

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Developing Children's Ministry



SESSION 17

Evangelizing and Discipling Children

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Evangelizing and Discipling Children

SESSION OVERVIEW

Sharing the Gospel in an Age-Appropriate Way

Discipling a Child's Spiritual Journey

Teaching Children Prayer and Bible Study

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand how to communicate the truth of the gospel with clarity and urgency in an age-appropriate way.
- consider several ways to follow up and disciple following a child's conversion.
- develop strategies to teach a child to participate in prayer and Bible study.

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest joys of being a children's pastor is to introduce children to Jesus and experience the excitement of watching the changes in their lives. Children usually respond to a salvation invitation because of experiences that lead them in that direction.

SHARING THE GOSPEL IN AN AGE-APPROPRIATE WAY



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Salvation is a goal for each child in children's ministry. However, a genuine experience and strong follow-up activities increase the probability the child will continue in that relationship. Children's leaders should review some of the important areas of Christian formation where children are likely to respond to a salvation invitation. When it comes to early childhood, babies experience God's love through the love of caregivers. They form a foundation of trust on which faith may be built. They sense God's presence as caregivers practice the presence of Christ. They feel loved and secure in church. They become familiar with the words God and Jesus. Toddlers and Twos know God made them and are aware of His love for them. They know the Bible is a special book that tells them about God and Jesus. They know Jesus, God's Son, is someone special who loves them. They know they are part of their church, a special place to learn about God. They enjoy the wonder of God's creation through their senses. They can express thanks and praise to God for His love and care.

Preschool children know God is great and good. They know Jesus is alive, and they love Jesus as their Friend. They want to please God, and they talk to Him. They fall in love with Bible stories and enjoy Bible verses through a variety of experiences. They recognize they make choices. They can begin to participate in the activities of their church community. Kindergarten children are likely to respond to a salvation invitation because they want to please God and those around them. They are not likely to understand what it means to be a sinner (although they do understand the idea of "naughty"). They have a sense of what it means to be a Christian, and they want to be one. This reflects a sincere heart. At this age, it is not appropriate to ASK a child to accept salvation, but it is important to respond to a child who shows sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading. It is never appropriate to either hold a child back or force him or her forward.

Elementary-age children often respond to the gospel message based on a clearer understanding of the implications of sin and salvation. Studies have shown that almost a third of people who respond to Christ do so during the elementary age. These years serve as a time of prime receptivity. Some children will accept salvation earlier, others later; but the elementary years are a window of opportunity. We need to recognize that motivations may change among children this age. Some children feel a need to please (being a "good" Christian), while others will react to avoid God's punishment or set unrealistic standards for themselves in light of a "law and order" mindset. We must recognize that



motivations vary but grace will be available. Ultimately, our role may be to help children see the larger picture of salvation beyond their viewpoint, but we need not deny their faithful responses.

Presenting the Gospel

While there are many messages and tools to explain salvation to children, the message needs to remain clear and uncluttered. This short list helps to simplify the steps of relationship with God before, during, and after salvation.

- We can trust God and what God says.
- God loves us and wants to be our best Friend forever.
- Everyone sins.
- Sin separates a person from God.
- Jesus, God's own Son, lived, died, and rose again to take away our sins.
- God will forgive our sins when we ask.
- As our best Friend, Jesus will help us know how to live for God and love others.
- As a Christian, we belong to God's family of believers.
- If we maintain our relationship with God, we will live as God's friend forever.

When a child responds to an invitation for salvation, we can walk him or her through the ABCs of salvation or a similar formula that helps focus their faith. These approaches may seem simple, but they help children understand the basics of salvation and provide a means for focusing their beliefs.

A: Admit you have sinned. Tell God what you have done, be sorry for it, and be willing to quit. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

B: Believe God loves you and sent His Son, Jesus, to save you from your sins. Accept the forgiveness God offers you. "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).

C: Claim Jesus as your Savior. Acknowledge God's forgiveness, respond with love, and follow Jesus. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).


