for themselves the power of prayer and the moving of the Holy Spirit.

Remind them that God hears them just as He hears you. By doing this, you will be setting a foundation that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

Questions For Further Study—

1. What method(s) do you use to become aware of and pray for children's needs?
2. List some ways that you can improve the prayer time in your classroom.
3. How can you encourage children to continue to pray at home throughout the week?

This article originally appeared in *Young Explorers: Around The World In 90 Days*. 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.

