

“Let the little children come to me” -Jesus

Jesus said it. The kids need it. We want it. But how can we be sure it happens? What can parents and children’s workers do to be sure their kids make a commitment to come to Jesus?

Parents look to the church for answers, but most of the church’s evangelism efforts are directed at adults. Many church leaders feel the parents should take care of leading their children to Christ, but many of them just don’t know how.

That’s why Darrin Ronde has developed **Joining God’s Family**. Here are really two tools in one.

- **H**ere is a presentation of the gospel put on a kid’s level. With words they can understand and art they will enjoy, here’s one evangelism tool that is not over their heads.
- **H**ere, too, is help for the parent or children’s worker. One section of this book contains helpful tips for sharing the gospel with children: How do I know when the child is ready? How do I begin? What do I say? How do I seek a decision without pressuring the child?

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me.” With **Joining God’s Family**, you can really do something to make His wish come true!

Darrin Ronde is Children’s Pastor at Central Christian Church, Mesa, Arizona.

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SPIRITUAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is God’s child” (1 John 5:1).

God has adopted into His family

_____ who received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior on

_____, 19____,

and was baptized by _____

at _____.

Parent(s)

Pastor

**Second, let God work *through* you:
to Help Others Join God's Family.**

"You are to go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere" (Mark 16:15, TLB).

God wants each member of His family to share the message of Christ so others can join God's family too!



Pretend that everyone in the world was infected with cancer. Within a few years, everyone will die. In your room, you work to develop a cure for the disease. What will you do with the cure once you've found it?

You can help others know about Jesus by

- *inviting friends and relatives to church.**
- *praying for those who are not yet Christians.**
- *supporting missionaries with prayers and money.**
- *telling others how Jesus has made you happy.**

Our mission is to let everyone know about Jesus! Who is someone you could share the gospel with or invite to church?

Four Important Questions

Now that we have concluded our study, I have four very important questions for you.

1. Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died for your sins and rose from the dead?
2. Are you sorry for disobeying God and are you willing to turn from your ways and follow God's ways?
3. Are you willing to confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord?
4. Are you ready to be baptized and live as a member of God's family?

You Live For God!

As a member of God's family, you continually let God work in you and through you to help others come to join God's family. One Christian says, *"I have been crucified with Christ: and I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me"* (Galatians 2:20). So you allow Jesus to reach the world through you!



**First, let God work *in* you:
to Make You More Like Jesus.**

"In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus"
(Philippians 2:5, ICB).

Even though you aren't perfect, God wants you to try your best to be like Jesus.

What Would Jesus Do?

Suppose each day in the lunch room at school, a certain boy sits all by himself. The other kids always ignore him or tease him. What do you think Jesus would do if He came into the room?

It's always good to ask yourself: "What would Jesus do?" and then do the same!

What are a couple ways you could become more like Jesus?

- 1). _____
- 2). _____

The Fruit Of The Spirit

The Holy Spirit lives in you to give you power to live for God. As you grow closer to God and obey His will for you, you will begin to produce fruit—the fruit of the Spirit.

God changes you from the inside out! The more you grow as a Christian, the more loving, joyful and peaceful—the more Christlike—you become!



Part 3

Living in God's Family!

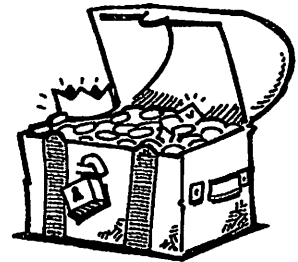
God Lives For You!

When you join God's family you are called by a new name: **CHRISTIAN**. A Christian has a special relationship with God. God is your Heavenly Father, and you are His child. The Bible says, *"The Father has loved us so much! He loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children"* (1 John 3:1, ICB).

God gives many promises to His children!

1. He _____ all of your sins.

"Everyone who believes in Jesus will be forgiven. God will forgive his sins through Jesus" (Acts 10:43, ICB).



2. He gives you the gift of the _____.

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

3. You can know that you have _____.

"I write these things to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

4. Jesus will be with you _____.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . 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).

5. He _____ your prayers.

"We can come to God with no doubts. This means that when we ask God for things (and those things agree with what God wants for us), then God cares about what we say. God listens to us every time we ask him" (1 John 5:14, 15, ICB).

6. He helps you when you are _____.

"And now he can help those who are tempted. He is able to help because he himself suffered and was tempted" (Hebrews 2:18, ICB).

Tell Others That Jesus Is Your Lord

When you claim Jesus as your Lord, you are willing to let others know. Have you ever been to a wedding? In a wedding, a man and woman tell everyone in the audience that they have chosen to put the other person first in their life. It is important that they speak their promises. In a similar way, God wants us to be proud enough to tell others that Jesus is first in your life. The Bible says:



"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"
(Romans 10:9).

Be Baptized

When you trust Jesus and are willing to turn away from sin, you are ready to be baptized. To be baptized means to be "dipped" or "immersed" in water. The Bible tells us that you should be baptized when you accept Jesus. These are some examples of people who were baptized:

Some Believers Who Were Baptized

- On the day the church began, 3000 people who believed in Jesus were baptized (Acts 2).
- The Samaritan men and women believed Philip's message and were baptized (Acts 8).
- After the Ethiopian official heard about Jesus, he asked to be baptized (Acts 8).
- Cornelius, his relatives and friends were ordered to be baptized after they believed and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10).
- A jailer and his family were baptized because they had come to believe in Jesus (Acts 16).
- Some of John the Baptist's disciples were baptized because they believed in Jesus (Acts 19).