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Following this presentation, we might pray with the child, using this or a similar prayer:

Dear God, I admit I have sinned, and I am sorry. Please forgive me. Thank You for sending Jesus to die on the Cross for the wrong things I have done. I want Jesus to be my Savior and best Friend. Help me to obey You every day. I believe You have forgiven me. Thank You.

As we discussed in the lesson on faith development, we need to recognize that younger children will undoubtedly express their faith differently than adults. We can trust a “childlike” faith since God saves us by grace through our trust and acceptance. Undoubtedly, children will need to deepen their understanding of faith as they grow but we need not question the simplicity of their acceptance of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

As soon as children receive Jesus, we should visit with them to let them know how to build a relationship with God. Here are some key steps for children:

- Learn more about God from the Bible.
- Talk to God often through prayer.
 - Thank Him for sending Jesus.
 - Ask God to help them obey Him.
 - Tell Him about their needs and the needs of others.
- Tell others about their Friend, Jesus.
- Go to church to meet with other Christians.
- If children feel they disobey God, ask for forgiveness right away. Keep on living as God's friend.

NOT Presenting the Gospel

There are some approaches we should NOT do when leading a child to Christ. For instance, we should not “bribe” or coerce a child to accept Christ by offering rewards such as Bibles or other gifts. We should never shame a child by mentioning sins we know the child has committed. Instead, we need to wait for the Holy Spirit to bring these things to the child's mind. Do not imply that this child “really needs to be saved.” Focus on the fact that all have sinned. This approach keeps a child from building defensive barriers against God's ongoing work. Never pressure a child with threats of punishment for sin.

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In addition, we need not overcomplicate the message of salvation with symbolic language. Many old songs and lessons use the words, "Ask Jesus into your heart." For some children, this symbol creates confusion and hinders their acceptance of Christ. After children are saved, they can talk about what Jesus does to them (fills them with love, gives them the desire to serve Him, etc.). The term "new life" can be very confusing for a child who is suffering life circumstances over which they have no control. When they still have the same parents, the same home, and the same hunger and need, they may feel that God didn't save them since they didn't get the new life they imagined. Focus on describing a spiritual life that allows them to have strength to do the right thing when life is difficult and gives hope for a better future. We develop hope in tangible ways when the body of Christ begins to connect with the physical needs of the child.

We should not feel we must overcomplicate the message of salvation with theological details, such as, "Jesus paid the price for your sins." (What does sin cost?) Do not focus on the death of Christ above His life and resurrection. While it may be helpful for adults to understand the purpose Jesus' death served in the context of God's covenant with humanity, it may frighten and confuse children in a way that hinders their ongoing relationship with God.

We must not forget that in a Wesleyan understanding of salvation, God's love serves as the primary focus of drawing people to God. While God's justice remains incredibly important, the focus on God's love and belonging is most consistent with the developmental needs of the child. Do not discourage a child who has "already been saved." Instead, we can express our value for the child's sensitivity, help him or her to confess whatever specific sins he or she feels are causing a separation from God, and focus the prayer on trusting God for salvation. Remember that each response provides an opportunity to deepen the child's commitment.

Finally, we must not get caught up in our role in leading a child to Christ. Salvation remains the work of God. While we may "set the stage" and "set goals" for the number of children we would like to see saved in relation to a certain event or program, we should never see a child's commitment as a measure of our success. We establish an open climate while God does the work.

DISCIPLING A CHILD'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



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Spiritual formation expert Dallas Willard shared, in a personal interview, that when he became a Christian at the age of nine, he felt as though he knew what he ought to do, but no one gave him the tools to do it. Willard knew he needed to be good to please God, but didn't know how. Dallas knew he needed to read his Bible, but he didn't know how. He knew he needed to resist temptation, but he didn't know how. Though raised in a strong Christian home, he still needed strategies for deepening his walk with the Lord. A discipleship plan for children allows them to develop tools to use at their own level of understanding.

Children's leaders should recognize the importance of follow-up to anyone's conversion experience as well as ongoing discipleship. Discipleship is especially important for children. There are a number of resources available as well as strategies for ongoing discipleship. A spiritual guide (parent, teacher, mature friend) meets with the child each week for five weeks to go over a booklet of activities or other resources. Look for materials that cover such topics as: I Believe in Jesus . . . Now What?; Roadblocks to the Faith; Growing Upward; Growing Together; Going Outward.

