

# **FIRST STEPS**

*A simple guide for a Bible  
ministry to Children*



*Dr Sam Doherty, BA, EdD.*

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## Table of Contents

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<b>Foreword</b> .....	vi
<b>Introduction</b> .....	vii
<b>SECTION I –</b> <b>THE BASIC PRINCIPLES</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1 - Salvation, Sanctification And Service</b> .....	3
How Can I Know If God Wants Me To Work With Children?	
<b>Chapter 2 – Ready, Steady, Go</b> .....	17
Where Do I Start?	
<b>Chapter 3 – Gather Them</b> .....	22
How Can I Get Children To Come?	
<b>Chapter 4 –Help Them</b> .....	28
What Are The Needs Of The Children?	
<b>Chapter 5 – Understand Them</b> .....	35
How Can Children Respond To The Gospel?	
<b>Chapter 6 – Reach Them</b> .....	44
Should I Evangelize Children?	
<b>Chapter 7 – Start Fishing</b> .....	52
How Do I Evangelize Children?	
<b>Chapter 8 –The Book Without Words</b> ... ..	61
How Can I Use The Wordless Book?	
<b>Chapter 9 – Feed Them</b> .....	68
How Can I help Saved Children To Grow?	
<b>SECTION II –</b> <b>ACTION STATIONS</b> .....	80

<b>Chapter 10 –Every Minute Counts .....</b>	<b>82</b>
How Can I Plan My Teaching Programme?	
<b>Chapter 11 – Ready For Anything .....</b>	<b>91</b>
How Can I Best Prepare For My Meeting?	
<b>Chapter 12 – Making A Joyful Noise.....</b>	<b>95</b>
How Can I Teach Children To Sing?	
<b>Chapter 13 – Talking To God .....</b>	<b>100</b>
How Can I Teach The Children To Pray?	
<b>Chapter 14 – Learning The Word .....</b>	<b>109</b>
How Can I Encourage Children To Memorize Scripture?	
<b>Chapter 15 – Hearing It Again .....</b>	<b>117</b>
How Can I Review What I Have Already Taught?	
<b>Chapter 16 – Preach The Word .....</b>	<b>122</b>
What Should Be The Basis And Main Subject Of My Teaching Ministry?	
<b>Chapter 17 – Be Systematic .....</b>	<b>129</b>
What Teaching Plan Should I Follow?	
<b>Chapter 18 – Capture Their Attention .....</b>	<b>139</b>
How Can I Tell A Bible Story?	
<b>Chapter 19 – Follow The Rules .....</b>	<b>145</b>
How Can I Be A Good Teacher?	
<b>Chapter 20 – Use The Story To Teach Truth .....</b>	<b>151</b>
How Can I Teach A Bible Lesson?	
<b>Chapter 21 – Study The Word .....</b>	<b>158</b>
How Do I Find The Central Truth?	
<b>Chapter 22 – Accomplish Your Goal .....</b>	<b>166</b>
How Can I Teach The Central Truth?	

<b>Chapter 23: Show Them What It Means</b> .....	175
How Can I Apply The Central Truth?	
<b>Chapter 24 – Get To Work</b> .....	187
What Steps Should I Follow In The Preparation Of My Bible Lesson?	
<b>Chapter 25 – Be Sure They Are With You</b> .....	198
How Can I Encourage The Children To Listen To My Bible Lesson?	
<b>Chapter 26 – Let Them Know You Are Ready To Help</b> .....	203
What Does It Mean To “Make Yourself Available” To Children?	
<b>Chapter 27 – Show Them The Way</b> .....	208
How Can I Counsel An Unsaved Child And Lead Him To Christ?	
<b>Chapter 28 – Help Them With Their Problems</b> .....	219
How Can I Counsel Saved Children?	
<b>Chapter 29 – Complete Your Programme</b> .....	223
How Can I Teach Missions And Bible Doctrines To Children?	
<b>Chapter 30 - Help Them To See It</b> .....	229
How Can I Use Visual Aids?	
<b>Chapter 31 – Keep Control</b> .....	238
How Can I Have Good Discipline In My Meeting?	
<b>Chapter 32 – Bring Them In!</b> .....	245
How Can I Build Up Attendance In My Meeting?	

## FOREWORD

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Have you ever desperately wanted to do something, but didn't know how? That was my situation in the early 1960's. God had opened my eyes and moved my heart to see the great need of children without Christ. But how to evangelize them, and how to evangelize them effectively was, in my estimation, an equation without a formula. After all, I was a local government official, not an evangelist!

Then God, in His wisdom, brought me into contact with a school teacher, a school teacher who was a Christian and who evangelized boys and girls! I sat wide-eyed and open-mouthed as he conducted quizzes, taught the children to memorize Scripture and presented the Gospel clearly and effectively. We did have one thing in common; we sang most of the choruses to the same tune! With him I took my first steps in child evangelism. His name is Sam Doherty, the author of this book.

This is not a book for a cosy read on a cold winter's evening. This book is a manual, a map, a guide to help you take your 'first steps' in child evangelism. Over 50 years of experience are poured into these pages. Within its covers you will find the A – Z of child evangelism. Chapters range from the preparation of yourself to the preparation of the Bible Lesson; from how to teach a memory verse to how to lead a child to Christ.

This is one of those books you want to read, mark (have a pen in hand as you read), learn and, most definitely, inwardly digest. It should be your constant companion as you prepare for a ministry to children.

Just as I took those faltering first steps in child evangelism all those decades ago, I challenge you, with the help of God the Holy Spirit and the aid of this book, to do the same. May God grant you a teaching ministry which will change many young lives.

*Kenneth Martin*  
(Co-Ordinator of Training and Missionary Outreach)  
(Child Evangelism Fellowship of Ireland)

## **INTRODUCTION**

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The primary purpose of this book is to help those who are starting a ministry to children, or who have just become involved in such a ministry.

For some considerable time I have seen the need for a book which could be given to someone who wants to teach the Bible to children, but has no experience or training; and who, indeed, does not even know where, or how, to start. I am not aware of any such book on the market which is suitable for this purpose. So I do trust and pray that this book will help fill that gap, and that it will be of great help, value and encouragement to all who receive it and use it.

At the same time, I feel that this book will also be a help to those who are already involved in a ministry to children, and who have gained much experience in the work. It will enable these children's workers to check and examine what they are doing in the light of what they read, and perhaps, in the light of such examination, to find ways by which they may improve and deepen their ministry. None of us should ever reach the stage where we feel that we know everything, and have nothing else to learn. We are, or should be, always in a process of self-examination, learning and continual improvement. And sometimes a simple practical book, like this one, can be a stimulus to such a process.

This book will endeavour to cover just about everything which is involved in a ministry to children. So the nature of the book, and its purpose, mean that nothing can be covered in detail. It is, in many ways, just a "starter kit". But I have written other books which go into the aspects of each subject, touched upon in this book, in much greater detail. I will refer in the text to these books, periodically, and as appropriate. If you do not have these other books and would like to study the subjects concerned in more detail, write to the address given at the beginning of this book, letting us know about your ministry, and your need for extra help, and we will send you what you need, and can use.

I have tried throughout the book to be as simple and as practical as I possibly can. I have cast my mind back over fifty years to the time when I was starting my own ministry to children; and I have tried to share with you what I would have liked to know, and the help that I would have liked to receive, at that time.

I have divided the book into two sections:

- The first section deals with the basic principles of a ministry to children which you and I need to UNDERSTAND, to some extent, before we commence that ministry. We should then make it our goal to understand them more and more as we continue with that ministry. These chapters will answer a number of key questions.
- The second section deals with the practical aspects of our ministry to children, and shows us what we should DO. Consequently, a number of key practical questions are outlined, and answered, in this section.

This book should not be read through quickly, and page by page, as you usually read a book.

It is a STUDY BOOK. You could study it chapter by chapter over a period of time, going through each chapter slowly and in detail and, at the same time, applying it carefully to your ministry. Or you could look through the table of contents on pages iii, iv, v, and select whichever subjects you need most help with. You can then study these.

Also, to help you and guide you in your studies, I have included a synopsis or summary at the beginning of each chapter. If you do not have time to study the whole chapter (although that is what I would recommend), you could select the topic which you need help with and then study it.

Much of what I have written in this book is not original. I have culled many outlines and ideas, now and down through the years, from books written by others, and from teaching which I have received from others; and I am not able to trace, and acknowledge, where they all came from. I have also included key passages from some of my other books where they would be of help.

If this book helps you get started, (or helps you improve your ministry), and, as a result, children are saved, and grow spiritually, I will be very well satisfied. My only goal is to help YOU so that you can help CHILDREN, thus God will be glorified in your life and service, and in the lives of many children.

*“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”*

(2 Timothy 2 v2).



## Section I:

### THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

The first step which needs to be taken in a ministry to children is to STUDY and UNDERSTAND the basic principles of children's work.

Such a study should answer the following questions:

- How can I know if God wants me to work with children? (chapter 1)
- Where do I start? (chapter 2).
- How can I get children to come? (chapter 3).
- What are the needs of the children? (chapter 4).
- How can children respond to the Gospel? (chapter 5).
- Should I evangelize children? (chapter 6).
- How do I evangelize children? (chapter 7)
- How can I use the Wordless Book? (chapter 8)
- How can I help saved children to grow? (chapter 9)

All these questions are answered in this first section – each one in the chapter indicated.

I trust that as you study these chapters you will have a good understanding of the basic principles of your ministry to children.



## Chapter 1:

### Salvation, Sanctification And Service

#### *How Can I Know if God Wants Me to Work With Children?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(The steps to be taken by every children's worker – or future children's worker).*

- **Salvation** – Every children's worker needs to trust Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.
- **Sanctification** – Every children's worker needs to live a life pleasing to God.
- **Service** – God expects His children to be involved in His work – and that includes children's work.
- **Ask God** to show you what He wants you to do – that is the next logical step.
- **A personal testimony** – from the author of the book.
- **The blessings of children's work** – As you work with children and minister to them, God will bless you and use you.
- **A check list** for teachers and children's workers. This can be filled in to see if you have the qualities needed for a children's worker.

**T**he very first step for anyone who feels that God may be leading him/her into a ministry to children is to recognize and understand the fact that God has a specific plan and purpose for his/her life.

This plan can be summarized in three words—salvation, sanctification and service. In other words God wants each reader of this book to be **saved**, to be **sanctified**, and to be engaged in His **service**.

#### **Salvation**

No one can, or should, be engaged in a ministry to children unless that person is sure that he is saved, that all his sins are forgiven, that he is a “new creature in Christ,” and that he will be in Heaven with Jesus Christ

at the moment of death.