Baptism is a symbol of the commitment you make to God in becoming a Christian. You are "buried" in water—representing the fact that your sins and old way of life are put to death. Then, you are "raised" from the water—just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so that you may live a new life for God. The Bible puts it this way:

"So when we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and shared his death. We were buried with him so that we could live a new life, just as Christ was raised from death by the wonderful power of the Father" (Romans 6:4, ICB).

When you give your life to God, He washed your soul clean of sin and fills you with His Spirit, making you His child. You look the same on the outside, but you are new on the inside. The Bible promises:

When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, TLB).

A Story Of Trust

The newspaper told a story about a family that awoke one night to find their house on fire. The family escaped from the burning home--all except for the 10-year-old son named Tommy. The noise of the fire engines caused him to wake up, but the fire had spread too far for him to run downstairs. Tommy walked out onto the second-floor balcony. His only way to safety was to jump, yet all he could see below him was smoke.

Tommy then heard a voice urging him to jump. It was his dad. "Jump!" his father yelled. Tommy cried, "How can I jump, Dad? I can't even see you!"

His father answered, "I can see you, Tommy. Jump! I promise I'll catch you!" Then Tommy hesitated for a moment. He thought about his dad's love for him. He knew his dad would keep his word, so he jumped safely into his dad's arms.

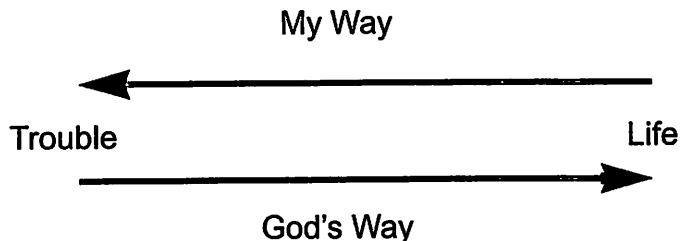
You can trust God because He loves you more than anyone and will always ask you to do what's best for you. Let's look at three things God asks you to do to show you trust Jesus.

Turn Away From Sin

When you become a Christian, you hate sin because it separates you from God. So you choose to do things that please God. God is pleased when you turn away from sin and follow His ways! The Bible calls this "repentance."

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out"
(Acts 3:19).

Repentance is making a U-turn with your life.



When you accept Jesus as your Lord, you accept the things he values, like love, honesty, patience and obedience. When Jesus is your Lord, you live to please Him. The Bible says, "God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because He owns it" (1 Corinthians 6:20, TLB).

Part 2

Joining God's Family!

In our last study together, we learned three important facts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

There is nothing you can do to make up for the bad things you have done. That's why we need Jesus as our Savior. The Bible says:

*"He saved us—not because we were good enough to be saved,
but because of his kindness and pity"
(Titus 3:5, TLB).*

The only thing you can do to become part of God's family is to trust Jesus!

Trusting Jesus



You can only be forgiven by trusting Jesus. Listen to God's promise: *"God says he will accept and acquit us . . . if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in the same way, no matter who we are or what we have been like"* (Romans 3:21, 22 TLB).

God accepts you no matter how good or bad you have been when you trust Jesus Christ to take away your sins. To trust means more than just believing--it means putting your life in God's hands.

Do you believe that if you were falling over that I am strong enough to catch you? (Demonstrate a Trust Fall).

What God Did For You!

[God wants everyone] "to be saved and to understand this truth: That God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus . . . is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for all mankind"
(1 Timothy 2:4-6, TLB).

All People

God



Jesus died in your place!

Jesus willingly took your punishment upon himself so you could be free to live with Him forever. Why did God do that for you? He did it because He loves you!

"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).

We were separated from God because of something we have done, but we are brought together with God because of something Jesus did! *"But God gives us a free gift—life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23 ICB). Since eternal life is a gift, it cannot be earned. It can only be received. When you receive Jesus Christ and trust Him as your Lord and Savior, you become part of God's family and receive eternal life!



"But to all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust him to save them" (John 1:12, TLB).

Write your name in the blanks:

God loved _____ so much that he gave his one and only Son, that by believing in Him, _____ will not die, but will live forever. By receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, _____ has the right to become a child of God.

The Lost Son

Jesus told us a story about a boy who received some inheritance money from his father. He spent all his money on wild living. He came to his senses and decided to go back home and work for his father. When his father saw him returning home, he told the servants to prepare a feast. The father exclaimed: "My son was dead, but now he is alive again!" (Luke 15:24, ICB).

Jesus also said:



"I tell you the truth. Unless one is born again, he cannot be in God's kingdom" (John 3:3, ICB).

PROBLEM #3. You Cannot Enter Heaven.

Look at the list below and put a check by the actions that do not show love to God or to other people:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lying | <input type="checkbox"/> Stealing | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving to others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking back to parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Praying | <input type="checkbox"/> Hating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Being jealous | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Killing | <input type="checkbox"/> Honoring parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Teasing |

Are you guilty of breaking God's command by sinning? _____

What punishment do you earn for your sins? _____

If you stay this way, can you ever enter Heaven? _____

Write your name in the blanks.

