

## Talking to Children about Salvation

Written by: **Dr. Tommy Sanders, PhD, M.A.**, Assistant Provost and Associate Professor of Religion at East Texas Baptist University.

Guiding children to take those first steps toward faith can be the most rewarding opportunity of life for both parents and teachers. The journey toward faith is filled with teachable moments. Influential adults and peers can answer questions, teach biblical truths, model Christian values, and share personal testimonies that further the child's understanding. The following information will prepare teachers for opportunities to talk with children about salvation.

### Ask Follow-Up Questions

When a child asks a question, often the child does not know exactly what to ask. Get clarification before deciding how to answer the question. For example, you might say, *Tell me more about what you are thinking.* You may ask questions such as, *What made you ask that question? Where did you hear about this?* Many times the question a child asks may not be the actual question for which the child needs an answer. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with *yes* or *no*.

### Avoid Giving More Information Than Needed

Adults are often tempted to tell all they know on a subject. When a child asks a question, answer only what the child is asking. Listen carefully to the child. If the child asks for more information, be more specific with your answers.

### Don't Jump to Conclusions

A child may ask, *Why did Andy get baptized?* This question may be only a request for information, not a request for the gospel presentation.

### Speak in Clear and Simple Terms

Avoid symbolic analogies and "church language" that may distract from discussion and understanding. Common "church language" includes words and phrases children hear only at church, such as "come forward," "saved," "everlasting life," "baptism," "prayer," "Holy Spirit," and "have Jesus come into your heart." Rather than using the phrase "accepting Jesus into your heart," say the words "becoming a Christian."

### Baptism

Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a picture of what Jesus did to save us—death, burial, and resurrection. Always make a distinction between baptism and becoming a Christian. Point out that becoming a Christian comes first. Someone is baptized as an outward sign that he or she has already asked Jesus to come into his or her life as Savior and Lord. The person is already a Christian.

## What a Child Needs to Know About Salvation

### **1. God loves you and has a great plan for your life.** (Psalm 139:13-16)

Talk about these truths: God made the world; God made people; God made you; God wants to have a relationship with you. Say, *Tell me one way you know God loves you.*

### **2. We have all sinned.** (Romans 3:23)

Everyone must understand that he or she is separated from God because of his or her sin. Sin is best understood as choosing to do things our way instead of God's way. (Give examples of sin, such as disobedience, ungratefulness, and lying.) Ask the child, *Have you ever sinned? What does God think about sin?* Point out that everyone has sinned.

### **3. Even though we choose to sin, God still loves us and offers to forgive us.** (Romans 5:8)

Ask, *How do you think it makes God feel when you sin?* Focus on the fact that God loves us even when we sin. Say, *God promised that a Savior would come who would die for all people. Do you know who that Savior is? Did you know that he died for you?*

### **4. Jesus died for us.** (John 3:16)

Talk about John 3:16. Explain that because sin separates people from God, everyone needs a Savior. Ask, *Do you know why Jesus died?* Say, *Jesus loves you so much. He willingly died for you so you could be with God forever.* If the child is old enough to understand the resurrection, say, *Jesus rose from the dead so we can have eternal life.*

### **5. You can become a Christian by confessing you are a sinner and Jesus is your Savior and Lord.** (Romans 10:9)

Ask, *Would you like to be a Christian?* Explain that the word "confess" means you must say that you are a sinner and Jesus is your Savior. To become a Christian, you must do these three things: admit you have sinned; believe that Jesus is God's Son; confess that Jesus is your Savior and Lord.

### **Review and Follow Up**

Encourage a child to tell you in his or her own words what he or she understands and believes. Either ask the child to repeat a prayer after you or help the child know what to say in his or her own prayer. After the prayer, read Romans 10:13 and remind the child that this verse is a promise. Jesus will be our Savior forever.

## The *ABCs* of Becoming a Christian

**A—Admit** to God you are a sinner. When you choose to do things your way instead of God's way, it is sin. Sin separates you from God. All people need to admit to God they have sinned and ask for God's forgiveness. (1 John 1:9)

**B—Believe** that Jesus is God's Son and accept God's gift of forgiveness. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. God loves you so much that God sent his only Son to die for the world and for you. (John 3:16)

**C—Confess** Jesus as your Savior and Lord. When you become a Christian, you are saying that you want God to forgive you and that you want Jesus to be your boss. (Romans 10:9-10)

### Prayer

*Say, If you want to talk to God about accepting Jesus as your Savior, no words are better than your own words. If you need a little help, you can pray like this:*

God, I know that you love me and have a great plan for my life. I admit I have sinned and chosen to do things my way instead of your way. I believe that Jesus is your Son and that Jesus died for me. Please forgive me of my sin. As of today, Jesus is my Lord and Savior.  
Amen

Encourage the child to tell his or her parents and Sunday School teacher about asking Jesus to come into his or her life.