



Sharing the Gospel with Children

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Introduction

This guide is intended to help you to share the gospel with your children and teach them to share the gospel with others. Inside you will find:

- ◆ **Part 1: What Is the Gospel and Why Share It with Children?**
- ◆ **Part 2: Sharing the Gospel with Children**
- ◆ **Part 3: Teaching Children How to Share the Gospel**
- ◆ **Part 4: How to Follow up with a New Christian**

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

*And surely I am with you always,
to the very end of the age.*

Matthew 28:19–20

The command is clear—go and make disciples. But when we think about discipleship we often forget about children! We think they are too young. We worry that we cannot explain the gospel in ways they will understand. We think there is time for them to hear and understand God’s message later in life. But Jesus did not ignore the children or turn them away. In fact, He embraced them.

Think about the first time you heard the gospel message. What blessings did you experience when you made the decision to accept God’s gift of grace? Did you feel humbling gratefulness when you realized that God loved you so completely that He sent His Son to die in your place? Did you feel overwhelming peace knowing that your life was in the hands of One who is completely

loving and trustworthy? Did you feel the excitement of knowing that you had been given a new life?

Children can experience these same blessings when they begin a relationship with their Savior. Help them to understand how deeply they are loved by our gracious and compassionate God. Answer His call and reach out to children in His name. Even if it seems difficult or you wonder if the time is right, trust Him to guide you.

Part 1: What Is the Gospel and Why Share It with Children?

Imagine you are holding a piece of paper money. If you have money in your pocket, take it out and look at it. What value does it have to you? If you could spend it on anything you wanted to, what would you spend it on?

Now crumple the money up into a ball. Drop it on the ground and step on it. Get it dirty and wrinkled. Then pick it up and open it up again. Has its value changed?

In some ways, we are like that money. Though we may feel dirty, beat up, or damaged, we are still highly valued by the One who created us. God loves each of us completely. Nothing we do, and nothing that has been done to us, can ever change our value to Him.

This is the incredible good news of the gospel! God created us and loves us more than we can imagine (Romans 8:39). But we all sin, and the punishment for our sin is death. Our sin separates us from God (Romans 3:23). But Jesus took the punishment for our sin by dying on the cross (Romans 5:8). Because Jesus died, God offers to forgive our sin when we ask Him to. God's forgiveness is a gift to us, but a gift must be accepted (Romans 6:23). We can choose to accept God's forgiveness and become part of His family, or we can choose to reject His gift (Romans 10:9).

The Bible tells us this good news is for all people, including children. God loves and values children, and He often uses them to accomplish His will. For example, the Bible tells us how Jesus used a boy's small lunch to feed 5,000 people. We can read about young David, who killed a giant with a sling and a stone. And we know that even as a boy, Jesus discussed His Father's truth with others at the temple.

Children are very important to God, and He often chooses to use them to share His love and truth.

Jesus gave us an example of how we ought to value children.

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant.

He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,

for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:13–16

In Jesus' time, it was common for religious leaders to be asked to bless children. So, this request would not have seemed unusual. But before Jesus could respond, the disciples stopped the children and scolded those who had brought them.

This made Jesus very angry. This is 1 of only 2 times Scripture tells us that Jesus became angry. In fact, Jesus was so angry that He rebuked the disciples in 3 different ways. First, He told them to let the children come. Then He told the disciples not to keep the children away. Finally, He told them that we should all have faith like children.

This might have been enough to communicate the message to the disciples that children are important. But then Jesus showed the disciples (and us!) how much He loves children. He was asked to bless the children, which meant to lay His hands on them and

Children’s openness to the gospel means that they are also more open to learning about God and how to trust and obey Him. The world is filled with information competing for children’s attention. If we do not intentionally share the gospel with children, they will hear other messages, and they may choose to accept those instead. Studies tell us that children are more open to the gospel message than adults. Most Christians accept Christ between the ages of 4 and 14, and those who accept Christ at an early age are more likely to keep their faith throughout their lives.