_____ is guilty of breaking God's law by not loving God and other

people all the time. _____ has sinned and earned death. Unless

_____ is born again, _____ cannot go to Heaven.

Who Can Help You?



What Happens When You Sin?

What does God want us to do? One time a man asked Jesus that question.

*“Jesus answered: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.’
This is the first and most important command. And the second command is
like the first: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself’”
(Matthew 22:37-39, ICB).*

The Most important Thing Is _____.

The Next Most Important Thing Is _____.



Even though we try our best to be loving, we all fail at times. That's why the Bible says:

*“There is no one without sin. . . . All people have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory”
(Romans 3:10, 23, ICB).*



PROBLEM #1. You Are Guilty Of Breaking God's Law.



What would happen if you were arrested for breaking several laws? You would receive a punishment, wouldn't you? They say crime doesn't pay, but the Bible says sin pays! Here's what it says:

*“When someone sins, he earns what sin pays—death”
(Romans 6:23, ICB).*

Sin causes us to die physically and spiritually. One day our bodies will die and we will be separated from this life. Because of sin, we will also be separated from God and His love forever. That's spiritual death. If you disconnected a sick person from an oxygen machine, he would die in a matter of minutes. When you are cut off from God because of sin, you are cut off from your source of life.

PROBLEM #2. You Have Earned the Penalty of Death.

Joining God's Family

Part 1

God Wants You In His Family!

Do you know that God has chosen you to be part of his family? Listen to what the Bible says:

"His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family"
(Ephesians 1:5, TLB).

God wants you to know Him as your Heavenly Father. He wants your life on earth to be fulfilling and exciting. He also wants you to spend eternity in Heaven with Him. Unfortunately, you have done something that keeps you from enjoying that special relationship. Let me explain.

"But the trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God"
(Isaiah 59:2, TLB)



Sin is _____.

**You sin by doing the wrong thing.
You sin by not doing the right thing.**

The Muddy Girl

Once there was a little girl who disobeyed her parents and played in the mud. When she came home, she planned to march into the house. But her father stopped her. He first took her to the side of the house and used a hose to wash off the mud. Then he brought her into his home.

Although God loves you, He will not let you into His family when you are dirty with sin. You must let Him wash away your sins.

Three versions of the Bible are used in this study. The New International Version (© 1973, 1978, 1984) is the primary text, but The Living Bible (© 1972) and International Children's Bible (New Century Version, © 1986) are used in several instances to communicate more effectively at a child's level.

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Joining God's Family

A Gospel Presentation for Children and Youth
by Darrin Ronde

Illustrated by Corbin Hillam



recall a classmate who was neglected by the other students because of appearance, clothing, grades, race, or abilities. Consequently, this child usually sat alone during the lunch hour.)

What do you think Jesus would do if he came into the room? (Nearly every child will answer this way: "He will go and sit with the student." Point out that, as Christians, we must be ones to act Christ-like, even if it is not popular.)

B. Applying the teaching: (Encourage the child to think of a couple bad habits that he would like to change with God's help. It is important that he realize God wants to rule over every part of his life. Since none of us is perfect, a child should be able to think of something pretty easily. If not, you can ask the parent for a suggestion. Parents usually can think of several!)

C. Explaining the fruit of the Spirit: God does not change us into Christ-like people overnight. Have you ever seen an apple tree? After you plant the seed, it takes a few years before you can pick the apples. In the same way, you will notice yourself becoming more

loving, patient, and kind as you get to know God better in the months and years ahead!

Page 10

A. Illustrating the need to tell others about Jesus: (Read the story in the first shaded box.) Everyone does have a deadly disease. It is called sin. Sin will keep millions of people away from God for eternity. But we have the opportunity to bring the "cure" to as many people as we can. That cure is the good news about Jesus.

B. Applying the teaching: (Encourage the child to think of at least one person whom he might invite to a church activity some time. For most children, this will be the best time of their lives for bringing their friends to Christ.)

C. Seeking a response: (Conclude the study by asking the four application questions. If he responds affirmatively to all of them, and you sense from your time together that he is sincere, then have prayer together. Allow him to tell God of his faith in Jesus and his desire to be forgiven and turn away from sin. Make arrangements for baptism with the parents and the church.

If the child is not ready to receive Christ, urge him to continue to learn by attending children's worship and Sunday school. [See page 5 for tips on determining the child's readiness.] Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for your time together. Maintain at least monthly contact with the child and the family until he is ready to respond to the gospel.)


"Spiritual Birth Certificate"

This should be completely filled out and presented to children who receive Christ and are baptized.

Second, let God work through you:
to Help Others Join God's Family.

"You are to go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere" (Mark 16:15, TLB).

God wants each member of His family to share the message of Christ so others can join God's family too!



Pretend that everyone in the world was infected with cancer. Within a few years, everyone will die. In your room, you work to develop a cure for the disease. What will you do with the cure once you've found it?

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- *inviting friends and relatives to church.
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(Note: Some churches believe children can receive Christ but should wait until they are older to be baptized. According to the Great Commission and the examples in the book of Acts, believers are entitled, even commanded, to be baptized as the benchmark for the new lives as Christians. Children who have sincerely believed but have not been baptized should not have to wait any longer for that privilege.)

Page 8

Part 3


Living in God's Family!

God Lives For You!

