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A Letter from Pastor Chris

Dear Parents and Children's Ministry Workers,

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
I can't seem to say "thank you" enough! Why? For simply caring
enough about children to make sure that you are equipped to
share the Gospel.

This resource was developed after talking with parents and
children's ministry workers and discovering the genuine need for a
simple training tool to answer questions we were facing
concerning children and the Gospel. Parents are frequently
asking, "How do I know when my son is old enough to
understand?" Children's Workers are wondering, "How can I
make sure they understand the Gospel?"

This handbook is a tool for you as a parent or children's ministry
worker to equip you in sharing God's plan of salvation with
children. Learning how to help a child on their spiritual journey is a
learned skill. This skill involves knowing how and when to talk with
our children about becoming a Christian. This skill involves
knowing our own testimony and becoming familiar with Scripture
verses that will aid you as you explain what the Bible teaches
about becoming a follower of Christ.

There is only one "thing" we can take with us to heaven... other
people! We can't take our money, house, boat, or car. We can,
however, take our children by sharing the Gospel with them.
Please know that I spent great time in prayer for you as this
resource was developed.

Praying for our children!



Pastor Chris

Introduction

The Bible does not have separate Gospels for children and adults. We have one Gospel. It is simple enough for a child to understand; yet I am still growing in my understanding of the Gospel as an adult.

The Gospel has four themes:

1. **CREATION:** God created you and loves you. You were created to enjoy a personal relationship with God. Even before God created the foundation of the earth, you were the focus of His love.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:3-4).

2. **THE FALL:** That special relationship with God was broken because of sin. Sin separates us from God and causes us to live our lives outside of His will.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way” Isaiah 53:6.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” 1 John 1:8.

“But your iniquities (sins) have separated you from your God” Isaiah 59:2.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23.

3. **REDEMPTION:** God came to earth as a human being (i.e. Jesus) to bring us back to Himself. We need forgiveness of our sin in order to have a relationship with God. Jesus died on the cross to pay your penalty for sin. He did this so we can have a relationship with Him again.

“Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” John 14:6.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 6:23.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” Romans 5:8.

4. **RESTORATION:** When you accept Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit works within you to make you more Christ-like in character. You will continue to sin and make mistakes, but the Holy Spirit works within you to help you grow in spiritual maturity. One day you will be fully restored and get to meet Christ face-to-face and spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Those who never accepted Christ will continue to be separated from God into eternity.

“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” Ephesians 4:22-24.

“but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,” 1 Peter 1:15.

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Cf. Revelation 21:1 – 22:5

As you can see, the Gospel is not just “how to be saved;” the Gospel is God’s continuing work in your life even after you are saved! Furthermore, sharing the Gospel with children is not a single event. We are to share the Gospel every single day in all we do.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” Deuteronomy 6:4-7

The Bible & Kids

How do I know when a child is old enough to understand the Gospel and respond by accepting Christ as their Savior? Some people may ask, "Does the Bible have an age of accountability?" What they want to know is whether or not the Bible gives a specific age in which a child is old enough to understand and be accountable to the Gospel. The short answer is "no." There is no specific "age" given within the Bible in which children are held accountable for the Gospel. Instead, I prefer to use the term "point of accountability."

Children do not mature at the same pace. Children arrive at the point of accountability at different ages depending on their personal life experiences and learning abilities. As we have already seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, parents have a major role in God's plan for helping children mature on their spiritual journey.

Since the Bible does not have an "age of accountability," what does the Bible say about children coming to faith in Christ? The Bible actually spends more time talking about godly parenting. Here are some verses to consider...

1. Psalm 127:3, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward."

What does this verse teach us about children/parenting?

2. Proverb 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

What does this verse teach us about children/parenting?

3. Matthew 19:14, "But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

What does the verse teach us about children/parenting?

Sometimes people ask, "Does a child go to heaven if they die before a point of accountability?" The Bible says that David's son died and David lamented, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (cf. 2 Sam. 12:15-23). This gives me great confidence that children who pass away prior to a point of accountability are in the presence of the LORD and one day "we shall go to them." When a child passes away prior to a point of accountability, we believe the Bible teaches they are "under grace."

Some children lack the mental capacity to ever reach a point of accountability. For this reason, they remain "under grace" even as they physically mature into adulthood while their mind remains as a child. Salvation has less to do with an age and more to do with accountability and the grace of God.

Questions & Kids

So the question remains, “How do I know when a child is at the point of accountability when they can understand the Gospel and respond by accepting Christ as their Savior?”

As you have conversations with your child about the Gospel, you will be able to better discern their understanding and personal conviction. Here are some suggestions to guide your discussion.

1. If your child is asking questions, it is important to consider the type of questions they are asking. For example, “When can I get baptized?” is very different from “Why do people get baptized?” Just because a child says “I want to get baptized” doesn’t mean they are ready. They may have simply observed someone get baptized and would like to enjoy the water too! In contrast, when a child asks, “Why do people get baptized?” they may be wondering if they should be baptized. Make sure that you clearly teach the distinction between becoming a Christian and getting baptized.
2. Ask your child open-ended questions, and not leading questions; or “yes” or “no” questions. When we ask questions like, “You want to go to heaven don’t you?” Children can tell by the inflection of your voice and our body language that the answer we are looking for is “yes.” This type of question is less conversational and more leading.
3. Here are a few suggested questions...
 - a. **What is sin?** (Possible answers: Sin is when we do something wrong. Sin is when we disobey God. Sin is anything that is contrary to the character of God.)