**We should share the gospel with children because
they are the church of tomorrow—
and the church of today.**



We often hear that today’s children are tomorrow’s church leaders. That is true, but children are also the church of today. Our churches are filled with children—sometimes more than adults. When children know and love Jesus at an early age, they have their whole lives to live in His service and enjoy the blessings of His love. And how many more lives can they touch with the gospel message?

Part 2: Sharing the Gospel with Children

Here are some tips to help you prepare to share the gospel with children.

Pray.

Pray for wisdom and opportunities to share the gospel message. Pray for God to draw their hearts to Him. Pray for children, who need to hear that God will forgive their sins, heal their hearts, and give them new life. Pray that children's hearts and lives will be changed with the knowledge that they are known and loved by their Creator. And pray that they will have opportunities to share the gospel with others. Prayer deepens our relationship with God and helps us listen to how He is working in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Be prepared.

Opportunities to share the gospel with children come and go very quickly. Children lose interest in things quickly. They constantly move from 1 activity to another. Be ready to share the gospel in any situation so you will not miss those precious opportunities.

Keep it simple.

A child does not need to understand every word in the Bible to understand its message of forgiveness, healing, and grace. Share this message in simple words that a child will understand.

Tip: The Faith Development Chart at the end of this booklet will help you understand what a child can understand at different ages. However, this chart is only a guide since the Holy Spirit can work in any person at any age.

Allow children to experience the gospel.

Children will more easily learn and remember the information in the gospel message if they learn from experience rather than simply through words. Weave an awareness of God into everyday life. Help them understand awe as they see God's amazing creation. Pray for them to feel the wondrous love of their heavenly Father. Show them the blessing of unexpected forgiveness. Help them to recognize His healing power. When children experience God instead of simply hearing others talk about Him, they begin to understand the gospel message in more powerful ways.

Here is a simple way to share the 5 essential parts of the gospel:

- 1. God loves.** He created us and loves us more than we can imagine (Romans 8:39)!
- 2. We sin.** Sin means choosing to go against what God wants for our lives. The Bible says that we all sin, and the punishment for sin is death. Our sin separates us from God (Romans 3:23).
- 3. Jesus died.** God sent His Son, Jesus, to take our place. He took the punishment for our sin by dying on the cross (Romans 5:8).
- 4. God forgives.** Because Jesus died, God forgives our sins when we ask Him to. This forgiveness is a gift to us (Romans 6:23).
- 5. We accept.** We can choose to accept God's gift of forgiveness and become part of His family, or we can choose to reject His gift (Romans 10:9).

There is an easy way to share this message with children using hand motions. You can share it wherever you are since it does not require any supplies.

The Gospel in Simple Words

- ◆ **God loves.** (Extend your arms in front of you at shoulder height. Hold your hands together.)
- ◆ **We sin.** (Move your left arm straight out to the side at shoulder height; keep your right arm straight out in front of you.)
- ◆ **Jesus died.** (Move your right arm to the side at shoulder height so both arms are extended at your sides.)
- ◆ **God forgives.** (Bring your right arm back to the front with your left arm still to the side.)
- ◆ **We accept.** (Move your left arm to the front so both arms are extended in front of you. Hold your hands together.)

Children who love the Lord can share the gospel with other children—and even with adults. This simple way to share it can help them to share more clearly and easily.

Another tool you can use to share the gospel is the Salvation Path. The Salvation Path is a visual way to see the steps of salvation. It includes Bible verses that help explain the gospel message to children in an easy-to-understand way. The Salvation Path is included at the end of this section.

When you use the Salvation Path to share the gospel message, show the illustration to the child and discuss the steps in order. These same steps are included in *The Gospel in Simple Words*, so you can use both together.

More Helpful Ideas

Read the Bible verses aloud directly from a Bible, if possible. This helps the child to understand that the gospel message of God's love and forgiveness is found in His Word.

Share this with children individually, if possible. This ensures that the child is making the choice without feeling pressured by others. It also gives you a chance to talk with the child to answer her questions and to pray with her.

Do not worry if you cannot answer all of the child's questions. Tell the child that you do not know the answer but you will find out. Be sure that you find the answer and share it with him. This helps to build trust and encourages the child to talk with others when he has questions about his faith.