When you join God's family you are called by a new name: **CHRISTIAN**. A Christian has a special relationship with God. God is your Heavenly Father, and you are His child. The Bible says, "The Father has loved us so much! He loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children" (1 John 3:1, ICB).

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6. He helps you when you are _____.
"And now he can help those who are tempted. He is able to help because he himself suffered and was tempted" (Hebrews 2:18, ICB).



8

A. Explaining membership in God's family: As a member of God's family, you have special privileges, just as you have special privileges in your family. You can be assured that your parents will provide you something to eat each day. You know that if you are lonely or afraid, you can sit on your mom or dad's lap. Strangers do not treat you this way, but your parents do because you are their child. You can expect certain things as a member of God's family, too.

1. He **forgives** all of your sin. On the end of a pencil is an eraser. Every mistake you make can be erased. Every sin you have ever committed is erased when you accept Jesus. It will never be remembered again.

2. He gives you the gift of the **Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit is invisible. He is like the wind. You can't see the wind, but you know when it is around by what it does. The Holy Spirit lives in us to help change us so we obey God instead of sin against him. He also gives us courage to speak up for Jesus.

3. You can know that you have **eternal life**. Like a seed that is planted in the ground and springs up new life, Jesus promises that even though our bodies will someday die, we will be raised with a new body to live with Him forever.

4. Jesus will be with you **always**. Have you ever moved or changed schools and left friends behind? That makes us sad, doesn't it. Jesus is one friend who will always be with you, whether you are at home, at school, or anywhere else.


5. God **answers** your prayers. God is not a genie in a lamp, but He wants to give you what will help you live better for Him. If you are at the dinner table and ask your mom for more ice cream, she'll probably say no because it's not good for you. But if you ask her for more vegetables, she'll let you have as much as you want. God will give us what we ask for if it is what He knows is best for us.

6. He helps you when you are **tempted**. Temptation is when your mom puts some fresh-baked cookies on the counter and says, "Don't touch those!" but you want to anyway. As you grow up, you will be tempted to do many bad things. But Jesus promises that He will help you do what's right.

Page 9

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God changes you from the inside out! The more you grow as a Christian, the more loving, joyful and peaceful—the more Christlike—you become!



"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control" (Galatians 5:22, 23)

9

A. Explaining "What Would Jesus Do?": (As you tell this story, fill in some descriptions of your own. You might

1. Sin separates us from God.
2. Jesus died to bring us back to God.
3. We must receive Jesus to have eternal life.

B. Illustrating that faith is more than believing: Faith begins with believing certain things about Jesus—that He is God’s Son and that He died for you. But it is more than just agreeing that those things are true. After all, even the devil and his demons believe in God, but they don’t put their lives in God’s hands.

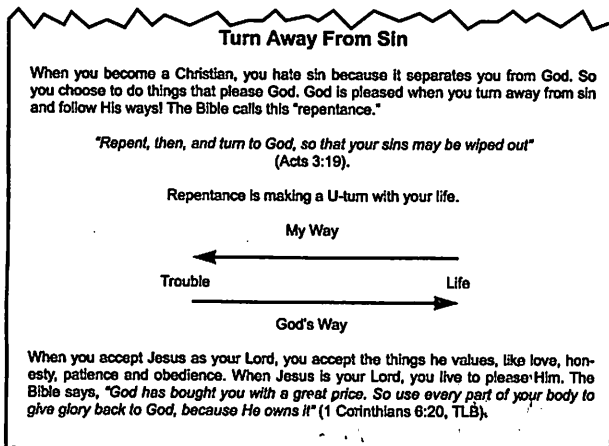
Let’s say you are sick and get some medicine from the doctor. You can believe it will help you, but it will not do you any good until you put your trust in it and actually take some. In the same way, you must receive Jesus in order to be saved.

C. Demonstrating faith: *(Have the child perform a “trust fall” to demonstrate faith. First, you must convince the child that you are strong enough to catch him if he were falling. Then, once he verbally admits he can trust you, stand up and direct him in a trust fall. He must stand straight facing away from you, arms hanging down while you kneel behind him. Urge him to close his eyes and fall backwards, remaining stiff and not moving his feet, and allow you to catch him. The first three or four times he tries this, he will probably roll up or put his arms out or otherwise try to protect himself. Encourage him to keep trying until he can put all his trust in you and not himself, falling straight back into your arms.)*

That is what faith is, putting all our trust in Jesus and not in our own efforts.

Page 6

A. Explaining repentance: Remember the story about the boy who received his inheritance from his dad and wasted it all? Just like that boy, we grow up choosing to do things our way instead of God’s way. As we do things our way, we find it only leads to trouble. But if we repent, we make a U-turn and begin to do things God’s way. *(Draw a curve connecting the top line to the bottom line.)* As we come back to God, we find life.



B. Illustrating lordship: Let’s picture your life like driving a car. As you grow up, you go wherever you want to go. But when you become a Christian, you move over to the passenger’s side and allow Jesus to be the driver. You start to go where He wants you to go and do the things He wants you to do. That’s what it means to have Jesus as your Lord.