Unfortunately, there are many teachers of children, and even Sunday School teachers, who, while they are fine, religious and clean living people, have not put their trust personally in Jesus Christ, and are consequently not saved. I know this because I was one of these people. I grew up in a church where the Gospel was not preached. I thought I was a Christian, because I had been both baptized and confirmed. I was a regular attender at church, and I lived a reasonably good life. In my first year as a school teacher I taught religious instruction to the children. But then at the age of twenty-two I realized for the first time that I needed to be saved, and I am so thankful that God enabled me to trust Jesus Christ personally as my Lord and Saviour; and this was the start of a new life, and a new service.

Salvation is not the result of church attendance, church ceremonies such as baptism, prayer, Bible study, or good works. All of these are fine in their own place, but they are the results of salvation and not the causes of it.

The Bible makes it clear that we are saved *“by grace through faith”* (Ephesians 2 v8) that *“a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”* (Romans 3 v28) and that God is *“the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”* (Romans 3 v26).

The biblical command and directive to those who wish to be saved is not: “be good”, “read the Bible”, “attend church”. It is rather:

*“Believe on (trust) the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”* (Acts 16 v31).

Salvation is the result of personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the moment a sinner trusts and commits himself to Him all his sins are forgiven (Acts 13 v39), and he is a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17).

At that moment, when he turns from his sin, and trusts Jesus Christ, he is converted. He is both justified and regenerated—for ever.

Have you personally trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? If not, why not stop reading and trust Him just now? If you know deep down in your heart that you have failed God, and that you are a sinner, and if you desire His forgiveness, and you sincerely want to be different, you can talk to Him in your heart and say:

*“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am not saved. Thank You for dying on the Cross to save me. Just now I want to turn from my sin and my old life, and I want to trust You as my very own Lord and Saviour.*

*Please forgive all my sins, and please make me a new person. I know You will do this because You have promised to do so. Thank You. I am so glad to know that I am now saved—for ever. Amen.”*

### **Sanctification**

Salvation is not the end! It is only the first step in God’s plan for you and me. The person who trusts Jesus Christ is born again (John 3 v3, 5, 7); he is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5 v17) and he starts to grow spiritually (2 Peter 3 v18). Where there is life there is growth. This growth may be slow; this growth may be small; but it must take place. If there is no growth there is no life.

God wants you and me to grow in holiness, to become more and more like Jesus Christ. That growth is known as sanctification.

*“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen”* (2 Peter 3 v18).

*“For this is the will of God, your sanctification”* (1 Thessalonians 4 v3).

Sanctification is a process. No one, or nothing, grows quickly. It is a step-by-step growth as we study God’s Word, talk to Him and worship Him. There are no easy steps in the life of holiness. There are many pitfalls, mistakes and backslidings. We have our ups and downs; but the general direction of our lives should be upwards and, through all the problems we face and endure, we should become more and more like Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour:

*“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”* (Romans 8 v29).

This growth, and this increasing likeness to Jesus Christ, is only possible because the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of the Lord) lives in every believer and it is He Who gives both the desire and the ability to grow spiritually.

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3 v18).

And then, one day, when we die, we will be with Him. The process of sanctification will be over and completed, and we will be fully like Him for all eternity:

*“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been*

*revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3 v2).*

### **Service**

But there is a third step in God’s plan for every believer. God wants us to serve Him and become involved, in some way, in His work. After all, if God only wanted to save us and sanctify us, He could have taken us immediately to Heaven, when we trusted Jesus Christ for salvation. We would have been entirely and completely sanctified at that moment. But He did not do so. Why? The primary reason was that He has a work for us to do here on the earth—a work which we could not do in Heaven. He wants to use us to reach out to others, to evangelize them, and to minister to their spiritual needs. He wants us who are saved, who are being sanctified, and who are engaged in His service to help others to be saved, to be sanctified and to be His faithful servants:

*“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16 v15).*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28 v19, 20).*

*“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24 v45-48).*

*“So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20 v21).*

*“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1 v8).*

You and I are therefore responsible to find out from God what He wants us to do. He has a plan for each of us and He wants us to fit into that plan. **We** do not decide our place and type of service. **He** does!

There are two vital facts to remember with regard to our service for Him.

- Firstly, God is willing and ready to guide us and show us clearly His plan for our service.
  - ✓ Where we should serve Him.  
Perhaps our service will be in our present local church; perhaps in the area where we now live; perhaps in some other part of the country or the world.
  - ✓ Who we should minister to.  
Perhaps adults, perhaps young people, perhaps children.
  - ✓ How we should minister to them.  
Perhaps on a voluntary basis (along with our present full-time secular job); perhaps part-time (with, at the same time, having a part-time secular job to finance us); perhaps full-time (trusting God for all the support we need).
  - ✓ With whom we should serve.  
Perhaps as part of our local church; perhaps in an interdenominational organization or missionary society; perhaps (although this is unlikely) completely on our own.

The Bible makes it clear that He will give us the answer to all these questions in His own time:

*“You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalm 73 v24).*

*“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left” (Isaiah 30 v21).*

*“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16 v13).*

So we should pray earnestly and regularly the Psalmist’s prayer as found in Psalm 25 v5:

*“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day”.*

Someone might ask the question—How can I know if God wants me to work with children?

God leads different people in different ways:

- ✓ You may see the spiritual need of the children and see your responsibility to help meet that need. Just as a person will jump in the river to rescue a drowning child, you might feel it

is your responsibility to rescue children who are in spiritual danger.

- ✓ You could read a Bible verse which especially speaks to your heart—a verse like Matthew 18 v14:  
*“Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish”* –  
 and God speaks to you through that verse.
- ✓ You could have an inner conviction that this is what God wants you to do. Such a conviction would be the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Someone might invite you to start work with children—just as Barnabas invited Paul to come and minister in Antioch (Acts 11 v25, 26), and as Paul invited Timothy to be his co-worker (Acts 16 v1-5). God often uses other people in this way.

Or indeed God could lead you through a combination of more than one of these factors. But almost invariably God uses His Word the Bible, at some point, to guide us.

(More details on how to know God’s will for your life and service can be found on pages 1 to 22 of my book *“50 Years and Still Learning.”*)

- Secondly, God gives us the abilities and gifts we need to do what He wants us to do. He will not call us or guide us to do something and then leave us alone, depending upon our own resources. He commits Himself to give us everything we need to accomplish His will for our service.

*“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5 v24).

Over and over again in the Bible we see how God called the most unlikely people to do jobs which seemed impossible, and for which they seemed so unsuitable.

- ✓ Joshua was a servant (Exodus 24 v12,13) and was fearful of becoming a leader (Joshua 1 v2, 9).
- ✓ Nehemiah was a cup bearer (Nehemiah 1 v11) and had never built walls before (Nehemiah 2 v5).
- ✓ David was a shepherd boy (Psalm 78 v70), and the last person to be thought of as a king (1 Samuel 16 v11-12).
- ✓ Peter was a fisherman (Mark 1 v16) and had no experience



of preaching (Acts 2 v14).

We can see this same principle at work as we study the history of the church and of missions:

- ✓ William Carey, missionary pioneer in India, was a shoemaker by trade.
- ✓ David Livingstone, the world famous missionary to Africa, worked in a textile mill.
- ✓ Gladys Aylward, greatly used by God in China, was a domestic servant, and a poor student.
- ✓ Brother Andrew, the well known missionary to the “closed lands” is a converted Dutch army commander.

Yet, in every case, God gave them the abilities, talents and gifts they needed for the ministry to which He had called them.

### ***Ask God to Show You What He Wants You to Do***

We have seen that the command of Jesus Christ to His disciples and to you and to me is:

*“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”*  
(Mark 16 v15).

God’s desire is that everyone, in every land, should hear the Gospel. You and I are part of His plan. We, ourselves, would like to go everywhere and reach everyone; but it is not physically possible. So we need God’s direction as to which country, and to which section of the people in that country, we should minister.

God calls some of us to reach children; and I believe that many of the readers of this book are conscious of the fact that God is leading them into a ministry to children, and that you are taking the “first steps” in that ministry. One of the ways He does this is by giving you a love for children (John 21 v15) and a concern for their salvation.

Not everyone is called to minister to children. But some are, and I am thrilled to know that you want to be part of that “some”.

After all, more than one third of the world’s population consists of children—and it is logical and normal to expect that God wants one third of total Gospel ministry, and one third of those who minister, to be directed towards that one third of the population. We do not anticipate more than that—but we certainly do not expect any less. And it would certainly be a joy and privilege for you to know that God has called you to minister to,

and serve Him among, the boys and girls.

Now, if you feel that God is leading you to work with children, you need to ask Him to show you on what basis you should minister to them:

- As a parent or a grandparent to the children in your home.
- As a volunteer Sunday School teacher, or weekday children's worker, in your church.
- As a volunteer children's worker in an outreach to children outside the church – through a Good News Club ministry, or an open-air ministry, or a camping ministry, or as a distributor of children's tracts.
- As a part-time or full-time worker with children, inside your own church and denomination, or as a worker with an interdenominational organization which works with children, such as Child Evangelism Fellowship.

God will show you what to do, and your responsibility is to obey Him and His call.

### ***A Personal Testimony***

It might help you if I shared with you my own experience with regard to these three steps in God's plan for my life – salvation, sanctification and service.

- At the age of twenty-two I came into contact with the Gospel for what seemed to be the first time. I was, as I mentioned earlier, a regular attender at church, I read my Bible from time to time, I prayed occasionally and I tried to live a reasonably good and moral life. If someone had asked me if I was a Christian, I would probably have answered "Yes" or "I believe so."

But then I met a young couple who were preparing for the mission field, and who shared the Gospel with me. I heard teaching I had never heard before. Over a period of time they explained what the Bible taught concerning sin (and my need of salvation), about Jesus Christ (and what He had done for me on the Cross), and about how to be saved (by turning from my sin and trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour). During a period of several months God worked in my heart through their ministry, and through my reading of the Word of God, He opened my eyes and understanding, enabling me to put my trust personally and firmly in the Lord Jesus Christ. I

asked Him to save me and He did!

- I knew, from that moment, that I was different, and I knew God wanted me to live a life that was pleasing to Him. But I have always found this difficult. I found that I had become a battle field, and that there was a war now in progress within me.

*“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7 v23).*

*“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5 v17).*

At the same time I had a desire to become more and more like Jesus Christ, and I trust that, down through the last fifty years, as I have studied God’s Word, and spent time in prayer and asked God for His help in my Christian life, I have become a little more like Him.