Share copies of the Salvation Path. If possible, make copies of the Salvation Path to give to children when you share the gospel with them.

Be sure to follow up with a child who accepts Christ. There is more information about following up in the last section of this booklet.

We are called to share the gospel. And when we do, we can help to bring a child into God's family. But sharing the gospel is only a small part of the work of becoming a disciple of Christ. We must never forget that transforming hearts and lives is God's work. We can introduce children to God's love, healing, power, and forgiveness, but it is His grace that completes the process.



**Step 1
God Loves**

Romans 8:39 says that when we join God's family, nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God."

**Step 2
We Sin**

Sin is choosing my own way over God's or doing anything He does not want me to do. Our sin separates us from God because He is holy. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned" and so are separated from God.

Even though each of us chooses to sin, and God hates sin, Romans 5:8 tells us that God still loves us so much that He sent His Son,

Jesus—who never sinned—to take our punishment for us.

**Step 3
Jesus Died**

**Step 4
God Forgives**

Romans 6:23 says that "the gift of God is eternal life." This means that since Jesus took the punishment for our sin, we can be forgiven and be part of God's family.

**Step 5
We Accept**

A gift must be accepted or it is not yours! Romans 10:9 tells us how to accept the gift God offers—if you "declare with your mouth" and "believe in your heart" that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead for you to be saved, then you accept God's gift to become part of His family.

You might pray something like this:
"Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and deserve to be punished. I believe that Jesus died on the cross to take my punishment. Thank You for forgiving my sins. I accept this free gift and want to be part of Your family forever.
In Jesus' name, amen."



Part 3: Teaching Children How to Share the Gospel

You can use this lesson to teach children how to share the gospel with others. If you know traditional or cultural ways to share the gospel, you can use them in place of the activity ideas included here.

Do an activity to learn about sharing news.

Greet each child as he arrives and ask him to share something about himself. Learning each child's name and something about him communicates that you value him.

When you are ready to begin, have the whole group form a line. Then stand at one end of the line and explain the activity to the whole group.

We will start at this end of the line. The first person will share some good news, such as "It is warm and sunny today." Then the next person will share some bad news that is related to the good news, such as "But it will start raining later today." Then the next person will share some good news related to the bad news, such as "The rain helps the crops to grow." We will continue until we reach the end of the line. Then we will start over at that end of the line and do the activity again. Share your news as quickly as you possibly can. You only have 10 seconds to share!

Tip: If you have a large group of children, divide them into smaller groups of 10. Each group will form a line and do the activity. The activity works best when everyone in the line can hear what the others say.

Start the activity by telling the child at the end of the line to share some good news. Do the activity a few times. Each time you do the activity, the group will probably start laughing since the news often becomes silly.

We all like to hear good news. We like to celebrate with others and learn about the things that make them happy. We like it when good things happen to us and the people we care about. And when we have good news, we love to share it! Let's talk about how important it is to share good news!

- What is the best news you have ever heard?

Allow 2–3 children to share their thoughts.

The word *gospel* literally means “good news.” It is the good news of our salvation through Jesus. That is the very best news we could ever hear. And it is also the very best news to share. Let's learn more about how we can share the good news with others.

Learn what the gospel is and how to share it with others.

Before you share the good news about Jesus, you need to be sure you understand it yourself. Let's talk about what the gospel is. The Bible tells us that there is only 1 way we can live forever with God.

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*For God so loved the world  
that he gave his one and only Son,  
that whoever believes in him shall not perish  
but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

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God loves us so much that He sent His Son to save us! The only way we can live forever with God is if we believe in His Son, Jesus. But why did God send His Son? And how can we believe in Him? That story is the gospel. Here are the most important parts:

- 1. God loves.** He created us and loves us more than we can imagine!
- 2. We sin.** Sin means choosing to go against what God wants for our lives. The Bible says that we all sin, and the punishment for sin is death. Our sin separates us from God.
- 3. Jesus died.** God sent His Son, Jesus, to take our place. He took the punishment for our sin by dying on the cross.
- 4. God forgives.** Because Jesus died, God forgives our sins when we ask Him to. This forgiveness is a gift to us.
- 5. We accept.** We can choose to accept God's gift of forgiveness and become part of His family, or we can choose to reject His gift.