I know someone who rents a house from a landlord. Do you know what a landlord is? He is the owner of the land. The people who live in it are only allowed to treat the house as the landlord gives them permission. When Jesus is your Lord, guess what he owns? You! So your life should be lived in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Page 7

Tell Others That Jesus Is Your Lord

When you claim Jesus as your Lord, you are willing to let others know. Have you ever been to a wedding? In a wedding, a man and woman tell everyone in the audience that they have chosen to put the other person first in their life. It is important that they speak their promises. In a similar way, God wants us to be proud enough to tell others that Jesus is first in your life. The Bible says:

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”
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- On the day the church began, 3000 people who believed in Jesus were baptized (Acts 2).
- The Samaritan men and women believed Philip’s message and were baptized (Acts 8).
- After the Ethiopian official heard about Jesus, he asked to be baptized (Acts 8).
- Cornelius, his relatives and friends were ordered to be baptized after they believed and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10).
- A jailer and his family were baptized because they had come to believe in Jesus (Acts 16).
- Some of John the Baptist’s disciples were baptized because they believed in Jesus (Acts 19).

Baptism is a symbol of the commitment you make to God in becoming a Christian. You are “buried” in water—representing the fact that your sins and old way of life are put to death. Then, you are “raised” from the water—just as Jesus was raised from death by the wonderful power of the Father” (Romans 6:4, ICB).

“So when we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and shared his death. We were buried with him so that we could live a new life, just as Christ was raised from death by the wonderful power of the Father” (Romans 6:4, ICB).

When you give your life to God, He washed your soul clean of sin and fills you with His Spirit, making you His child. You look the same on the outside, but you are new on the inside. The Bible promises:

When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, TLB).

A. Explaining confession: We should not be shy about speaking about Jesus. We like to talk about our favorite cartoons, music groups, and sports teams. If Jesus is really important to us, we should not feel ashamed to let others know about our faith or our involvement in church activities like Sunday school and camps.

B. Explaining baptism: While some churches practice sprinkling infants, the Scriptures show that only believers were baptized. The method of baptism was immersion. This method best illustrates the faith of a believer who surrenders his life to God—burying the past and rising to live a new life for God.

will answer "yes." Lead into the three questions that apply the teachings. Then ask the child to write his first name on the blanks in the shaded box. Read the paragraph aloud. Ask how he feels after reading it.) You could decide today never to sin again since sin causes so much trouble. Could you keep the promise? Of course not! Besides, if you could, it's too late. You have already broken God's law by not loving all the time. So, you can't do anything to help yourself. But someone can help you.

Page 4

What God Did For You!

[God wants everyone] "to be saved and to understand this truth: That God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus . . . is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for all mankind" (1 Timothy 2:4-6, TLB).

All People
God

Jesus died in your place!

Jesus willingly took your punishment upon himself so you could be free to live with Him forever. Why did God do that for you? He did it because He loves you!

"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).

We were separated from God because of something we have done, but we are brought together with God because of something Jesus did! *"But God gives us a free gift—life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 ICB).* Since eternal life is a gift, it cannot be earned. It can only be received. When you receive Jesus Christ and trust Him as your Lord and Savior, you become part of God's family and receive eternal life!

"But to all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust him to save them" (John 1:12, TLB).

Write your name in the blanks:

God loved _____ so much that he gave his one and only Son, that by believing in Him, _____ will not die, but will live forever. By receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, _____ has the right to become a child of God.

A. Explaining Jesus as the way to God: Instead of sin breaking our relationship with God, Jesus becomes our bridge to God. (Write the letters J E S U S on the spaces along the top of the crossbeam.)

B. Illustrating how Jesus was punished in our place: (A lady in our church tells this story about herself. It is included here without names to serve as an illustration.) A little girl once played with her father's garden hoe and left it lying in the grass. When her father came home from work, he stepped on the end of the hoe, and the handle swung up and smacked him in the nose. He was so angry that he called for his three kids. He announced that one of them was going to get a big spanking for leaving the hoe in the yard. The girl's older brother knew his sister was the guilty one, but he stepped in front of her and told his father, "If you must punish

someone, then punish me." The father gave him a spanking he never forgot.

In the same way, while you were the one to break God's commands, Jesus was the one who was punished. God allowed evil men to whip him and nail him on a cross to die. So Jesus suffered in your place.

C. Illustrating eternal life as a gift: (Hand your Bible to the child.) Let's say I give you this Bible as a gift. You have not done anything to earn it; I simply choose to give it to you because I love you. Now, you can either receive the gift or you can reject it. We have the same choice to make about the gift of eternal life that God wants to give us. (Follow with the John 1:12 passage.)

D. Applying the teaching: (Have the child write his first name in the spaces and then read the paragraph aloud.) How do you feel about that? (The child will undoubtedly say, "Good.") That is the reason this is called the "good news," or gospel.

(Ask if there are any questions about the material covered. When all questions are answered, set up a time to return for the second study. Leave the material from the first session with the family.)

Page 5

Part 2

Joining God's Family!

In our last study together, we learned three important facts:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

There is nothing you can do to make up for the bad things you have done. That's why we need Jesus as our Savior. The Bible says:

"He saved us—not because we were good enough to be saved, but because of his kindness and pity" (Titus 3:5, TLB).

The only thing you can do to become part of God's family is to trust Jesus!

Trusting Jesus

You can only be forgiven by trusting Jesus. Listen to God's promise: "God says he will accept and acquit us . . . if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in the same way, no matter who we are or what we have been like" (Romans 3:21, 22 TLB).

God accepts you no matter how good or bad you have been when you trust Jesus Christ to take away your sins. To trust means more than just believing—it means putting your life in God's hands.