I have never found the process of sanctification to be a simple one or an easy one. But it certainly is very worthwhile to make it our goal to live as God wants us to live.

- Fred Orr, the man who led me to the Lord, always emphasized that salvation should result in service. He even told me before I trusted Christ, that when I did so, God would have a ministry for me. Therefore as soon as I trusted Christ I began to ask God to show me **what He wanted me to do**. That was my first question.

I had my own ideas. I played rugby football for one of the top teams in the country. I could see myself evangelizing rugby players and muscular athletes like myself! But over the first few months of my Christian life God began to show me that my ministry was to be to boys and girls. I did not experience any dramatic call, vision or spectacular guidance. In little ways, here and there, God began to lay it upon my heart that I should minister to children. When I went to a meeting in church someone would speak about children; when I read the newspaper I would read something about the needs (physical or otherwise) of children; when I read the Bible I could see more and more the importance of children. And so over a period of time it became clear that this was to be my ministry.

The second question was to know **how I should do this and with**

**whom.** I wrote to Fred Orr, whom God had used in my conversion, and who was now at Bible College preparing for his ministry in Brazil. I shared with him that I felt God was leading my wife and myself into a ministry to evangelize boys and girls, and I asked him what this meant, and how could I start.

The next day a visitor came to his Bible College. It so happened that he was a missionary with Child Evangelism Fellowship. He spoke to the students about the work of CEF and the needs of children. Then, at lunchtime, he was seated beside my spiritual father, Fred, and when he heard he was from Ireland, he told him that God had placed a burden on his heart for Ireland and he would dearly like to see the ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship start in Ireland. He asked Fred if he would be interested in doing this, but Fred told him he was on his way to Brazil. Then he pulled out of his pocket the letter he had received the previous day from me, and told him about us – a young couple who were interested in evangelizing children. “Why don’t you go and visit them?” he suggested. He did so and, through that visit, we were absolutely sure that we should work with Child Evangelism Fellowship. In this way we had the privilege of introducing the work of CEF into Ireland and being its leaders for fourteen years.

My third question was—**where did God want us to reach children** with CEF? Should we work with Irish children—or with boys and girls in another country? As we continued to pray about this matter, we were sure that God wanted us to minister to the boys and girls of our own country—especially the unreached children. We had a burden for all children, and we would have been willing to go anywhere, but God laid it upon our hearts that we should remain in Ireland (at least for the time being) and reach the boys and girls in our homeland.

So we are thankful that, over a period of time, God showed us His plan for our service. As a result, it has been a joy for over fifty years to minister, with Child Evangelism Fellowship, to the spiritual needs of children—first of all in Ireland for fourteen years, then in Europe for the twenty-nine years which followed, and now through the books which I am writing.

One other thing I should point out is this, that for the first fourteen years of my ministry with children, and with Child Evangelism

Fellowship, God led me, I believe, to stay in my profession as a school teacher. I was not therefore a full-time worker with CEF during those years. The two main reasons why I continued as a school teacher were:

I had many opportunities in school to evangelize my pupils, and I had the joy of seeing a number of them trust Christ.

My salary as a school teacher covered all the expenses involved in my work as the leader of CEF in Ireland. I therefore did not need any support from the Mission, or from elsewhere, but was completely self-supporting.

It was, however, only possible to carry on two “full-time jobs” because God had given me such good health, and also an understanding wife. Eventually I realized it was not possible to continue with both jobs and, as we prayed about it, we felt that God was leading us to take a new step into full-time ministry with CEF. This happened in 1964 and soon after that we were appointed as leaders of CEF in Europe. But that’s another story!

### ***The Blessings of Children’s Work***

It is a privilege when God calls you and me into a ministry to reach children with the Gospel, and I believe that many will be blessed through your ministry.

I believe, too, that as you get more and more involved in the evangelism of boys and girls, God will bless you and use you in your ministry. It will not be without its problems, of course. But the joy and sense of satisfaction you will receive will more than compensate for any problems or difficulties:

*“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126 v5, 6).*

- Children will be saved.

The greatest joy you will ever experience (apart from the joy of your own salvation) will be the joy and thrill of seeing a child come to Christ through your ministry. The “sweetest music” you will ever hear this side of Heaven will be the words of a child when he comes to you and says, “Could you please tell me how I could trust the Lord Jesus?”

- Children will grow in their faith.

You will discover that not all children who profess to trust the Lord Jesus really grow and develop spiritually (for one reason or another). But many of them do; and you will have a special sense of satisfaction when you see a child, who trusted Christ under your ministry, grow in his faith and become a well developed believer. However, you need to realise that this takes time!

- The local church will be helped.  
Your primary responsibility in your Christian service is to help and build up the ministry of the local church or assembly to which you belong. And there is no doubt that, as you engage in a ministry to children, as an outreach from your local church, your church will receive and experience the benefits and blessings of such a ministry. These blessings will be long-term rather than short-term – but will be visible eventually.
- The homes of the children will be helped.  
The children in today's world face temptation and pressures about which we as children knew little or nothing. On every side they are faced with the pervading influences of drugs, alcohol, sex, and violence. Parents, both Christian and non-Christian, are often at their wits' end as they see the problems faced by their children, and the danger of them becoming involved. Consequently, when you minister to these children and teach them the truths of God's Word, and help them to deal with the problems they face in today's world, the parents will, or should, be appreciative, and they will feel that you have helped them and their families.
- You, yourself, will be blessed.
  - ✓ You will be blessed personally because you have obeyed God's command to reach the children. Obedience always results in blessing.
  - ✓ You will be blessed as you see the results of your ministry as outlined above.
  - ✓ You will be blessed by your increasing knowledge of God's Word as you teach it. I learned more about the Bible through my teaching of it to the children, than in any other way.
- Your family will be blessed.  
Your children, or grandchildren, will have the privilege and opportunity of sitting under your ministry, as you minister to the

children in your Good News Club, 5-Day Club or camp – and you can pray that God will speak to them, save them and bless them.

➤ God will be glorified.

**That** will be the greatest blessing of all in your ministry. God will be glorified through your obedience to His will, and through the salvation and changed lives of the children.

*“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4 v11).*

### ***Check List for Teachers and Children's Workers***

It is good for those who work with children, or who plan to do so, to know what qualities God expects to see in their lives and ministries. These qualities are goals to aim at. Do not be discouraged if you have not yet achieved them—provided you are moving in the right direction—and provided you can see evidence of growth and progress.

<b>Quality</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Saved	Have I trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour?	Yes/No
Consecrated	Am I consecrated to Jesus Christ, and am I becoming a little more like Him day by day?	Yes/No
Called	Do I believe that God wants me to work with children?	Yes/No
Burdened	Am I concerned for the children and their salvation?	Yes/No
Useable	Although I feel incapable, am I willing for God to use me in this ministry?	Yes/No
Teachable	Am I willing to be trained for this ministry, and to take advantage of every possibility for training through classes, books etc?	Yes/No
Reliable	Am I prepared to discipline myself so as always to be punctual and dependable?	Yes/No
Prayerful	Do I see the need and importance of prayer for myself—and especially for the children?	Yes/No
Hard-working	Am I willing to work really hard at my ministry and to spend much time in preparation?	Yes/No
Friendly	Am I prepared to visit with the parents of the children, and build up a friendship with them?	Yes/No
Consistent	Is my witness to the children and their parents consistent and do I practise what I preach?	Yes/No

I trust that all your answers are—YES!



## Chapter 2: Ready, Steady, Go *Where Do I Start?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(These are the first decisions to make concerning your work with children.)*

- **Help in your local church.** This is the best place to start.
- **Help in the ministry of an organisation which reaches children.** The largest of these is Child Evangelism Fellowship, and our organisation is always looking for more workers.
- **Go ahead and do something on your own.** This is not the best way – and is only recommended if the first two options are not possible.

**I** am presuming that God has shown you that He wants you to work with children, to reach them with the Gospel, to teach them the Word of God, and to minister to them and their spiritual needs.

It is probable that you now have two questions:

- Where do I start?
- What do I do?

I am going to give you three answers to those questions and I trust that these will help you to get started. You need to remember that the most important part of a journey (and sometimes the most difficult part) is the first step! When that first step is taken, the path ahead usually becomes clearer.

### *Help in Your Local Church*

I trust that you attend and are a member of a local church, where the Gospel is faithfully preached. If not, you should be.

So your first step should be to speak either with your pastor, or Sunday School superintendent, and offer to teach, or help in some way in the Sunday School. I have found that many Sunday Schools do not have enough teachers, and your offer to teach will probably be accepted eagerly, and with gratitude. Even if there are enough teachers, you would, I am sure, be welcome as a substitute teacher (to fill in when another teacher is absent), or as a helper with the pre-school children or in the junior section (to help keep order and discipline). Or, if nothing else is available, just to be present during the Sunday School and be available to arrange seating, welcome children, and tidy up afterwards. When you show your dedication to children, and demonstrate your desire to help them, even in the most simple and humble way, God will, I am sure, open a door into a direct teaching ministry to a group of children in your Sunday School.

At the same time you should avail yourself of every opportunity to improve your ministry to the children for whom you are responsible in the Sunday School:

- Study the Word of God on a daily basis for your own edification.
- Be a regular attender at your church services.
- Attend a regular training class, or seminar, which will help you in your ministry.
- Read and study books, like this one, which will show you how to teach the children effectively.

Another possibility, either as a substitute for Sunday School teaching or, in addition to it, would be to approach the pastor, or whoever is responsible for the children's ministry in your church, and offer to help in a weekday church-based ministry to the children, or in children's church on Sundays (if there is one). Some churches have mid-week meetings for children, or uniformed organizations which reach children, and additional workers and helpers are usually needed and eagerly sought for these ministries. You could have a very good ministry to children in this way.

Or, in addition, you could offer to help, or teach, in a Holiday Bible School organized in, and by, your church for one and a half to two hours each day during a holiday week.

### ***Help in the Ministry of an Organization which Reaches Children***

While I believe that the centre and focus of New Testament evangelism is, and should be, the local evangelical Bible-believing church, there is also an important place for para-church interdenominational organizations whose goal is to reach children with the Gospel – especially those children who are not attending the local church. The best known of these organizations is Child Evangelism Fellowship, the Mission with which I have worked for over fifty years. It is established in over one hundred and fifty countries worldwide, and has a total of over 2,500 full-time workers and many thousands of volunteer workers.