There are some basics of discipleship that can be applied at any stage of life, though exactly what they look like will vary. Among the most trusted approaches include the following: mentorship, small group accountability, Christian education and/or catechism, and practicing spiritual disciplines.

Mentoring

Mentoring provides one-to-one support in development. In the best of all possible worlds, mentoring happens with a family member who is a daily role model for the child. Sometimes, grandparents serve this function. Throughout history, godparents have been selected for exactly this purpose. Mentors show personal interest, check in regularly, set aside time, and are available for chats when something comes up. They share tools from their own personal experience. Mentors watch for areas where training is needed. For example, a mentor might notice the approach of adolescence and begin to initiate conversations about growing up. You might think of this as an apprenticeship in Christianity.

To help parents in their role as mentors, it is helpful to provide tools for family devotions that are fun and practical. We can also teach parents to be "on the lookout" for God in creation, in daily situations, and as our family sustainer.

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The family is God-ordained to pass on the faith to the next generation. Often denominations like the Church of the Nazarene offer devotional magazines for families to help them be successful with devotions.

There are a number of potential guidelines for family devotions to share with parents. To begin, families need to be realistic. Work family devotions into times when the family is together. Families rarely stay with devotions if the plan doesn't work with their schedules. Longer devotions are not better devotions. Keep devotions short, and keep the pace moving.

Try to include both emotional as well as intellectual engagement when families are together. Holding children and relating with them emotionally provides a special tool for drawing family members closer. Also incorporate the other senses. Look for devotions based on activities that can be tasted, touched, smelled, heard, and seen.

Use media as a connection to the things of God. Kids watch television and videos. Watch with them. Give them opportunities to evaluate the behavior of characters in light of Scriptural truths. Get out of doors. Think about the things of God in nature. Think about God's miraculous designs for your body as you exercise together. Create traditions around holidays. On Valentine's Day, create a valentine to God. For Lent, give up electric light at mealtimes and light candles instead. For Easter, each day for a week, open a plastic egg that tells a part of the story of Jesus' death and resurrection story. On Christmas, don't forget Jesus' birthday cake!

Allow kids to share what God is teaching them, what verses they have read privately, and what they learned from Sunday school. Let the children be "in charge" of the content from time to time. Don't be too focused on structured time, or families will risk missing opportunities in real life.

Focus more on questions than answers. Don't lecture kids; have conversations with them based on life experiences. For example, when a child gets a bad grade, suggest the parent say, "I was thinking about one time when I got a D on a test. I felt so bad, and I was really mad at myself. I wonder if anyone in the Bible ever felt like I did. I wonder if you ever felt like I did. How do we know what we should do when we blow it? Let's see if we can find out from Scripture." If parents have a tough time finding an answer, search it out together with the children. Make the search the devotional time. Children have a much more favorable attitude to family devotions when they are integrated into life rather than implemented as a rigid, scheduled event.

NOTES*Small Groups*

Small groups serve a different purpose than a class setting. Small groups foster community, usually among a group that has a particular reason for coming together. In the case of discipleship, it is a place for children who are interested specifically in growing as a Christian, and who are willing to set aside extra time to talk with other kids serious about growing in Christ. A small group may be oriented around answering thematic questions as they arise, rather than around a curriculum plan with a scope and sequence. A small group provides a place where people who are going through similar things can strategize for success together. A small group may include games, activities, and services that teach through life experience.

Christian Education and/or Catechism

Christian education in the church is still largely done in a Sunday school model. The focus of this ministry revolves around the Bible, learning Scripture, and applying it to life. Children learn the basics of Bible content to apply in all areas of their lives. In many cases, a Sunday school teacher becomes a mentor who leads a small group meeting during Sunday school and who helps children learn the spiritual disciplines that will be practiced independently as children grow in the faith. This description presents a challenge for a volunteer who may also have a job and family responsibilities. The limited time given to Sunday school provides one reason we have such a hard time discipling children for lifelong commitment. The job is just too large for one person to accomplish.