Do you believe that if you were falling over that I am strong enough to catch you? (Demonstrate a Trust Fall!)

A. (As you begin in the second study, review the three main points of the first study.)

B. Explaining sinfulness: God is perfect. Everything He does is what's best for us. But we are sinful—full of sin. The problem isn't that we've sinned once or twice. The problem is that we can't stop sinning! Let's figure you sin just three times a day, and that you began sinning when you were four. At 1000 sins per year (roughly 3 x 365), you've sinned more than _____ times! See, we have a hard time getting away from sin.

C. Explaining personal sin: Sin is disobeying God. We disobey God in two ways. We usually think of sin as doing something wrong, like lying or cheating. But we also sin when we fail to do something right, like helping our neighbors or feeding the hungry.

Sin causes many problems. Let's look at how sin messes up your life.

Page 2

What Happens When You Sin?

What does God want us to do? One time a man asked Jesus that question.



"Jesus answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. This is the first and most important command. And the second command is like the first: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself'"
(Matthew 22:37-39, ICB).

The Most Important Thing is _____

The Next Most Important Thing is _____

Even though we try our best to be loving, we all fail at times. That's why the Bible says:

"There is no one without sin. . . . All people have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory"
(Romans 3:10, 23, ICB).

PROBLEM #1. You Are Guilty Of Breaking God's Law.

What would happen if you were arrested for breaking several laws? You would receive a punishment, wouldn't you? They say crime doesn't pay, but the Bible says sin pays! Here's what it says:

"When someone sins, he earns what sin pays—death"
(Romans 6:23, ICB).

Sin causes us to die physically and spiritually. One day our bodies will die and we will be separated from this life. Because of sin, we will also be separated from God and His love forever. That's spiritual death. If you disconnected a sick person from an oxygen machine, he would die in a matter of minutes. When you are cut off from God because of sin, you are cut off from your source of life.

PROBLEM #2. You Have Earned the Penalty of Death.

2

A. Explaining God's law: The most important thing is loving God. The second most important thing is loving other people. Any time you do not show love, you sin. Most of us would say that we love God, but do we love Him *all the time*? I love God, but there are days when I don't spend any time talking to Him. That definitely is not loving.

We know it is hard to love others all the time because we occasionally get jealous, or we fight with them. Whenever we don't show love to God or others, we sin.

6

B. Illustrating how sin is "missing the mark": When you aim at a target, you try to hit the center. God wants us to aim for love with our lives. Each day I am sure you do many things that are loving. But also, each day you do some things, maybe only a few things, that are not loving. These are the sins that get you in trouble.

C. Illustrating that sin has a penalty: (*This follows the reading of Romans 6:23.*) If I were driving down your street at 80 MPH, what would happen to me? I'd get a ticket. Even if I promised never to do it again, I'd still get a ticket because I broke the law. When you break God's law, there is a penalty. Even if you are sorry, you're still guilty. And guilty people receive a penalty.

Page 3

The Lost Son

Jesus told us a story about a boy who received some inheritance money from his father. He spent all his money on wild living. He came to his senses and decided to go back home and work for his father. When his father saw him returning home, he told the servants to prepare a feast. The father exclaimed: *"My son was dead, but now he is alive again!"* (Luke 15:24, ICB).

Jesus also said:

"I tell you the truth. Unless one is born again, he cannot be in God's kingdom" (John 3:3, ICB).

PROBLEM #3. You Cannot Enter Heaven.

Look at the list below and put a check by the actions that do not show love to God or to other people:

<input type="checkbox"/> Lying	<input type="checkbox"/> Stealing	<input type="checkbox"/> Giving to others
<input type="checkbox"/> Talking back to parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Praying	<input type="checkbox"/> Hating
<input type="checkbox"/> Being kind	<input type="checkbox"/> Fighting	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible
<input type="checkbox"/> Swearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Being jealous	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheating
<input type="checkbox"/> Killing	<input type="checkbox"/> Honoring parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Teasing

Are you guilty of breaking God's command by sinning? _____


What punishment do you earn for your sins? _____

If you stay this way, can you ever enter Heaven? _____

Write your name in the blanks:

_____ is guilty of breaking God's law by not loving God and other people all the time. _____ has sinned and earned death. Unless _____ is born again, _____ cannot go to Heaven.

Who Can Help You?



3

A. Explaining death as separation: (*Read the story of "The Lost Son."*) Was the boy really dead? Of course not. He was spiritually dead. When he went away, he cut off his relationship with his father. (*It's helpful to review the story with stick-figures*). While the boy was out blowing his money, it was almost as if he were dead. The father could not talk with or show love to him. But when he returned home, it was just like coming back to life.

B. Applying the Scriptures: (*Have the child mark the actions that are sins.*) As you looked over that list, did you see some things that you have done? (*No doubt, he*

way, such as, "You love Jesus, don't you?" If the child is ready to make a commitment to Christ, he ought to be able to express his faith on his own. If you lead in prayer, you might even allow him to "call upon the name of the Lord" in his own words. Most of us could pray more beautifully and doctrinally correctly than the child, but the Lord hears his words and understands his heart. If the child is not accustomed to praying, you can initiate him to the simplicity and blessing of daily prayer.

8. Do not pressure the child with guilt. His emotions are too fragile for you to hang his eternal destiny on his acceptance or rejection of the invitation. Allow the truth of the Scriptures shared and the conviction of the Holy Spirit to bring the child to the point of decision.