You could be one of these volunteer workers. If you would like to be involved in this way you could make enquiries and see if there is a branch of Child Evangelism Fellowship (or any other similar organization) in the area where you live. You could then speak with the local leader or director of the work, and offer to help or get involved in one of CEF's ministries:

- You could open your home for a weekly children's meeting, or Good News Club, to teach the Word of God to the children in your neighbourhood.
- You could teach in a Good News Club, which is held in someone else's home.
- You could be a summer missionary with CEF and teach, or help, in 5-Day Clubs held during the summer in the open air.
- You could help, or be a counsellor, in a children's camp.

However, before you could get involved in any ministry with CEF, there are several commitments you would need to make:

- You would need to sign CEF's Statement of Faith to ensure that you are doctrinally sound.
- You would need to give an assurance that your ministry would be interdenominational and not controversial.
- You would need to be willing to attend CEF teacher training classes or training programmes.
- You would need to use, for the most part, CEF literature and teaching materials.

You would then need to make application to be a helper or worker – and this application would be carefully and prayerfully considered.

### ***Go Ahead and Do Something on Your Own***

A third possibility is to do something to reach and teach children on your own. This is not the best way to go, and it should only be considered if the first two steps are not, for some reason, possible. It is always better to work and minister as part of a church team, or as part of a team of workers inside an organization like CEF. In both cases, you can have fellowship with others who have the same goals; you can have help and encouragement from your leaders and co-workers; and you will have someone to whom you are responsible. All of these are both helpful and necessary.

However, it may be that neither of these two options are possible, although you are still sure that God wants you to reach children with the Gospel and teach them the Word of God. In this case, you should just go ahead yourself and do something to reach the children.

What could you do? There are a number of possibilities:

- The simplest possibility, and the one which needs least experience and least ability, is to distribute tracts which are specifically written and published for children. You can get tracts such as these from most Christian publishers and bookshops, or from organizations such as Child Evangelism Fellowship.  
Each tract should have an enclosure, or a tear-off slip, with your name on it so that children can write to you if they want spiritual help.
- In summer time you could gather a group of children together in the open air and share a simple gospel message, or Bible story, with them. You could use the Wordless Book, or a flashcard story, or an object lesson. You need to be sure that you do this openly and in full view, and, at the same time, you should let the children's parents know who you are, and what you are doing.
- You could contact the parents of the children who live in your locality, and ask if their children could attend a weekly meeting in your home. You could emphasize that this meeting would be completely interdenominational. Many parents will allow their children to come to such a meeting if they know you and have confidence in you.

It is a help to have a co-worker in a meeting such as this (or in an open-air meeting). You can be the teacher and the other person your

assistant (or vice versa). The teacher's responsibility is to conduct the meeting. The assistant meets the children, gets them seated, keeps an eye open for discipline problems, keeps a record of attendance, is available for counselling children afterwards, and can take part in different parts of the meeting itself as invited by the teacher.

You could also invite another interested person to be a prayer partner for your meeting, and ask him to pray for you and the children on a regular basis. This is especially important while the meeting is in progress.

In some countries, especially in the Western world, people are suspicious of those who work with children in the ways outlined above – and particularly if you are working on your own. That is why everything you do must be public and open; and that is why you need to keep good contact with the parents of the children. That is also why it is a help to be linked to a church, or to a reasonably well known Christian organization.

In some countries there is also legislation concerning children of which you need to be aware. In Northern Ireland, for example, there is a Child Protection Order, and all those who work with children need to be conversant with it.

It would be good for you to contact your local Child Evangelism Fellowship office and director and enquire about this matter.

## Chapter 3: Gather Them *How Can I Get Children to Come?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(These are steps to help you “gather the children”).*

- **Understand God’s commands.** A study of Deuteronomy 31 v12 and 13 will help you see the importance of “gathering the children”.
- **Plan carefully.** Be sure you have a time and place which suits the children (and the parents).
- **Contact the parents.** It is most important to do this in the right way.
- **Contact the children.** Now you are ready to give personal invitations to the children.
- **Make your meeting interesting.** Children who come will not return if your meeting is dull and irrelevant.
- **Encourage children to invite others.** They can do a better job than you can.
- **Organize special events.** These can help from time to time.
- **You need to adapt.** All the above steps need to be related to your own situation.
- **You need to pray.** This is your most important responsibility and the main way to ensure that the children come.

### ***Understand God’s Command***

God’s command to the children of Israel through Moses was:

*“Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess” (Deuteronomy 31 v12, 13).*

We note, first of all, that there were four groups of people included in this command – men, women, strangers and **little ones**.

Then, secondly, we can see the goals God set before the children of Israel, and which He also sets before us with regard to each group, including the little ones:

- He wants them to be gathered together. *“Gather.... the little ones.”*  
The word “gather” means “to assemble” or “to collect”.
- He wants them to listen to, or hear, His Word – *“that they may hear.”*
- He wants them to understand, or learn, His Word – *“and that they might learn”*.
- He wants them to fear Him – *“to fear the Lord your God”*.
- He wants them to observe, or obey, all that is in His Word – *“and carefully observe all the words of this law”*.

As we look at these points in reverse order we will better understand what God is saying to us:

- The little ones cannot really obey all of God’s word unless they **fear** Him.
- They cannot fear Him unless they **understand** what the Bible teaches about Him.
- They cannot understand what the Bible teaches if they don’t **hear** His Word.
- They cannot hear His Word – **IF THEY DON’T COME**.
- They will not come if we don’t **“gather them”**.

And that brings us back to the key question.

“How can we gather the little ones? How can we encourage them to come and listen to God’s Word?”

There are, as we have seen in the last chapter, different types of ministries to children. But we need to know the answers to these two questions no matter which kind of ministry we have to children – whether it is an established ministry or a “new ministry”. However the answers (as outlined in the basic principles which follow) are especially relevant to those who are starting a “new ministry”. I believe that if these principles are followed you should be able to “gather the children”.

### ***Plan Carefully***

Before you start thinking about how to “gather the children” you need to be sure that the place you select for your meeting, the day on which the meeting is held, and the time at which it will be held, will be suitable for the children to come. You cannot expect children to come to a meeting, when it is inaccessible, or which is held on a day or at a time when there are many other activities which would prevent them from coming. You need, first of all, to do a lot of research in the area where you will be ministering to the children, so that when you plan the place, the day and the time of your meeting you do so carefully, and in a way which is most favourable to the children.

### ***Contact the Parents***

Before you start your ministry to children, you should make it your goal to contact the parents of the children whom you plan to reach. You need to recognize that children are under the authority of their parents. You would hope, therefore, that the parents would allow the children to come and listen to you.

There are two possible dangers:

- You need to recognize that if, on the one hand, you contact the parents, they may refuse to allow their children to come.
- However, if you don’t contact, or inform, the parents, but instead contact the children “secretly”, you run the risk of alienating the parents completely.

I believe the first of these dangers is the lesser one, and that you should contact the parents, and run the risk of them saying “No”. However, I believe a number of them will appreciate your openness and honesty in contacting them, and this openness may well encourage the parents to allow the children to come and listen to you.

The best way to contact parents is “face to face”. This would therefore mean going from house to house, and door to door. You should introduce yourself to them, explain what you plan to do, and invite them to allow their children to come. At the same time, you should emphasize that you will simply be teaching the truths of the Bible to the children, and that you are not seeking to take the children away from their present church (if they attend one). You should lay



special emphasis upon the fact that you want to help the children in their own personal lives, and enable them to handle the stresses and pressures of today's world. You could also tell the parents that they would be very welcome to come to your meeting, so that they themselves can hear what you teach. You could also leave with the parents a photocopied letter concerning yourself and the meeting.

### ***Contact the Children***

The next step is to make contact with the children and invite them to come and listen to your teaching.

This can be done in two ways:

➤ *By personal invitation*

You should speak personally to children and invite them to come. Explain who you are and what you will be doing. Also let them know that you have already spoken to their parents, and that they should ask their parents if it is alright for them to come.

➤ *By printed invitations*

It is a big help if you can have little cards with an invitation and details of your meeting printed on them. You can then distribute these at key points to the children. One very good place is **outside** the gates of the local school. You might need to ask for permission to do this. Even if you don't have to do so, it may be helpful to ask. A positive contact with the school can be very useful. They may even display a poster inside the school for you, and eventually it may lead to an opportunity to speak to the children.

Do not worry if you do not have large numbers at your first meetings.

It is often better to start off small and grow – than to start off big and decrease. The children themselves will often be the ones who will promote your meeting.

### ***Make Your Meeting Interesting***

Having contacted the parents and invited the children, you need to ensure that your meeting is interesting, relevant and attractive. If it is not, many, if not all, of the children, will stop coming.

On the other hand, if it is interesting, relevant and attractive, most of the children who start coming will continue to do so, and in addition others will hear about it and start to come.

We will speak about how to do this later in the book.

### ***Encourage the Children to Invite Others***

The best “inviters” are the children themselves. You should therefore think of different ways to encourage them to talk to other children, and invite them to attend:

- You could challenge them to do so, as a ministry, to help other children.
- You could organize a competition to find out who can invite the most children.
- You could give “a star” to each child who brings someone else, and then give a prize to every child who receives, say, five stars.

### ***Organize Special Events***

You could interest and attract more children to your regular meetings by organizing special events at special times throughout the year, and inviting other children to come to them.

These events could include:

- Christmas parties, with a special Christmas programme and a visualized Christmas lesson.
- Easter parties with a programme and a lesson focused on Easter.
- Missionary meetings where a missionary speaks about his work and shows slides or a video.

### ***You Need to Adapt***

It is necessary to adapt all I have already written in this chapter to your own circumstances:

- That which is valid in one culture is not always valid in another culture. So you need to adapt the methods of “gathering children” you will use to the cultural background of your society.
- You also need to adapt what I have outlined to the ministry which

you plan to exercise. For example, if you are only planning to give out tracts to children, you do not need to contact their parents before you do so.

But I believe that the basic principles which I have outlined will, if followed, be helpful in most cases, and will be valid for whatever ministry to children that God lays upon your heart. I feel that these principles, if practised, will enable you better “to gather the children”.

### ***You Need to Pray***

It is hardly necessary to emphasize the importance of prayer to your life and your ministry. You, yourself, and your ministry will only be blessed if God blesses. And the primary way to receive His blessing is to spend much time in prayer – throughout the week, in your personal Quiet Time, and before each meeting.

You should pray:

- That the children will come.
- That the children will listen well.
- That God will speak to the hearts of the children:
  - ✓ So that they will trust the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - ✓ So that they will grow spiritually.