Optional:

If you are working with older children or teens, pick a different child to read the verse that goes with each section of The Gospel in Simple Words message.

1. God loves—Romans 8:39
2. We sin—Romans 3:23
3. Jesus died—Romans 5:8
4. God forgives—Romans 6:23
5. We accept—Romans 10:9

Have a child read the first verse aloud from the Bible. Then ask the following question:

- **What does this verse tell us about our relationship with God?**

Guide the discussion using the explanation above. Then repeat this process for the rest of the verses.

End of Option

Now that we understand what the gospel is, let's talk about why we should share it with others.

First, it is good news, and good news is meant to be shared! When we know something exciting and joyful, we want others to hear about it. Having a relationship with God is the most wonderful thing that can ever happen to a person. We should tell others so that they can know Him, too!

Second, we should share the gospel because the Bible tells us to.

*Always be prepared to give an answer
to everyone who asks you
to give the reason for the hope that you have.*

1 Peter 3:15

The hope this verse tells us about is the hope we have in Christ. It is the hope that we can be forgiven of our sin. It is the hope that we can have a relationship with our loving God and live forever with Him. That is something wonderful to hope for!

Optional:

If you are working with older children or teens, divide them into smaller groups of 4–5 and have them discuss the following questions in their groups.

- **What does this hope mean to you?**
- **How do you think this hope can change a person's life?**

End of Option

Tip: Some of the children may want to accept Jesus in order to have the hope this verse promises. If possible, take each child aside and pray a short prayer with him. Then tell him you would like to talk with him after class, and continue with the lesson.

Now that we understand why it is important to share the gospel, let's learn how to share it with others.

Tip: This is just one of many ways to share the gospel with children. It is easy, memorable, and specific. However, if you have a way to share the gospel that is more locally relevant and familiar, feel free to use that in this part of the lesson.

I am going to teach you an easy way to share the gospel with others. To help you remember it, we will do some motions with our arms. Spread out as much as you can so you do not hit anyone, and we will learn how to share the gospel with others.

Lead the children through the motions below, saying the words as you do the motions. For younger children, repeat the first motion and say the words a few times. Then do the second motion and say the words a few times. Then add the first and second motions together. Repeat this process until they have learned all of the motions.

The Gospel in Simple Words

- ◆ **God loves.** (Extend your arms in front of you at shoulder height. Hold your hands together.)
- ◆ **We sin.** (Move your left arm straight out to the side at shoulder height; keep your right arm straight out in front of you.)
- ◆ **Jesus died.** (Move your right arm to the side at shoulder height so both arms are extended at your sides.)
- ◆ **God forgives.** (Bring your right arm back to the front with your left arm still to the side.)
- ◆ **We accept.** (Move your left arm to the front so both arms are extended in front of you. Hold your hands together.)

Sharing the gospel this way helps us to remember all of the important information. Let's learn more about sharing the gospel.

Following are 4 activity options. Choose the activity that best fits your children and your situation. When you have done the activity of your choice, continue with the lesson.

Activity Option 1:

Tip: This activity requires a piece of paper money.

Hold up the piece of paper money.

- **How much is this worth?**
- **Does anyone want to have it?**
- **What would you do with it if it were yours?**

Crush the money into a tiny ball. Drop it on the floor and step on it a few times. Then hold it up again.

- **Do you still want this money now, even though it is crushed, dirty, and wrinkled?**
- **Why do you still want it?**

This money has been damaged. It is now wrinkled and dirty. But it still has the same value it had before. The damage we have done to this money does not change its value.

- **In what ways are we like this money?**

We are like this money because we have great value to God. He loves us completely. But we have been made dirty with sin or hurt by others' sin. Sin means choosing to go against what God wants for our lives. Our sin damages us and separates us from God. But God still loves and values us, so He made a way to restore us.

Smooth out the money and hold it up.

From the beginning of time, God had a plan to bring us back into His family. He knew we could not make ourselves clean.