Remember this: Sin is wrong because it is contrary to the person, nature, and character of God. Why is lying wrong? Because God is truth. Why is murder wrong? Because God is life. Why is hatred wrong? Because God is love. When we do anything contrary to God’s character as revealed in Scripture, it is sin. Likewise, when we don’t do something we should... it is sin.
 - b. **What does sin do?** (Possible answers: Sin separates us from God.)
 - c. **Who is Jesus?** (Possible answers: Jesus is God.)

- d. **What did Jesus do? or Why did Jesus come to earth?**
(Possible answers: Jesus died on the cross to pay our penalty for sin. Jesus rose from the dead proving He was God and conquered sin and death.)
- e. **Why should you become a Christian?** (Possible answers: I need forgiveness of my sins so that I can have a restored relationship with God and spend eternity with Him.)
- f. **How can you accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord?**
(Possible answers: Because of my need for forgiveness of sin, I must ask Jesus to forgive me. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me and rose from the grave to make that forgiveness possible.)
- g. **Does baptism save you? or Why do we get baptized?**
(Possible answers: Baptism does not save us. Baptism is a public testimony that we have already been saved by grace through faith in Jesus. Baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.)
- h. **Does the Lord's Supper save you? or Why do we take the Lord's Supper?** (Possible answers: The Lord's Supper does not save us. The Lord's Supper is a picture of the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross on our behalf. The bread is a picture of His broken body. The fruit of the vine is a picture of His shed blood.)
- i. **How is a person saved? Or What do you understand it takes for a person to go to heaven?** (Possible answers: Trusting Jesus. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are not saved by good works. We cannot earn our way into heaven with good deeds.)

Your Testimony & Kids

It's hard to share something you don't have. Much like the flight attendant reminds us as parents that we must first secure our own oxygen mask before assisting our children, we too must secure our own salvation in Christ. Once we have secured our salvation in Christ we will find it much easier to share our faith with children.

We have a resource called "Everyone Has A Story." This resource will help you think about your own salvation experience. It's important for children to know their parents and church leaders have accepted Christ as their Savior. For this reason, it's important for us to share our testimony with them as we have opportunity.

Here are some questions that might help you prepare to share your salvation testimony with children.

1. **How old were you when you became a Christian?** _____

2. **Where were you when you became a Christian?**

3. **What do you remember most about the moment you became a Christian?**

4. **Who helped lead you to Christ?**

Pick up a copy of "Everyone Has a Story" in the church lobby or visit our website at www.fbcmtsterling.com and find the online version under discipleship resources.

The Gospel & Kids

The word *Gospel* means “good news.” It is the good news that God has come into the world to bring us back into a relationship with Him.

1. **CREATION:** God created you and loves you. You were created to enjoy a personal relationship with God. Even before God created the foundation of the earth, you were the focus of His love.

Ephesians 1:3-4; Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17

2. **THE FALL:** That special relationship with God was broken because of sin. Sin separates us from God and causes us to live our lives outside of His will.

Isaiah 53:6; 1 John 1:18; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23

3. **REDEMPTION:** God came to earth as a human being (i.e. Jesus) to bring us back to Himself. We need forgiveness of our sin in order to have a relationship with God. Jesus died on the cross to pay your penalty for sin. He did this so we can have a relationship with Him again.

John 14:6; Romans 6:23; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8-9

4. **RESTORATION:** When you accept Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit works within you to make you more Christ-like in character. You will continue to sin and make mistakes, but the Holy Spirit works within you to help you grow in spiritual maturity. One day you will be fully restored and get to meet Christ face-to-face and spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Those who never accepted Christ will continue to be separated from God into eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Peter 1:15; 1 Corinthians 13:12

Responding to the Gospel

1. **ADMIT:** Once you understand what sin is and what sin does, it is important to acknowledge that we are all sinners. Just like Adam and Eve (i.e. the first people God created) chose to disobey God, every person since then has chosen to disobey God. The word *repent* means "to change your mind." Are you ready to change your mind about following your own plan and begin to follow God's plan for your life?

Romans 3:23 – Read and highlight.

- What is sin?
- What does sin do?

2. **BELIEVE:** Only Jesus can save you. You cannot be saved by: doing good things, going to church, being baptized, and so forth. We are saved only by grace through faith in Jesus because of what He did for us on Calvary. Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son, that He died on the cross for your sins, and rose from the dead?

Romans 5:8; 6:23; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9 – Read and highlight.

- Who is Jesus?
- What did Jesus do?

3. **CONFESS:** The word *confess* means "to say the same as." It means that you are in agreement with God. You agree with Him about the sin in your life and you agree with Him that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Romans 10:9-10 – Read and highlight.

- Why should you become a Christian?
- How can you accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

If the child is ready to accept Christ, use the following prayer as a guide.

Dear God, I know that I have sinned and my sin separates me from You. I am sorry for my sin. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me so that I can be forgiven of my sin. I believe Jesus rose from the dead and is alive today. I ask Jesus to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior. I want to obey You and live for You for the rest of my life. Please help me to grow in my faith as a Christian. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.