## Chapter 4: Help Them *What Are the Needs of the Children?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need to understand the children's needs so that you can help them.)*

- **Children need to understand the truths of God's Word.** Most children do not know these truths.
- **Children need salvation.** Every children's worker should be clear about this.
- **Children need strength.** They live in a difficult world – with many pressures.
- **Children need security.** In a world of confusion and uncertainty the only sure hope is in God.
- **Children need the Gospel.** All the above blessings come to the children through the Gospel – and it is our responsibility to bring that Gospel to them.

**R**ight from the beginning of your ministry it is necessary that you understand, from the Bible, the needs of the children, and how you can best meet those needs. Your goal is to minister to them and to help them, and you cannot do this if you don't know clearly what their needs are. You cannot give the solutions if you don't know the problems; you cannot give the answers if you don't know the questions. But when you do have a correct understanding of what the Bible teaches about children and their needs, you will be better able to set your goals, and you will be able to see more clearly what you want to be accomplished in the lives of your children.

### ***Children Need to Understand the Truths of God's Word***

God has revealed Himself, and the great truths which men, women, boys and girls need to hear and understand, in His Word – the Bible. Without

that understanding the children are living in spiritual darkness and ignorance. The Bible was given to us for three main reasons:

- To show us what God is like.
- To show us what we are like.
- To show us how we can become what God wants us to be:
  - ✓ Through salvation.
  - ✓ Through sanctification.
  - ✓ Through eventual glorification.

But the vast majority of children have little or no understanding of God's Word. They do not know what God is like; they do not really know what they themselves are like (in the eyes of God); and they don't know how they can become what God wants them to be. Much of Bible truth is questioned, ignored or ridiculed by secular society. So teach them the truths of the Bible. Do not be apologetic or bow to that pressure. Teach God's truth as absolute truth.

So your first responsibility as a teacher is to help the children to know the truths which God has revealed in His Word and to apply those truths to their own lives. You need to teach these truths to the children as thoroughly as you can.

### **Children Need Salvation**

It is most important that you know and clearly understand what the Bible teaches about the spiritual position and condition of all children who have not trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

- They are spiritually dead:
 

*"And you He made alive, who were **dead in trespasses and sins**, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2 v1, 5).*
- They have a sinful nature:
 

*"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and **in sin** my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51 v5).*

*"Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature** children of wrath, just as the others" (Ephesians 2 v3).*

- They are outside God's kingdom:  
*"And said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by **no means enter the kingdom of heaven**'"* (Matthew 18 v3).
- They are lost as far as their position is concerned:  
*"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was **lost**. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them **goes astray**, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is **straying**? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go **astray**. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should **perish**"* (Matthew 18 v11-14).
- If they are old enough to know they have sinned, to know that Jesus Christ died for them, and have rejected what God is saying to them, the Bible teaches that, if they die, they will be lost eternally:  
*"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he **who does not believe** the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God** abides on him"* (John 3 v36).

You should also understand that when children put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour they are saved, and all the problems outlined above are dealt with:

- They receive spiritual life:  
*"Even when we were dead in trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)"* (Ephesians 2 v5).
- They have a new nature and are changed:  
*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is **a new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Corinthians 5 v17).
- They have been born again into God's kingdom:  
*"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"* (John 3 v3, 5, 7).

- They are found and “inside the fold”:

*“And when he has **found it**, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for **I have found** my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15 v5-7).*

- They are saved eternally from God’s judgement and will live for ever:

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but **have everlasting life**” (John 3 v16).*

You can learn, in more detail, about children and their need for the Gospel, in my book “Why Evangelize Children?”

### **Children Need Strength**

Children are born into a world which is very much different from the world into which you and I were born. They face pressures and temptations of which we, as children, were ignorant. It seems that the devil is making an all-out effort to destroy our children, and believes, that by so doing, he can inflict irreparable harm on the cause of Jesus Christ and His Church.

In the ninth chapter of Mark’s Gospel we read of a man who came to the Lord Jesus because he had a son who was dumb and possessed by a spirit. When the Lord Jesus asked him how long he had been like this the father replied in verses 21 and 22:

*“From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him.”*

The devil wanted to destroy this child; and that is still his aim and purpose with our children. But as the Lord Jesus healed the boy in our story, He can do the same for our children today. He can meet their spiritual needs, and give them strength.

As a consequence of the devil’s all-out campaign against our children, we can see in today’s world an alarming increase in materialism, scepticism, humanism and sin, in its various forms and manifestations.

Children, on their own, are helpless in the face of such an onslaught and are not able to withstand the pressures and temptations from the world,

the flesh and the devil.

At the same time the wonderful news is that there is Someone Who can save children, change them, and give them the strength and power they need to live victoriously in a world like this. Jesus Christ came into the world and died on the Cross not just to forgive the sins of those who trust Him, not just to save them from God's judgment and condemnation, not just to give them everlasting life – but also to save them from their sins, today, in this world.

*“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1 v21).*

*“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2 v14).*

After Jesus Christ was exalted, forty days after His death and resurrection, He sent God the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts and lives of those who trusted Him as Lord and Saviour (Acts 1 v8; Acts 2 v33; Acts 2 v38) and the Holy Spirit gives saved children the power and strength they need, to be the boys and girls God wants them to be (Galatians 5 v22, 23).

### ***Children Need Security***

One of the main features of today's world is a lack of security, and a sense of uncertainty about everything – about employment, about health and about death. Most people have no assurance or confidence about the future, and especially about eternity. Children share this sense of insecurity – especially because so many of them live in broken homes. Some have only one parent. Others have no parents. Some suffer from physical, mental and sexual abuse.

Jesus Christ not only saves and strengthens but gives to those who trust Him a security which the world cannot give:

➤ He promises eternal life:

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have **everlasting life**” (John 3 v16).*



- He takes away worry and stress:  
*"And the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4 v7).
- He takes away the fear of death:  
*"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and **release those** who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Hebrews 2 v14, 15).
- He gives confidence concerning the future:  
*"Therefore **do not worry about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"* (Matthew 6 v34).
- He promises to supply every need:  
*"And my God shall **supply all your need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4 v19).
- He gives comfort and security to the weak, helpless and fatherless:  
*"**A father of the fatherless**, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation"* (Psalm 68 v5)  
*"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the **Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'"* (Romans 8 v15).

Oh how much our children need the Gospel, and the wonderful Saviour and Friend Who can become theirs through the Gospel, and through faith in Him!

### **Children Need the Gospel**

All these blessings come from Jesus Christ when He becomes the Lord and Saviour of boys and girls.

- He becomes their Lord and Saviour when they put their trust in Him.
- They cannot put their trust in Him unless they hear about Him, about what He has done for them, and about what He will do for them if they trust Him.
- They cannot hear about Him unless we tell them.  
*"Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall*

*they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10 v13-17).*

Children do have physical needs, mental needs and social needs and, if the opportunities arise, we should try to help meet those needs. But their main needs are spiritual, and these can only be met through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Consequently, your first responsibility to the children you plan to teach is – TO EVANGELIZE THEM. This means that you need to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ (what Jesus Christ has done for them, what He wants them to do, and what He will do for them, and in them, if they trust Him) – and it also means that you need to challenge them to respond to this gospel message. We will look at all of this in more detail in chapter 6.

## Chapter 5: Understand Them

### *How Can Children Respond to the Gospel?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need to understand what the Bible teaches about children.)*

- **They need to be saved.** They are all spiritually dead, lost and outside God's kingdom.
- **They can be saved.** It is possible for a child, even a little child, to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- **They are open to the Gospel.** Children are more open to the Gospel than adults.
- **They have their whole lives to live.** A child saved is a life saved.
- **Conclusion.** We need to evangelize them.

**T**he Bible teaches us four fundamental truths about children and their response to the Gospel and we, as teachers, need to understand all four truths. It is vital that we base our ministry to children upon what the Bible says, and not upon the views, opinions and teaching of men.

#### ***Children Need to be Saved***

We have already learned in the last chapter that boys and girls need Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and therefore, need to hear the Gospel, and respond to it in faith.

This biblical teaching is opposite to the views of many people and “experts” in the world, and even a number inside the church:

- Some feel that all children are innocent beings who do not need to be saved.
- Some feel that all children are in the kingdom of God from birth.

- Some feel that children who have been baptized are regenerated, and are in God’s kingdom as a result of their baptism.
- Some feel that it is not possible for children to trust Jesus Christ and be saved.

None of these viewpoints are biblical.

The Bible teaches several key truths about children and their spiritual needs:

- That **all children are spiritually dead** until they trust Jesus Christ and receive spiritual life:  
*“And you He made alive, who were **dead** in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2 v1).  
*“Even when we were **dead** in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”* (Ephesians 2 v5).
- That **all children are born with a sinful nature**, and as they grow older this nature demonstrates itself in **sinful acts**:  
*“Behold, I was brought forth in **iniquity**, and **in sin** my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51 v5).  
 Only Jesus Christ can give them a new nature which will help them to live a life which is pleasing to Him.  
*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5 v17).
- That **all children are outside the kingdom of God** until they are born again:  
*“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he **cannot see the kingdom of God**.’”* (John 3 v3).
- That **children who are old enough to reject Jesus Christ are under God’s condemnation** until they trust Christ and are then saved:  
*“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God abides on him**”* (John 3 v36).
- That **children who have not reached the age of accountability, and cannot understand what sin is and what they need to do to be saved, are spiritually dead and outside God’s kingdom**. But if they were to die they would not be lost forever because they

have not consciously rejected God and His revelation:

*“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And **this is the condemnation**, that the light has come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3 v18 and 19).

- But we do not know when that age of accountability is. It is a long time before the age of thirteen or fourteen, and it varies from child to child. It is not our business to try and work out whether a child is accountable or not. That is in God’s hands. As far as we are concerned all the children are lost, outside God’s kingdom and they need to hear the Gospel. Our responsibility is to evangelize **all** of them.

*“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to **every** creature”* (Mark 16 v15).

### **Children Can Be Saved**

The Bible teaches that it is possible for children to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and be saved.

This is a wonderful truth which we as teachers need to understand and believe. Children don’t need to wait until they are adults, or even until they are teenagers, before they can trust Christ:

#### ➤ **Bible verses show us the possibility of child conversion.**

- ✓ It is possible for a **little** one to trust, or believe in, Jesus Christ.  
*“But whoever causes one of these little ones **who believe in Me** to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea”* (Matthew 18 v6).
- ✓ It is possible for a child to set his hope in God.  
*“That the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children. That **they may set their hope in God**, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments”* (Psalm 78 v6, 7).
- ✓ It is possible for a child to fear God.  
*“Gather the people together, men and women and **little ones**, and*

*the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to **fear the LORD your God** and carefully observe all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31 v12).*

- ✓ Children are included in the “*whoever*” of John 3v16 and other similar verses – provided they trust the Saviour.