Catechism classes provide another tool for helping children learn specific content about the Christian faith. A catechism describes an organized summary of the essentials for Christian faith and life. The church holds them to be true according to the Christian faith, rehearsed in holy Scripture, and passed down by the saints to guide us. A catechism often includes a rote memorization process, though adults and children can explore the meaning behind the material. This background may help children to develop an understanding of the meaning behind the theology being developed by their personal experience.

Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

The learning model associated with Christian education and catechism often revolves around classroom learning. We have looked at discipleship as apprenticing, interning, and being in a classroom. What's left? Obviously, there is independent practice! Children need to be able to put into action those skills that will help them be Christian when no one else is looking—when they are “on their own” with God. That leads us to teaching kids about spiritual disciplines.



Remember our previous lesson that explained why we should practice spiritual disciplines? These practices place us where God can do for us what we can never do for ourselves by making us Christlike. This goal remains the same for children.

TEACHING CHILDREN PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY



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There are a number of potential spiritual disciplines that children might practice. However, two key practices help disciple children and shape their spiritual journey following conversion: prayer and the formational study of Scripture.

Teaching Children to Pray

Prayer remains a primary means for connecting with God. Our responsibility is helping children pray according to their developmental stages beginning with infants. Before children develop language skills, pray for them in their presence. Speak to God for both of you, using the word “we.” Focus on thanksgiving and adoration prayers. “We thank you God for arms and legs.” “We love you God. Thank you for loving us.” These prayers should be spontaneous and related to what’s happening. You can offer prayers “by the book” as well. As you snuggle and read, thank God for the things pictured in the book.

Beginning with toddlers, we can pray “with” children. As children begin to learn language, they love the sounds of rhyme and meter. Teach them recited prayers, and say these prayers with them, especially before meals and bedtime. Rather than being meaningless chatter, these memorized prayers are an important part of prayer as toddlers develop habits of prayer. Once we move to two- and three-year-old children, we may pray in response to them. As these children relate their hurts and problems, ask, “Would you like me to pray about that?” Then pray a short prayer that models bringing concerns to God. With four- and five-year-old children, we can build on our suggestions to pray for needs. Ask a child to pray for one specific thing in a public setting. We might open the prayer ourselves and invite the child to join in when we desire him or her to pray about the specific thing.

With early elementary-age children, we can encourage very brief silent prayer. Leave time open in group settings for children to whisper their own prayers to God. This act teaches several important principles. We can all pray at the same time. God hears even when we don’t talk out loud. We can pray to God on our own, even when no one else is listening. This practice moves the child toward an independent prayer life, not mediated by teachers or parents. Middle elementary-age children may pray with each other. Children may begin to feel shy about praying out loud at this age. Introduce partner prayers where the children can tell each other about a prayer need and choose how to pray about it together. Some children are ready to lead the whole group in prayer by this age. This practice moves children toward seeing the power of “two or more gathered in My name.”

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Encourage preteen children to develop an active, private prayer life. Introduce the concept of a prayer journal and habit-building tools to connect prayer and Bible study in a personal devotional setting. Many children of this age enjoy keeping charts to remind themselves to have devotions. They can be accountable to you as their spiritual leader and to peers in a small-group accountability structure. At this stage, children are ready to learn to be faithful in intercessory prayer and can tolerate long-range prayers that God is answering “not yet.” Preteens also enjoy prayer challenges, such as praying for a local rescue mission or for world hunger, even when they may not see direct results.

As in all developmental approaches, children do not always follow the agendas we project. Any child can pray in any way at any age (especially if you use tools to teach them about specific kinds of prayer). This framework helps children have the tools for an effective prayer life. Once children learn these basic prayer patterns, they can participate meaningfully in more highly-developed practices based on these earlier forms. For example, a preteen no longer prays, “God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food.” The preteen should have the ability to recognize the significance of “The Lord’s Prayer” spoken together or of prayers read together in worship.