So He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for our sins. Jesus, who never sinned, died for the sins of all of us. His sacrifice was enough for everyone who has ever lived and who ever will live. It is because of Jesus' sacrifice that we can be forgiven. God loves us so much that He made a way for our relationship with Him to be restored. He gives us the gift of forgiveness when we repent, or ask for forgiveness for our sin. What we need to do is accept God's gift.

We have great value to God even though we are sinful and broken people. Nothing we do and nothing that is done to us can ever separate us from His love. Listen to what the Bible tells us about God's never-ending love.

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*Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,  
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,  
neither height nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God that is  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:38–39

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Divide the group into smaller groups of 4–5. Have the children discuss these questions in their groups.

- **How does it make you feel to know that you are loved and valued by God?**
- **How does it make you feel to know that nothing can separate you from His love?**
- **How would you like to respond to His love?**

You can use the example of the money to share the gospel message with others. Be sure you also use the information from *The Gospel in Simple Words* so you will know that you have shared all the important parts of the gospel message.

Activity Option 2:

Plan 5 stations in your teaching space or outside. These stations need to be empty places that are large enough for your whole group to stand together and spread out a bit. At each station, you will demonstrate 1 part of The Gospel in Simple Words.

When Jesus called His disciples, He told them to follow Him. So follow me and I will share the gospel with you. This is Jesus' message of salvation to all those who follow Him.

Lead the group to the first station.

The first part of the gospel message is that *God loves*. Do you know how much God loves you? Imagine the biggest hug you have ever received. God's love is even bigger than that! Stretch your arms out as though you were giving someone a huge hug! Then bring your hands together and straighten your arms in front of you.

Demonstrate these actions for the children. As you do, say the words, "God loves." Have the children do the actions and repeat the words. After the children have done this at least once, lead the group to the next station.

The next part of the gospel message is that *we sin*. God is perfect, but we are not. Sometimes we make choices that hurt us and others. That is called sin. Sin means going against what God wants for our lives. Our sin separates us from God.

Put your arms out in front of you with your hands together and say, "God loves." Then move your left arm straight out to the side. Your other arm should stay in front of you. Do you see how your arms are separated, like sin separates us from God? Now say, "We sin."

Demonstrate these actions for the children. As you do, say the words, "We sin." Have the children do the actions and repeat the words. After the children have done this at least once, lead the group to the next station.

The next part of the gospel message is that *Jesus died*. God knew we could not make ourselves clean, so He sent His Son, who never sinned, to take the punishment for all of our sins. Jesus died on a cross with His arms straight out to the sides.

Put your arms straight out at your sides, too. Then say, "Jesus died."

Demonstrate this action for the children. Then start at the beginning, with your hands clasped together in front of you, and say, "God loves." Then move your left hand out to your side and say, "We sin." Then move your right hand out to your side and say, "Jesus died." Repeat this at least 3 times. Then lead the group to the next station.

The next part of the gospel message is that *God forgives*. We were separated from God, but He reached out to us. He sent His Son to save us! And because Jesus died, all of our sins can be forgiven when we repent.

Hold your arms out straight at your sides, and then move your right arm back to the front to show how God reached out to us.

Demonstrate this action for the children and say, "God forgives." Then do the 4 parts in order, beginning with your hands clasped in front of you. Be sure to say the words that go with each part. Then lead the group to the next station.

The final part of the message is that *we accept*. God gave us the gift of forgiveness through Jesus' death. When we accept this gift, our sins are forgiven, and we are no longer separated from God. We are part of His family forever!

To show that we are no longer separated from God, hold your right arm in front of you and your left arm straight out at your side. Then move your left arm to your right arm and put your hands together. Say, "We accept."

Demonstrate this action for the children and say, "We accept." Then start at the beginning and repeat all 5 parts, saying the words

that go with each one. Lead the group through the whole series a few times so they will remember them.

Have the children sit down for the rest of the lesson.

Activity Option 3:

Hold up your hand. You will show the students how to share the gospel using their fingers. You will start with your hand closed in a fist. Then you will hold up your fingers when the instructions tell you to. After you hold up each finger, you will keep that finger up and continue. At the end of the example, all of your fingers will be up and your hand will be open. Encourage the students to move their fingers with you and listen to what you are saying.