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3 v16).*

No other qualification is required. The Bible does **not** say that a child must have reached a certain age before he can be saved.

- ✓ A child can hear and respond to the voice of God.

*“Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel answered, ‘**Speak for Your servant hears**’” (1 Samuel 3 v10).*

➤ **Experience shows us that children can trust Christ.**

- ✓ Many well known Christians trusted Christ when they were young.
- ✓ I am sure that a number of the readers of this book can testify to being saved as children.
- ✓ I am equally sure that many of you have, like myself, seen children trust Christ and grow spiritually.

➤ **Many Christian leaders have expressed their clear conviction that children can be saved.**

Charles Spurgeon, the well known English pastor and preacher of the late nineteenth century, wrote, for example:

*“I thank God that in our Sabbath school we believe in the salvation of children as children. How very many times has it been my joy to see boys and girls who have come forward to confess their faith in Christ! And I again wish to say that the best converts, the clearest converts, the most intelligent converts we have ever had have been the young ones.”*

*“I hold that children are capable of salvation. He who in Divine sovereignty reclaimed the grey haired sinner from the error of his ways can turn a little child from his youthful follies.”*

The obvious question which many teachers will now ask is – “At what age can a child trust Christ and be converted?”

The simple answer is – “We don’t know.” The Bible does not give an age. Children are different one from the other. Some are ready and able to trust Christ at an earlier age than others. We must not make the mistake of setting an age when children can trust Christ; and we certainly must not set that age around thirteen or fourteen. Children can trust the Lord Jesus (as the Holy Spirit enables them to do so) a long time before that age.

The Lord Jesus in Matthew 18 v6 speaks about “*one of these little ones who believe in (or trusts) Me*”, and the fact that He has a little child in His arms, while He says this, shows clearly that He is speaking about children. So we know it is possible therefore for **little** children to be saved. From my own experience in the evangelism of children, I have found that **many** children between the ages of seven and eleven are ready and able to trust Christ. That does not mean that children below seven are not able to; a good number of them are. Nor does it mean that those above eleven are not able, or willing, to do so; obviously a number are. But those years between seven and eleven are, I believe, the period of greatest openness, understanding and response.

As soon as a child is old enough to know what sin is, old enough to be convicted of it, and old enough to want to turn from it; as soon as he is old enough to know that Jesus Christ died for him on the Cross; and old enough to trust Jesus Christ in his own simple childish way – he is old enough to be saved.

And remember, above all, that salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is He not able to work in the hearts of little children and save them?

Charles Spurgeon writes again:

*“I will not say at what age children are first capable of receiving the knowledge of Christ, but it is much earlier than some fancy; and we have seen and known children who have given abundant evidence that they have received Christ and have believed in Him at a very early age.”*

### **Children Are Open to the Gospel**

This is another one of the great truths about children, and their response, which we need to understand. Children are open to the Gospel, and it is this openness to the Gospel which makes the evangelism of children so

fruitful, and also so enjoyable.

- The Bible teaches that adults must become like children before they can be saved. They need to become simple, trustful, dependent and humble – like children.

*“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and **become as little children**, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18 v3).*

*“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God **as a little child** will by no means enter it” (Mark 10 v15).*

But a child already is a child. He already is simple, trustful, dependent and humble – and God can bless and use these child-like qualities, and direct them towards Christ:

- The Bible teaches that childhood is the best time to trust Christ before hearts become really hard and resistant.

*“That the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children. That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and **may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation**, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.” (Psalm 78 v6, 7, 8).*

*“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, **before the difficult days come**, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Ecclesiastes 12 v1).*

- Statistics show us that most people are saved in childhood or teenage years; and that, the older a person is, the less likelihood there is of him trusting Christ.
- Experience of working with children proves that they are more open and responsive to our teaching than adults (and also more open and responsive than teenagers). That is why the evangelism of children makes so much sense. Why wait until they are not interested, and until they have hardened hearts, before evangelizing them?

Also children are more open to new ideas because they have had fewer ideas imposed on them, or received by them, than someone older. As a result they do not yet have a fully worked-through system of beliefs.



But I need to give you two warnings:

- Children are not only open to the Gospel, they are open to everything. It is their nature. That is why **we** must reach them first! Don't wait! Reach them now! If we don't reach them someone else will.
- The openness of children to our teaching and evangelism, and the fact that they are very impressionable, is a great advantage to us, and it is something for which we should be thankful. But, at the same time, we must be careful not to abuse, or exploit, these wonderful qualities. The openness of children makes it easy for us to influence, and put pressure upon them, to "make decisions", which are then the results of our pressure, and not the work of the Holy Spirit. Be careful! Do not abuse their openness. The kind of openness that we are looking for comes as a result of the Holy Spirit's work within. We do not need to, nor should we try to, manufacture this.

### ***Children Have Their Whole Lives to Live***

A child saved is not just a soul saved; it is a life saved.

*"It is good for a man to bear the yoke **in his youth**"* (Lamentations 3 v27).

When D. L. Moody was asked how many were saved at one of his evangelistic meetings he replied, "Two and a half." The questioner laughed, "Oh, you mean two adults and a child." "No," replied Mr. Moody, "I mean two children and an adult."

There were three souls saved, but only two and a half lives were saved. The adult had only half a life to live for Jesus Christ. The children had almost all their lives, before them, to live for Him.

Corrie ten Boom, the well known Dutch missionary and evangelist, was saved at the age of five and she died at the age of eighty-five. She lived eighty years for Jesus Christ!

We who evangelize children are not just interested in souls to be saved. We are also interested in lives to be lived, and we believe that the earlier a person comes to Christ the better.

What do you think? Is it better to trust Christ at the age of seventy, or at the age of seven?

Paul wrote to Timothy:

*“And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3 v15).*

### **Conclusion**

We can now understand four biblical truths about children and their need of, and response to, the Gospel:

- Children need to be saved.
- Children can be saved.
- Children are open to the Gospel and to salvation.
- It is good for children to be saved.

We also know from the Scriptures that they can only be saved through the preaching of the Gospel and the Word of God:

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1 v16).*

*“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16 v15).*

*“And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10 v15).*

**THEREFORE LET US EVANGELIZE THE CHILDREN.**

(You can receive more detailed teaching and information concerning children and their response to the Gospel in my book “*Why Evangelize Children?*”)

## A BIBLICAL PATTERN TO IMITATE

### PSALM 78 v1-8

#### 1. THE PROMISE MADE BY THE PSALMIST

*"We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78 v4).*

#### 2. THE PRECEPT OBEYED BY THE PSALMIST

*"For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children" (Psalm 78 v5, 6).*

#### 3. THE PURPOSE ESTABLISHED BY THE PSALMIST

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78 v7).*

#### 4. THE POSSIBILITY SEEN BY THE PSALMIST

*"And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God" (Psalm 78 v8).*

## Chapter 6: Reach Them *Should I Evangelize Children?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Five truths which you need to understand about the evangelism of children.)*

- **There are two groups of children.** It is vital to know that every child falls into one of two groups – saved and unsaved.
- **You have therefore two ministries.** You need to evangelize the unsaved children, and you need to help the saved children to grow.
- **You need to understand what the gospel message is.** There are five groups of truths in the gospel message.
- **You need to know that the Gospel has power.** The power in evangelism lies in the message, not the messenger.
- **You need to depend upon the Holy Spirit.** It is God the Holy Spirit Who does the work which lasts.

**I**t should be obvious from our studies in the previous chapters that there are two groups of children, and that every child who comes to our class or club falls into one of these two groups.

### ***There Are Two Groups of Children***

The Bible teaches that there are two groups of children:

- There are, firstly, children who have not trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.  
These children are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2 v1), spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4 v4), and under the dominion and power of sin (Romans 6 v17). If they have reached an age of accountability, responsibility and understanding, and have not

trusted Jesus Christ, they are also guilty before God (Romans 3 v19), and if they die in that condition they will be lost for ever (John 3 v36).

These children need Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and they need to be evangelized (Mark 16 v15).

- There are, secondly, children who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

God has given them spiritual life (John 6 v47), spiritual sight (Acts 26 v18), forgiveness of all sin (Ephesians 1 v7), the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 2 v38) and eternal life (John 3 v16). At the same time God has changed them (2 Corinthians 5 v17), and has broken the overall power of sin in their lives (Romans 6 v18).

These children do not need spiritual life; they already have it. They do not need to be evangelized. They need spiritual food so that they can grow spiritually (1 Peter 2 v2; 2 Peter 3 v18).

### ***You Have Two Ministries***

It is therefore clear from what we have stated above that you have two different, but related, ministries to children:

- Your first ministry is to evangelize the unsaved children. God has called you to be a fisherman.

*“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”* (Matthew 4 v19).

Your first and primary role is that of an evangelist, and you continually need to teach and apply your teaching to unsaved children, to encourage, and enable, them to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

- Your second ministry is to feed the children who are saved. God has also called you to be a shepherd.

*“Feed My lambs”* (John 21 v15).

You must not neglect the “lambs of the flock”. If you don’t feed them it will be difficult for them to grow.

Consequently, you want to teach and apply your teaching to saved children to help them grow spiritually.

## ***Understand the Gospel***

Your first task and responsibility, therefore, is to evangelize the children who are not saved, and we will look at this responsibility in the next few chapters.

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us, as His disciples, to “*preach the Gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16 v15) and that includes the children.

But before we can obey that command to evangelize the children we must understand what the Gospel is. We cannot preach, or teach, that which we do not know and understand.

Evangelism involves the teaching of as much as possible of five areas of Bible truth.

### **➤ Teach about God - the source of salvation**

We need to teach about His Character (Who He is, and what He is like) and His work (what He has done). An understanding of sin and the need of salvation begins with a clear understanding of God. We need to emphasize:

- ✓ God is the Creator (Acts 17: 23-29)  
Therefore the children have a responsibility towards Him.
- ✓ God has spoken to man through the Bible (1 Corinthians 15 v3, 4).  
Therefore the children should listen to God’s Word.
- ✓ God is holy and just (Acts 17 v31).  
Therefore He must judge sin.
- ✓ God is good and gracious, loving and merciful (John 3 v16).  
Therefore He has provided the answer to the children’s need.

The holiness of God makes salvation necessary; the love of God makes salvation possible. We should always teach these truths in biblical balance.