Child-Friendly Prayer Motivators

Children’s leaders can use prayer motivators to help children learn how to pray. We must be careful that children learn prayer, not use prayer to gain items or attention. Still, when applied wisely, some motivators provide much needed structure to a child’s prayer life.

Prayer Candy

Give each child a personal-size bag of candy bits, such as M&Ms or Skittles. Tell the kids not to eat them yet! For every red M&M, they should pray for a family member. For every green M&M, pray for someone in the church. For every yellow one, thank God for something that happened this week. For every brown one, pray for someone in the class. For every blue one, pray for something in this world that makes God sad. Variation: Thank God for something of the color of each candy before they eat it.

Five Fingers of Prayer

Use folded hands to guide prayers. When clasped in prayer, the thumb is nearest the child. So begin prayers by praying for those closest to children, family, and friends. They are the easiest to remember. The next finger, the pointing finger,


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teaches children to pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds children of leaders who need God's guidance. The fourth finger is the ring finger. Normally seen as the weakest finger, it should remind children to pray for those who are weak, in trouble, or in pain. The last finger is the little finger; the smallest finger of all. This "pinkie finger" should remind children to pray for themselves. By the time children have prayed for the other four groups, their own needs may seem smaller, but they are important!

Other Strategies

During Global Prayers, children spin a globe and stop it with one finger. They then pray for people (or missionaries) wherever their finger lands. Alphabet Praise describes a prayer practice that begins with the letter A, and children name something for which to praise God. Children continue around the circle, with each person naming something that begins with the next letter of the alphabet. A Prayer Phone approach entails using an old cell phone. Encourage young children to talk to God about their day, what made them happy or sad, and what they are planning to do before they go to bed. A Graffiti Wall approach begins with a large piece of butcher paper, along with some crayons or markers. Leaders encourage children to draw or write their prayers. Leaders might use a Prayer Chain. Children write each prayer on a strip of paper and join the strips together in a paper chain. This is an especially good activity when the group is praying for one person or about one thing together. The Hot Potato Prayer game provides a playful way to learn public and intercessory prayer. Leaders pass a potato from person to person while you play music. When the music stops, someone prays for the person holding the "hot potato."

Finally children can engage in a Prayer Walk. As children come into class, give each one a piece of construction paper and a marker. For children who can write for themselves, have them write a prayer request on the paper. For those who can't, write the requests for them. Tape the papers to the floor in a random path, like a cake walk. When you are ready to pray, have the children walk the path from request to request. When the music stops, they are to pray for the request they land on.

Teaching Children to Study the Bible

From the time children are very small, they need a Bible they can call their own. For the youngest child, there are board book Bibles that are mainly pictures. Young reader's Bibles use simplified vocabulary that matches early reader's emerging


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skills, such as the New International Reader's Version (NIRV) or the New Century Version (NCV). When children are old enough to read on their own, they should be introduced to Bibles and devotional books designed for independent use.

To better understand how children can learn to make the Bible their source for daily guidance, teach them to use very simple reference sources. Many youth Bibles provide these resources alongside the text. You want to introduce some basic Bible studies. How do you develop practices that will really help children grow in their faith? Here are just a few ways children can be involved in discovering God's Word.

Bible Detective

There are lots of strategies leaders use. First, help children understand the Bible's organization of chapters and verses. Verses alone don't usually tell the full story. Children need to understand the message. They need to read the Bible in passages. Most modern translations identify passages with topic headings—descriptions that are not part of the Bible text but help us know the main idea of the passage. As an example, children might take the book of Galatians and use the subheadings or introduction to the book to outline the overall message.

Bible Archaeologist

All parts of the Bible happened in a time and place and were written by someone for some reason. An archaeologist discovers these details and then helps us understand how the people are like or different from us. To discover this information, leaders could encourage children to:

- look in the introduction to the Bible book.
- look for words in the text or title of the book that will help.
- look at Bible maps.
- place the event on a Bible timeline.

For instance, when children know the book of Galatians was written to a people who were going overboard with the idea of rules to live by, they can begin to see ways that we might be tempted to do the same thing today.