Look at your hand. It is amazing! God has given you fingers that are very useful! You can use them to pick up things, to point to things, and to do work. You can also use them to share the gospel!

Close your hand into a fist. Then hold up your thumb. Point it up to the sky. Your thumb represents God. God created everything in the whole world—including you! He loves you more than you can imagine!

Now hold up your littlest finger. This finger represents people.

Now try to hold up your ring finger. Your ring finger represents sin. Do you see how it is difficult to move your ring finger without moving your littlest finger? That shows us that it is difficult to choose not to sin. Our sin separates us from God.

Now hold up your middle finger. God had a plan to save us from sin. Your middle finger represents Jesus. God sent His Son, Jesus, to save us. When you move your middle finger and your ring finger at the same time, it is easier not to move your smallest finger. When we have Jesus in our lives, He helps us to choose not to sin.

Now hold up your index finger. The index finger represents our faith. This means that we believe that Jesus died to take the punishment for our sins. Because of what Jesus did, we can be forgiven by God.

When we first held up our hands, there was a big, empty space between people and God. We were separated by our sin. But now that space is filled. Jesus took the punishment for our sins, so now we can be forgiven. This is a wonderful gift! When we choose to accept it, we are no longer separated from God!

If any of the children would like to accept Jesus as their Savior, spend a few minutes talking and praying with them individually. Then continue with the lesson.

Activity Option 4:

If you are using "The Story of Jesus," read the booklet to the children. As you read, hold up the booklet and point to the illustrations. Try to use different voices for the characters and read with excitement.

After you have finished reading, give each child a copy of the booklet. Give the children a few minutes to look at the illustrations. Then direct them to the Salvation Path on page 23 of the booklet. Read the Salvation Path and answer any questions the children may have about what it means to accept Jesus. When you have finished, read Do You Want to Follow Jesus? aloud.

This list explains what we need to do to become part of God's family. Make a check by the things you believe. If you believe them all, then you are ready to accept Jesus! Say a prayer like the one on page 23 and accept God's gift of forgiveness.

Give the students a few minutes to think and pray.

You can share this booklet with other people to teach them the gospel, too! When you do, show them the list on the back of

the booklet. Then, if they want you to, pray with them as they accept the gift of forgiveness.

After completing 1 of the activities, finish the rest of the lesson below.

This is a special way to remember what God has done for us. God has given us an amazing and beautiful gift! We should share that gift with others!

Tip: Help the children understand how to be safe while sharing the gospel. If possible, give them guidelines to help them recognize when and where they can safely share the gospel with others.

Practice sharing the gospel with others.

Let's practice sharing the gospel with others. The more we practice, the easier it will be.

Tip: The purpose of this activity is to help the children understand appropriate and safe ways to share the gospel in your community. If the ways suggested in this lesson will not work for your situation, choose options that are better for your community.

Have the children find partners. They can take turns sharing the gospel with their partners. They can use any of the activities they just did. Walk around and observe the children's sharing. Correct any mistakes as they share the gospel with each other. Give the children 10 minutes to do this activity.

The gospel message is good news! And you did a great job sharing it! Let me share 1 more exciting thing with you.

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*Yet to all who did receive him,  
 to those who believed in his name,  
 he gave the right to become children of God.*

John 1:12  
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When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we become part of God's family! We begin a relationship with our loving Father. We also become part of a Christian family that is all over the world. We have Christian brothers and sisters in our community, and we have Christian brothers and sisters all over the world. We are part of a very special family—God's family!

- **How does it make you feel to know that you can be part of God's family?**

Tip: Some of your children may want to belong to God's family. If possible, take each child aside and pray briefly with her. Then tell her you would like to talk with her after class and, continue with the lesson.

Close with a blessing based on John 1:12 and Romans 8:38–39:

Blessing: May you know and believe in the name of Jesus, who paid the price for your sins so that you could be forgiven. Each day, may you know more and more what it means to be a child of God. And may you know that nothing can ever separate you from His love.

Part 4: How to Follow up with a New Christian

The Bible tells us that the goal of sharing the gospel does not stop with salvation. It continues into discipleship. *Discipleship* means learning to be more and more like Jesus and living in ways that are pleasing to Him.