To determine each child's readiness, I try to evaluate him in these areas:

- A. **Knowledge:** Does he understand that he has sinned and that sin harms his relationship with God? Does he believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He died on the cross to forgive sin? Does he understand what it means to trust God?
- B. **Emotions:** Do those facts have an impact on him? Is there a certain degree of sorrow over sin? Does he feel a need to be forgiven and become part of God's family?
- C. **Will:** Does he indicate a change of heart or a spirit of repentance? Is he willing to demonstrate his faith and allow Jesus to be his Lord, or leader Is he already making an effort to know God better?

If you feel a child is not ready to make a commitment, voice your concern to the parents. If they feel otherwise, leave the decision in their hands. They know the child better and are in a position to follow through and disciple the child.

In Flavil Yeakley's intriguing study of *Why Churches Grow*,² he discovered that the older the child is when he makes his decision, the greater the odds are that he will continue to grow. Conversely, the younger the child, the greater the chance that he will disregard that decision later in life.

We dare not deny children the opportunity to respond to the good news, nor do we need to push them too quickly. We simply must provide children a clear path to the Savior. As Jesus said:

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Matthew 19:14).

Presenting *Joining God's Family*

The following notes will help you to explain and illustrate the truths of the gospel, using the study called *Joining God's Family*, included at the back of this book. This is not a "script" for using the study, however. You will need to develop your own way to present it.

Learn the stories and illustrations well; then adapt and use them to fit your own presentation. Underlined words in the notes refer to words that should be written by the leader in the spaces on the study sheets. Words in parenthesis and italics are prompts for the leader, and are not to be spoken to the child.

Copy the attached study sheets for each child you work with. You may want to make it more attractive by copying on colored paper. The certificate should be copied on heavier paper.

Page 1

Joining God's Family

Part 1

God Wants You In His Family!

Do you know that God has chosen you to be part of his family? Listen to what the Bible says:

"His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family"
(Ephesians 1:5, TLB).

God wants you to know Him as your Heavenly Father. He wants your life on earth to be fulfilling and exciting. He also wants you to spend eternity in Heaven with Him. Unfortunately, you have done something that keeps you from enjoying that special relationship. Let me explain.

"But the trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God"
(Isaiah 59:2, TLB)

All People

SINFUL

Sin keeps you from God!

God

PERFECT

Sin is _____

**You sin by doing the wrong thing.
You sin by not doing the right thing.**

The Muddy Girl

Once there was a little girl who disobeyed her parents and played in the mud. When she came home, she planned to march into the house. But her father stopped her. He first took her to the side of the house and used a hose to wash off the mud. Then he brought her into his home. Although God loves you, He will not let you into His family when you are dirty with sin. You must let Him wash away your sins.

A. **Illustrating how sin separates us from God:** The Grand Canyon was formed over thousands of years from water wearing away the rock and dirt. In some places, the canyon is a mile wide and several hundred feet deep. In a similar way, sin continues to break down our relationship with God so that we're cut off from Him.

² Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr., *Why Churches Grow* (Nashville: Christian Communications, 1986), pp. 26-31.

the need to be right with God. For many years, they have known the fact that Jesus died for their sins, but the truth finally becomes personal. They display a noticeable change in their attitude toward religious matters.

When children inquire, we have an ideal opportunity to present the gospel simply and clearly to them. Some will be ready to respond; others will need more time. Remember: we plant the seeds; God causes the growth. Allow the Spirit to bring conviction upon the child according to God's timing. In response to the Great Commission, we seek to make *disciples*, not *decisions*.

As both a children's pastor and a parent, I have been moved by the devotion many of our children have for God. One of the highlights of my ministry occurred when I baptized my oldest child, Stephanie, in December of 1990. She was quite young at the time, but as strong in her faith as I was when I was ten years older. What a joy it is to watch God work in her life!

My prayer is that this study tool will help you to experience the thrill of leading young ones to Christ!

The Approach of *Joining God's Family*

This study was developed after presenting the gospel to more than two hundred children. Most of the children growing up in our Sunday school are aware that Jesus died for them but do not understand what it means to have a personal relationship with the Savior. Many gospel presentations for children are quite simple, focusing on the basics of sin, Christ's death, and faith. While these tools have been used very effectively, they do not accurately portray the Biblical doctrine of the new covenant relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. In this covenant relationship, God serves our best interest while we serve His. What is our greatest need? The forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life. What is God's greatest need? Ambassadors who will devote their lives to leading men, women, boys, and girls into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. As Paul taught, we are saved by grace through faith—for a new purpose.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Joining God's Family is divided into three sections or studies. The first study covers the problem of sin and the work of Christ on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. The second study looks at faith and its expressions. The third study looks at God's promises and our responsibilities as members of God's family. The first study takes approximately forty-five minutes to complete. The second and third can be combined into a one-hour session.