### **➤ Teach about sin - the need of salvation**

- ✓ We need to teach about the sinfulness of the human heart.
- ✓ We need to explain what sin is, and that all are sinners before a holy God.
- ✓ We need to teach the consequences of sin.
- ✓ We need to emphasize:

- Sin is against God (Psalm 51 v4). It is the transgression of His Law (1 John 3 v4).
- All are sinners by nature (Ephesians 2 v3) and by act (Romans 3 v23).
- Sin deserves punishment and everlasting separation from God (Romans 1 v18).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin. We need to pray that He will do this work in the hearts and lives of those children whom we teach.

➤ **Teach about Jesus Christ - the way of salvation**

- ✓ We need to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ; He is the One who saves.
- ✓ We need to teach about His Person (Who He is), and His Work (what He did).
- ✓ We need to emphasize:
  - He is God the Son, the Only Saviour (Acts 9 v20).
  - His death: its meaning and importance, and its sufficiency to atone for sin (Acts 2 v23; 33; 38).
  - His resurrection: He is a living Saviour (Acts 2 v24-32).
  - His exaltation: He is Lord of all (Acts 2 v33-36).

Christ is the One Who must be believed in, or trusted personally, for salvation.

Teaching on His Person and His saving work should be closely linked when presenting the Gospel.

➤ **Teach about repentance and faith - the appropriation of salvation**

- ✓ The invitation to come to Christ is an essential part of the Gospel (John 6 v37; Revelation 22 v17).
- ✓ We need to pray for an immediate, present trust in Christ.
- ✓ We need to emphasize:
  - Christ's invitation **to come** to Him (Matthew 11 v28).
  - The need **to turn** from sin to God (Acts 2 v38; Acts 20 v21).
  - The need **to trust** the Lord Jesus Christ, and to submit to Him in obedience (Acts 16 v31; Romans 10 v9,13).

Both repentance and faith involve a three-fold response to Christ's

invitation - a response of mind, heart and will (Romans 6 v17).

➤ **Teach about the results of salvation**

We need to let the children know what will happen if, and when, they trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour:

- ✓ All their sin will be forgiven. They will be justified (Acts 13 v38,39).
- ✓ They will be regenerated and receive a new nature (John 3 v3-8), and God will expect to see a real change in their lives (Acts 26 v20).
- ✓ They will receive eternal life (John 3 v16).
- ✓ They will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2 v38).

Three things need to be remembered by the teaching evangelist:

- It is not necessary for the child to understand all the gospel truths outlined above to be saved. God is sovereign. Sometimes He regenerates on the basis of much truth and much understanding. Sometimes He regenerates on the basis of little truth and little understanding.
- It is not possible, or necessary, to try to teach, or even include, all the above truths in any Bible lesson. The apostles certainly did not. It is better to teach less, and to teach it more thoroughly. However, we should endeavour to teach **all** of them over a period of time
- The passage being taught will primarily determine which gospel truth(s) should be taught. But you need to know what to look for. That is why the above outline is so important.  
You might find it helpful and, for the moment, easier to remember this brief summary of the gospel message:
- You **need** to be saved
  - ✓ Because God is holy and cannot allow sin into Heaven.
  - ✓ Because you are a sinner.
- You **can** be saved
  - ✓ Because Jesus Christ took the punishment for your sin.
  - ✓ Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.
- You **will** be saved
  - ✓ If you turn from your sin.
  - ✓ If you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.
- When you **are** saved



- ✓ All your sin will be forgiven – past, present and future.
- ✓ You will be a “new creature”, and will start a new life.

### ***Realise the Power of the Gospel***

God has provided us with a message which, when taught and explained to children, has, through the Holy Spirit, real life-changing power.

The power is not in us. It does not depend primarily upon our experience, our training or our ability. The power is in the message we proclaim. The Holy Spirit uses that message to speak to the children’s hearts, to convict them of sin, to give them a desire to turn from their sin; and, on the basis of that message, He regenerates them, as they trust Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus told His disciples in Mark 16 v15 to “*go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*” they must have felt very inadequate. They had no Bible school education or missionary training. By profession several were fishermen and one a tax collector. They had all kinds of personal doubts and problems. But they did what they were told. They had no gimmicks or special techniques. They just obeyed their Master and PREACHED THE GOSPEL everywhere they had the opportunity.

What happened? One onlooker said they “*have turned the world upside down*” (Acts 17 v6), and that they had “*filled Jerusalem with their doctrine*” (Acts 5 v28). Thousands of people were converted; churches sprang up all over the known world; lives, cities and even nations were transformed; and Christianity grew and spread until it eventually became what it is today.

And this was all because a handful of unlearned, inexperienced, doubting, hesitant men preached the Gospel as simply and as clearly as they could. **And from this we learn that the power was, and is, in the message and not the messengers.**

Isn’t it encouraging to realise that God used people like them in such a wonderful way? That means He can use you and me also, as we bring the same message to the boys and girls – no matter how nervous or inexperienced we are. God uses people like us to accomplish His purposes so that He receives the glory and not us.

*“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and*

*the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1 v26-29).*

Paul describes the Gospel of Christ as *“the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes”* (Romans 1 v16). And he writes again in 1 Corinthians 1 v18:

*“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

It is therefore vital that you preach and teach the Gospel to unsaved children, that you never subtract from it, or add to it, and that you never substitute any alternatives for it.

### **Depend Upon the Holy Spirit**

As Paul looked back upon his ministry in Thessalonica he wrote:

*“For our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also **in power, and in the Holy Spirit** and in much assurance”* (1 Thessalonians 1 v5a).

His Gospel **did** come in words, and it **was** spoken. But it also came in power and in the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, we need to pray that the Holy Spirit will do His work as we teach His Word; and we need to depend upon Him to do so.

His Work is seven-fold:

- It is He Who gives to us, in preparation for our ministry, **the gift of teaching**. Teaching according to Ephesians 5 v11; Romans 12 v7 and 1 Corinthians 12 v13 is one of the gifts of the Spirit.

- It is He Who, as we prepare, helps us to **understand** the Word of God of which He was the author.

*“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He **will guide you** into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come”* (John 16 v13).

- It is He Who, as we prepare, gives us the **wisdom** to know what to teach the children in the light of their needs.

*“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, **full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom**, whom we may appoint over this business”* (Acts 6 v3).

- It is He Who, as we teach, gives us utterance and freedom of speech, helping us to know what to say and what not to say; and He gives

power and authority in saying it.

*“But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1 v8).*

- It is He Who gives understanding to the children who listen, and convicts them of sin.

*“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will **convict** the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16 v7-11).*

- It is He Who regenerates dead children, leading them to repentance and faith.

*“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born** of water and **the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3 v5).*

- It is He Who indwells the saved children, gives them understanding, assurance and strength and helps them to grow.

*“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever; the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14 v16, 17).*

*“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8 v16).*

## Chapter 7: Start Fishing *How Do I Evangelize Children?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

(You are called to “fish” children with the Gospel.)

- **What does it mean to fish?** To fish children means to evangelize them, to reach them, and to “catch them” with the Gospel.
- **Who are the fish?** They are the boys and girls.
- **Who are the fishermen?** You and I are the ones to fish for children.
- **Where do we fish?** Anywhere – but especially where there are lots of fish.
- **What do we fish with?** Our equipment is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- **How do we fish?**
  - ✓ Teach the Gospel to the children.
  - ✓ Challenge them to respond (without any pressure).
  - ✓ Make yourself available to children who want help.
  - ✓ Counsel children who come to you.
- **Be sure to follow the Saviour in all you do.**

He said, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*”

**W**hen the Lord Jesus called Simon Peter into His service He commanded him and his brother Andrew “*Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men*” (Matthew 4 v19). In the years that followed, and especially in the period from Pentecost onwards, Peter became a great fisherman. He no longer caught fish; he caught men, and women, and boys and girls. His greatest “catch” was on the day of Pentecost when he “caught” 3,000 fish (Acts 2 v41).

Now that you understand the spiritual needs of the children, and you know the message of salvation which can meet their needs, it is

essential that you apply that message to the children's needs, and that you go ahead and evangelize them, using that message. In other words, you need to start "fishing". It is not enough for a fisherman to know everything about the fish, and to know everything about bait and hooks and the best methods to catch the fish. He needs to start fishing!

In this chapter we will put together a simple manual for fishermen; a manual for those who want to start fishing for children. And we will do so by comparing the work of a fisherman in the world, and a fisherman in God's work among children. Consequently, we will ask and answer a number of questions about FISHING!

### **What Is Fishing?**

*The purpose of a fisherman is to catch fish. Fish don't jump into the boat. He has to catch them. A fisherman is never truly satisfied if he does not "land" any fish. But he knows that to be successful he needs to prepare his equipment, he needs to work hard, he needs to be patient and there are times when he needs to get on with his pastime, or work, when people don't understand him and what he wants to do.*

The first and primary purpose of a children's worker and teacher is to "catch" children. The children don't "jump into the boat". The task of the children's evangelist is to go out after them, and "catch them".

Children's evangelists are fishers; they are "catchers" of the souls of boys and girls, and their goal is to bring them savingly to Jesus Christ – *"to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God"* (Acts 26 v18).

This is a task which also requires:

- Much preparation before we start.
- Hard work when we do start.
- Patience to wait, eagerly, for results. A fisherman may work a long time without visible results; but he perseveres and keeps going.
- Courage to withstand the criticism of others.

## **Who Are the Fish?**

*A good fisherman needs to know as much as he can about the fish he wants to catch – about their habits, and their likes and dislikes. He needs to focus on them, and study them very carefully, and with great detail.*

The fish we want to catch are the boys and girls and the waters are full of them. We need to study them, to know their needs (spiritual and otherwise), and we need to understand what they will listen to, and what they won't listen to. Above all, we need to focus on them. If we spread our aims, and our goals, too wide, we will catch nothing.

## **Who Are the Fishermen?**

*Not everyone in this world is a fisherman. But there are many people (both men and women) who like to fish. For many of them it is a hobby or pastime; for others it is a business.*

Not every Christian is called to fish for boys and girls. But there are many, like you and me, who feel that this is a work God has called us to do.

- Some of us fish on a part-time voluntary basis. We have also our secular jobs which bring us an income, and in which we spend most of our time. But we do have several hours each week to devote to fishing for children:
  - ✓ We may be parents fishing in our own homes
  - ✓ We may be teachers fishing in a Sunday School class
  - ✓ We may be teachers fishing in a Good News Club
  - ✓ We may be summer missionaries fishing in the open air
  - ✓ We may be pastors fishing in our Sunday morning talks to the children in our church
- Some of us are called to be full-time “professional” fishermen of children, and in this capacity we ourselves spend much time fishing. But we also conduct training classes and write books (on the basis of what we have learned) to help others know how to fish.