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*He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and  
teaching everyone with all wisdom,  
so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.  
To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy  
Christ so powerfully works in me.  
Colossians 1:28–29*

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When children hear the gospel and accept Jesus, it is the first step on a journey of life transformation. The first changes appear as their relationship with God shapes their hearts and minds. But God wants their relationship with Him to grow and deepen.

To be sure children who have accepted Jesus receive the guidance they need, follow up with them. Here are some helpful things you can do.

Pray.

Once a child has accepted Jesus, he needs just as much prayer as he did before he became part of God's family. Pray *with* the child, thanking God for His gift of grace. Ask for God's guidance as the child grows in faith. Pray *for* the child, asking God to provide the right people and opportunities to help him as he learns what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Encourage the child to pray and share his life with God. Prayer is the most meaningful gift you can give!

Share God's Word.

If possible, give the child a copy of "The Story of Jesus" or, even better, a Bible. Her understanding and her relationship with God will grow as she reads and studies His Word. If possible, be available to discuss with the child what she is reading in the Bible and answer any questions she may have.

Encourage fellowship and discipleship.

An important way for new believers to learn more about what it means to be a Christian is to spend time with other believers. God intends for Christians to learn to grow in faith with other believers. Help connect the child with other Christians to love and encourage him. Invite him to a local church. Introduce him to mature Christians who will help him to grow in faith. His relationships with other Christians will provide the support he needs on his journey from new believer to mature Christian.

Encourage them to share their faith.

The excitement of a new relationship with Jesus makes the story of a new believer especially meaningful. Encourage her to share the story of how knowing Jesus has changed her life. This will help her to grow in faith—and it provides opportunities for others to hear the story of God's transforming love!

Faith Development Ages and Stages

We would not expect a small baby to physically care for himself as an adult would. In the same way, we cannot expect young children to act, think, learn, or grow as adults would. Just as we grow physically and mentally throughout life, we also grow spiritually.

This chart outlines some of the characteristics of growth and the ages when they are commonly seen. These are only general ideas as each child develops individually. Some children may show greater spiritual understanding than expected. Others may be slower to understand certain truths. The most important thing to remember is that each child is created in the image of God and can grow in relationship with Him. Pray for God to help you understand the children you are ministering to so that you can lead them well.

Discovering Truth Ages 6–8		
How Are They Growing?	What Can They Understand about God?	How Can They Best Learn from the Bible?
<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand cause and effect • See another’s point of view • Think about and make choices • Pay attention for an extended time 	<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how much Jesus loves everyone and why He came • Understand who God is and that He keeps His promises • Choose to be in relationship with God • Recognize their own sin and ask God for forgiveness 	<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Bible stories and answer questions about them • Memorize Bible verses • See Jesus as a helper and friend • Develop a simple understanding of sin and the gospel

Discovering Deeper Truth Ages 9–11		
How Are They Growing?	What Can They Understand about God?	How Can They Best Learn from the Bible?
<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to have regular Bible reading and prayer times • Make right choices and accept responsibility for actions • Recognize knowledge and abilities that can be used to serve God and others • Begin thinking abstractly 	<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that the Bible is God’s truth • Begin to understand the truth of Jesus’ death and resurrection • Gain a larger worldview through an emphasis on ministering to others • Begin to develop a personal value system 	<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to understand the organization of the Bible and memorize the books in order • Locate and read short Bible passages • Memorize Bible verses • Begin to ask deeper questions about Bible passages

Exploring Justice Ages 12–14		
How Are They Growing?	What Can They Understand about God?	How Can They Best Learn from the Bible?
<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose to follow God’s ways even when others do not • Put faith into practice in daily life • Feel confident of God’s love and trustworthiness • Look for opportunities to know God more deeply 	<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand right and wrong from a biblical perspective • Understand that salvation is personal for each person • Understand the history and chronology of the Bible • Become familiar with biblical people, events, culture, and vocabulary 	<p>Children in this age group can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from learning Bible stories to studying the Bible • Begin to understand how to use basic Bible references • Read selected passages to discover facts and details • Memorize Bible verses

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