Tips for Sharing the Gospel With Children

1. When you set up your studies with a child, always ask one of the parents to be present at the study. There is a three-fold purpose in having a parent with you:
 - A. The parents will support your work when they see that you are teaching and not pressuring their children into making a decision. This is very important in homes where the parents are not Christians.
 - B. Since parents have the primary responsibility for discipling their children, they need to be involved in the children's decisions. If the parents are active Christians and are comfortable doing so, I suggest that they baptize their children.
 - C. You may have opportunity to minister to the parents while they are listening. I have found that parents appreciate a simple gospel presentation, too. At the conclusion of one study, I turned to the mother and asked, "Now what do *you* think of God's offer?"
2. Always take three things with you for the study. You should bring your Bible, a pen or pencil, and a companion to train. By observing you in action, this other person will gradually learn the procedure and be prepared to lead the studies and train others. Every teacher ought to be able to lead a child to Christ.
3. Have the child sit beside you at a table. A kitchen or dining room table in a well-lit room works best. The child will sit more attentively and be able to write when he is asked.
4. Minimize distractions. If the television or radio is on, request that it be turned off during the study. If other siblings are playing in the room, ask if they might play in another room or outside during the study.
5. Throughout the study, allow the child to read some of the Scripture verses. If the child has difficulty reading, limit the number of passages he reads. Help him discover that the Bible speaks to kids. (In the study included in this volume, certain verses are italicized; these are the ones suggested for the children to read.)
6. Avoid using religious jargon that may confuse children. Words like "redeemed" or "transgressions" are meaningless to most children. Even phrases like "asking Jesus into your heart" can be misleading unless carefully explained. More than one child has been baffled at how a big bearded man can live inside of them!
7. Allow each child to speak for himself. Do not ask questions that force the child to answer in a desired

Sharing the Gospel With Children

Why Evangelize Children?

Joining God's Family is a gospel presentation prepared to help parents and teachers lead young people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Many children begin to ask serious questions about the Christian faith during the grade-school and junior-high years. The interest may be stated in such words as, "I want to be baptized," "I'm ready to become a Christian," or, "I want to ask Jesus into my heart." These children who express an interest in deepening their spiritual lives need to be given significant attention. They are more ready than ever before to listen and respond to a clear presentation of the gospel.

When Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19), He intended that to be the priority focus of every Christian. God designed each of us to win souls. You may be a soul-winner who is a Sunday-school teacher, or a soul-winner who is a nursery coordinator, or a soul-winner who is a youth or children's pastor. Through your ministry, you strive to lead people closer to Christ.

Somewhere along the way, we have changed the primary focus of children's ministry from evangelizing children to handing down Biblical information. We're good at education, but we fail at evangelism. We are good at story-telling but not at soul winning. Children desiring to accept Christ are referred to the preacher, the "pastor of evangelism," or someone else.

I am convinced that the most influential person in the church is the Sunday-school teacher. The Sunday-school teacher has the type of constant contact with students that allows him to build discipling relationships. One of our junior department teachers has a great heart for evangelism. In the past two years, more than twenty of her students have come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

We must persuade our churches that children are our ripest mission field! More than 80% of Christians are won to Christ as children and teenagers. Children *can* be reached for Christ! The gospel invitation is so simple that its concepts can be understood by elementary minds and its demands satisfied by youthful wills.

The apostle Paul reflected this attitude when he reminded Timothy to "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from *infancy* you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to

make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14, 15).

Some of the greatest Christian leaders of our time were converted before the age of ten, including Henrietta Mears, Leighton Ford, LeRoy Lawson, Luis Palau, and Corrie Ten Boom. Most of our churches and mission fields are filled with leaders who made their confession of Christ in childhood.

The importance of child evangelism was aptly proclaimed by the great preacher Charles H. Spurgeon:

We have come into the kingdom by the kingdom's coming to us; it receives us by our receiving it. Now, if this entrance into the kingdom depended upon something to be fetched out of the human mind by study and deep thought, then very few children could ever enter it; but it depends on something to be received, and therefore children may enter.

It is not very easy, I know, to preach Christ to little children, but there is nothing else worth preaching. To stand up and say, "Be good boys and girls, and you will get to heaven," is preaching the old covenant of works, and it is no more right to preach salvation by works to little children than to those who are of mature age.¹

Children tend to be very receptive to the gospel for many reasons. First, their lives are uncluttered with the worldly cares of life. They are not filled with attitudes, dreams, and habits that are difficult to part with. Second, children tend to possess a clear understanding of the basic gospel truths. They are not side-tracked by secondary doctrinal and ethical issues that tend to cause doubt for adults. Children have an innocent trust in God's Word. If they have grown up in a Christian environment, belief in Jesus is quite natural. I believe this simplicity of faith is what our Lord desires in all of us as we seek to "become like little children."

While children are very receptive to the gospel, they are also extremely impressionable. Their decisions are based on a variety of motives. Some children want to please their leaders by doing what is right, whether that authority be the parent, a teacher, or God. They may choose to accept Christ because it is a good thing to do, like doing homework. Other children may choose to receive Christ because "all the other kids" have done it. Still others will come to a point in their lives when the truth of the gospel hits a spiritual nerve, and they sense

¹Spurgeon's *Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol II. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 473, 415.

Contents

Sharing the Gospel With Children

Why Evangelize Children?	3
The Approach of <i>Joining God's Family</i>	4
Tips for Sharing the Gospel With Children.....	4
Presenting <i>Joining God's Family</i>	5

Joining God's Family

God Wants You in His Family.....	13
How to Join God's Family.....	17
Living in God's Family	19

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DARRIN RONDE

**Helps for Leading
Children to Christ**

JOINING GOD'S FAMILY

Includes Reproducible Pages

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