Heart and Soul

Show children how to use a highlighter to underline words that cause strong feelings. For example, passages that command people to “carry each other's burdens” (Galatians 6:2) may catch the attention of a compassionate child's


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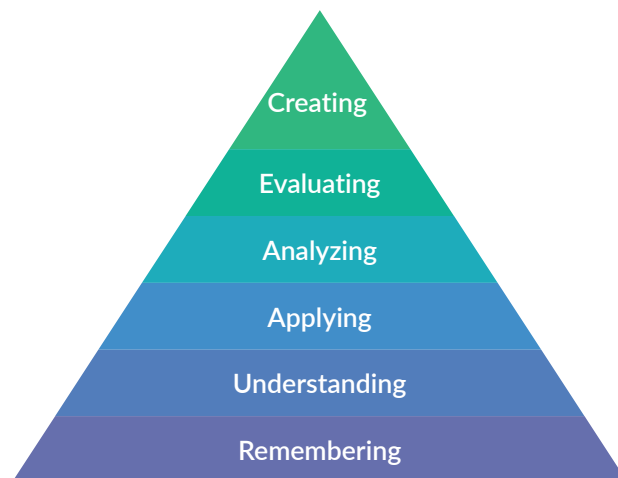
heart. Admonitions to conduct our lives “without comparing ourselves to others” (Galatians 6:4) may speak to a child who is struggling with peer pressure. This kind of Bible study is not oriented so much to knowledge as to the work of the Spirit in showing us how to live.

Imagine the Outcomes

Children can also relate Scripture to a real life situation that compares the reading. For example, Galatians 6:1 talks about a person who is caught in a sin. The child might think about someone they have seen committing a sin. He or she might think about what they thought when it happened. This verse says that spiritual people should restore that person gently. What might a gentle response to this person be? What kind of gentle response might the child give next time he or she is in this situation? Leaders can ask the child to imagine what it feels like to be restored gently. Have the child think about how Jesus does this for them when they have done something wrong. What are some other times people have been gentle with them? Like all strategies, this one must be taught and practiced before children can use it effectively.

Follow the Questions

To come up with good questions to help children apply God's Word internally, it is necessary to understand how children move from remembering facts to applying content. Benjamin Bloom, an educational researcher, developed a system of leading a learner through this process. It is called Bloom's taxonomy.



Atherton, J. S. (2005) *Learning and Teaching: Bloom's Taxonomy* [online] UK


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Starting at the bottom, the pyramid shows which questions should help children interact with the text. First and most basic, questions should help children *remember* the text. A knowledge (remembering) question might be: “How should a brother who is caught in a sin be restored?” The answer is, “Gently.” Moving to the next level, we need to make sure that a child *understands*. A question might be, “What does gently mean?” There is not only one right answer. There are many ways a child might answer that question based on his or her own experience. There are some wrong answers, but there are many right ones. Next, the child might be encouraged to *apply* the information through a question such as, “When is a time someone has treated you gently when you made a mistake?” An *analyzing* question might be framed as an example: “Jared discovered Alyssa taking a cookie from the tray after their mother asked them to wait until after dinner. Jared yelled, ‘Stop!’ at Alyssa and ran to tell his mom. Did Jared apply Galatians 6:1? How do you know?” An *evaluating* question might be: “What could Jared have done better to apply Galatians 6:1?” To move to the final step of *creating*, you might assign a task: “Create a short skit with a friend to show how you might live out Galatians 6:1.” Notice how this process takes the learner deeper and deeper one step at a time. It is possible to skip steps, but each step of the process leads to a better and deeper ability to bring the text to life.

We should look for good Bible studies with questions; make sure the questions move above and beyond the remembering stage. Remembering is important, but remembering alone doesn’t lead to active life formation or change. Children need to go deeper into the text.

Some Mistakes Leaders Make in Using Scripture with Children

In the same way leaders overdo evangelism strategies, they also have to learn appropriate methods for engaging Scripture with children. Remember, the goal is the formation of the child, not mastering abstract information. Leaders may fall into several false attempts:

- Too much, too fast: The practice of a chapter a day (or a psalm, a proverb, and a passage) doesn’t give a child a chance to dwell deeply with the concepts. They have completed a reading task that is part of developing a discipline. However, is that really all we want them to accomplish? Less may be more as children develop personal devotional skills.
- Children may fall into memorizing words without exploring their understanding. We can’t assume that just because we taught the verse, children understood it. Children need to take whatever steps are necessary to put the verse into their own words.


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- Memorizing verses without putting them into the context of God's story. By focusing on memorization of important concept verses, we sometimes fail to help children get the overall view of God's Word as a story that continues in history.
- Teaching stories without drawing out the life principles New Testament letters present so clearly. Children need to see the connections between how Bible characters act and the standards God sets for our character and behavior.
- We might overestimate children's independent reading level. Children can understand what is read to them approximately two years before they can understand what they read on their own until they are about middle school age. Just because they can read the words does not mean they can comprehend the meaning independently. Children who do not have strong reading skills can listen to brief passages of Scripture and feel just as successful in developing the spiritual discipline of Bible study as those who read the passages themselves.
- "One size fits all": Our teaching needs to reflect the different needs of different learners. The methods we teach children to use independently should reflect their different learning styles. There is not a right way and a wrong way to explore God's Word. God promises that His Word will not return void, and His Spirit can be trusted to reveal truth!
- We fail to check for understanding. If we send kids out to study the Bible without following up on their understanding, children may develop misperceptions. One way we can follow up is to ask them to teach us what they are learning from the passages they explore. Christian life is best learned in the context of conversation and practice.
- We fail to help children understand that their ability to live up to God's standards will grow as they do. Children need to understand that we are all growing in grace and becoming more Christlike as God continues to work in our hearts and lives.

There are many other ways to teach children how to engage in prayer and study the Bible for life change. These methods serve a larger plan of evangelizing and discipling children. Salvation begins with a faith commitment to God through Jesus. That commitment is anchored in the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. For Wesleyans, salvation begins, but does not end, with this commitment. Our role in participating with the Holy Spirit will be to guide children deeper into their relationship with Jesus as both Savior and Lord of their lives. Evangelism and discipleship for children describe a life-long journey to which we, as children's leaders, must accept our role by God's grace for the sake of children.

APPLICATION

**NOTES**

1. Interview several adults who had childhood conversions. What do they remember, and how were they disciplined in their journey?
2. Talk with leadership about appropriate and inappropriate approaches to evangelism with children.
3. Design a discipleship strategy for helping a younger elementary child develop a prayer life and a means for studying Scripture.

EXAM

**NOTES**

1. Salvation for children relies on both genuine experience and strong follow-up.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. Kindergarten children may seek God but we should not directly ask them to accept salvation.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. _____ of adults respond to Christ during their elementary years:
 - A. One fifth
 - B. Half
 - C. One third
 - D. Two thirds
4. Simple formulas obscure the true meaning of the gospel with children.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. Children will express their faith differently than adults but God honors them.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. Symbolic language captures children's imaginations when presenting the gospel.
 - A. True
 - B. False
7. _____ serves as the primary focus for drawing people to God:
 - A. Our sinfulness
 - B. The sovereignty of God
 - C. God's love
 - D. Escaping hell
 - E. Promises in heaven



8. Nurturing children's salvation includes:
 - A. Mentors, including parents.
 - B. Catechism.
 - C. Small groups.
 - D. A and C.
 - E. All of the above.

9. Even children can use reference sources in Bible study.
 - A. True
 - B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. How can we develop an age-appropriate approach to evangelizing children?
2. Are there times when we risk manipulating children to get them to accept the gospel? What about impeding children from accepting the gospel?
3. How can we develop a system of mentors and small groups to support children in their ongoing discipleship?
4. How can we train parents and other adults in how to pray and read Scripture with children? What would this program include?

Review your answers with your mentor, then respond to the following:

How many responses focus on supporting children (particularly in areas where they are not yet fully self-reliant), and how many answers focus on empowering children?

Which of these answers support the goal of living Christlike relationships? Why?

What do we need to add to our list to make our approach more comprehensive, more faithful? Which do we need to incorporate into the role of the children's leader as one who both supports and empowers Christlike relationships with children?