Anyone can be a fisherman of children, if God guides them in this way, and if they are willing to learn.

### **Where Do We Fish?**

*A fisherman will only fish in waters where there are fish! If there are no fish there is no point in fishing. And he will always be attracted to waters where there are lots of fish! He will be especially interested in waters where the fish are both plentiful and hungry enough to rise to the bait. When he finds a good fishing spot and the fish are hungry and really biting, he stays there, and keeps fishing.*

Where do we as fisherman find the boys and girls we want to fish? In one sense they are everywhere. There is no problem in finding boys and girls.

- Fish can be caught by parents in their own homes
- Fish can be caught in the church by Sunday School teachers and pastors.
- Fish can be caught in the neighbourhood Good News Club

Then there are some places where the fish can be found in larger quantities and the “fisherman” will be especially attracted to go there.

- And so the children’s evangelist goes out into the open air where the fish are plentiful and starts fishing:

One of the great advantages for the fisherman who fishes for boys and girls is that so many of them are open to, and ready for, him and his net! This is why the evangelism of children makes sense! The waters are full of fish ready to bite! It is a fisherman’s paradise! It is good for the fisherman to stay in a place like this – and keep fishing!

### **What Does the Fisherman Use?**

*Some fishermen use lines with bait to catch individual fish (and he catches them one at a time); others use nets to catch larger quantities of fish. When he uses bait it must be bait which attracts the fish. In both cases the fishermen need to know and prepare their equipment thoroughly – and they also need to be sure that it is of the highest standard possible. If the lines and nets are of poor quality the result will be failure.*

The man or woman who fishes for children also needs “equipment”. His equipment is the Gospel of Jesus Christ – whether he is fishing for individual children (who are caught one at a time) or directing his

fishing towards a group. The Gospel is both line and net.

The Lord Jesus said that *“The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind”* (Matthew 13 v47).

Every children’s worker needs to keep examining his net (or line) to be sure that the net he is using to fish is the right one and in good shape. So he needs continually to remind himself of the gospel message, the message of salvation with which he is hoping to “catch” the children; (the message we looked at and outlined in the previous chapter).

- The children must know that they **need to be saved**:
  - ✓ Because they are sinners.
  - ✓ Because God is holy and there is no sin in Heaven.
 They also must know that they cannot save themselves by being good or in any other way, and that they cannot be saved through the church, their pastor or priest, or through baptism.
- The children must know that they **can be saved**:
  - ✓ Because Jesus Christ died on the Cross and took God’s punishment for sin.
  - ✓ Because Jesus Christ is alive and able to save them no matter how bad they have been.
- The children must know that they **will be saved**:
  - ✓ If they are willing to turn from their sin.
  - ✓ If they put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The children must know what will happen **when they are saved**:
  - ✓ All their sins will be forgiven – past, present and future.
  - ✓ They will be “new creatures” and will start a new life.

A good fisherman knows his limitations, and of course, will not try to teach everything at once. But his goal is that every child with whom he comes into contact will understand this wonderful gospel message. But he must be sure that his line and his net are in good working order. That is his responsibility.

Also a good fisherman will use “bait” which will attract the children. He wants the children to come and listen to his message. So he will try to make his presentation as interesting and as attractive as possible.



### ***How Does the Fisherman Fish?***

*It is not enough for a fisherman to have a good net or a good line. No matter how well equipped he is, he will never catch fish if he does not know how to use what he has got – and if he does not go ahead and use it.*

The children's evangelist who has a clear view of the gospel message, and understands what he is to teach the children, must know how to present this message, and what he needs to do, so as to "catch the fish".

There are several simple rules for him to follow, and these will be examined in much more detail in the second section of this book:

- You need to teach the gospel message to the unsaved children:
  - ✓ The best place to do this is during your Bible lesson. Teach the central truth of the passage to the children by weaving it into your Bible story; and then apply it to the unsaved children to show them how to be saved (see page 151 onwards for more information on how to do this).
  - ✓ You can also teach other parts of the message of salvation through the choruses you sing, through the Bible verses which the children learn, and through any doctrinal lessons you teach.

It is important that you **teach** the gospel message as thoroughly and as simply as you can – so that the children will understand it.

- At the same time, you need to challenge the children to respond to what you have taught; and you need to invite them to come to Jesus Christ, and trust Him as their Saviour and Lord:
  - ✓ Your challenge or invitation should be clear and direct. The children should know what they need to do to be saved; and you should challenge them to act upon what they know – and trust the Lord Jesus today.
  - ✓ But you should never put any pressure upon the children to respond. It is enough to close your lesson with words like the following:  
*“And so Zacchaeus came to the Lord Jesus when He called him to do so, and that day he was saved. His sins were forgiven and he was a different person.*

*The Lord Jesus is calling you to come to Him. You cannot come to Him physically (with your body) but you can come to Him in your heart and you can ask Him to save you – even right now as you sit there.*

*He promises that He will receive you and not turn you away (John 6 v37). Why not come to Him today? He will receive you and save you if you ask Him. I trust you will do so today.*

*Let's close our meeting with prayer.*

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*I pray that some boys or girls in our meeting will come to the Lord Jesus today, even right now, and ask Him to save them.*

*Amen."*

- ✓ You should **not** ask the children for any physical response such as:

*"Raise your hand".*

*"Stand up".*

*"Come to the front".*

There are several dangers if you do this:

- Some children will make such a physical response because they see others do it.
- Some children might feel that this kind of physical response is what saves them.
- A request for a physical response like this can put pressure upon children to respond, especially if it is prolonged, or given emotionally.
- ✓ The openness of your children to the Gospel – which is normal, and indeed biblical, has, as we have already seen, both advantages and disadvantages:
  - The advantages are that they are open to our message, and as the Holy Spirit works in their hearts they find it reasonably simple to respond to it. (Of course they also find it simple to respond to other messages as well).
  - The disadvantage is that they may respond, humanly speaking, to you and your personality, without responding in their hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit. This is a

purely human response which does not save, and indeed can result in them thinking they are saved, and becoming more difficult to reach with the Gospel.

- You need to make yourself available to unsaved children who have questions, or who need personal help in knowing how to trust Christ. I deal with this in detail in chapter 26.

You could for example say to the children:

*“If there is a boy or girl who has never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and would like to – but is not yet sure how to – I would be glad to speak with you and help you after the meeting. When the other boys and girls are leaving after the meeting just come to me and let me know if you would like to speak with me. I will be standing here beside the flannel board. I will then try to help you know how to trust the Lord Jesus.”*

This opens the door for children who need help, and it does not put any pressure on them. They can come if they wish. But you must be sure that you are available to them after the meeting, and that the concerned child knows where to go if he wants to speak with you.

- When a child comes to you, take time to counsel him thoroughly. I have outlined how to do this in chapter 27.
- When the fish has been caught – whether he trusts Jesus Christ on his own during your meeting, or at home or elsewhere, or whether you lead him to Christ in your counselling session – you are now responsible to feed him and help him to grow in his Christian life (see chapter 9 for more details on how to do this).

This is the major difference between a fisherman fishing for fish, and a children’s evangelist fishing for children. When the fisherman catches a fish, he kills it and eats it. When the children’s evangelist catches a fish, he feeds it and helps it to grow!

### ***Use the Wordless Book***

One of the most effective tools used by “fishers of children” in their ministry of evangelism is the Wordless Book. Children’s evangelists have found the Wordless Book to be an interesting, helpful and attractive way to present the gospel to children, and in our next chapter I will explain to you how you can use this little book in your “fishing ministry” to evangelize

boys and girls.

### ***“Follow Me”***

As we think back to our original text in Matthew 4 v19 we remember that there is a condition to be fulfilled by all fishermen – if they are going to be blessed and helped in their ministry:

*“Follow Me”, the Lord Jesus said, “And I will make you fishers of men” (or boys and girls).*

Our duty and responsibility is first and foremost to **follow Him**:

- We should model our lives and ministry on His life and ministry. He is our example.
- We should ensure that the content and method of our preaching and teaching are similar to His.
- We should follow Him in whichever direction He leads.
- We should keep in close contact with Him, as we follow Him, and enjoy fellowship with Him.
- We should ask Him, as our leader, to grant us the help and wisdom we need.

Then to those who fulfil this duty, responsibility and condition to follow Him, He promises that He will make them *“fishers of men”*. He is the One Who gives the ability to fish and the results. Our task is to “follow Him”.

## Chapter 8:

### The Book Without Words

#### *How Can I Use the Wordless Book?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(The Wordless Book can be a real help in your evangelism.)*

- **What is the Wordless Book?** A book with five pages of different colours and no words.
- **What do the colours represent?**
  - ✓ Gold page speaks about God
  - ✓ Dark page speaks about sin
  - ✓ Red page speaks about the Death of Jesus Christ
  - ✓ White page speaks about salvation
  - ✓ Green page speaks about Christian growth
- **What should you say?**  
Explain each colour thoroughly
- **When should you use the Wordless Book?**
  - ✓ For a brief gospel presentation
  - ✓ To illustrate a gospel truth in your Bible lesson
  - ✓ To use when counselling a child

**I** have found the Wordless Book to be a tremendous help in my evangelism of children, and many others have also found this to be true.

#### ***What Is the Wordless Book?***

The Wordless Book is a book without words. It has a green cover and inside there are four pages, or double pages. These pages are gold, black, red and white. To make a Wordless Book you will need five pieces of coloured paper – green, gold, black, red and white. Each piece should be approximately 15 cm x 6cm. Fold all five pieces in two. The green paper is the cover. Stick one half of the gold page to the first inside half of the green cover, and then the second half of the gold page to the first half of

the black page – and so on, finishing by sticking the second half of the white page to the inside of the second half of the green cover.

Each colour represents a group of gospel truths, and should be shown to the children as you speak about the truths, or any truth, from that group.

This little book has proved to be a very effective way to help preach and teach the gospel message:

- The gold page speaks about God and His holiness.
- The black, or dark, page speaks about sin and its consequences.
- The red page speaks about Jesus Christ, and His death for sin.
- The white page speaks about salvation – especially about justification.
- The green cover speaks about spiritual growth after salvation.

You can carry this little book in your pocket or handbag so that you can use it at any time when the opportunity arises; or you can keep it in a little pocket specially made for it, and attached to the inside of the back cover of your Bible.

### ***What Do the Colours Represent?***

#### ➤ **The gold page speaks about God:**

*“And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!’ (Isaiah 6 v3):*

There are two ways you could explain and use this colour in your presentation:

- ✓ By comparing the gold page to the metal gold (as follows).
  - God created and owns the world (gold speaks about wealth).
  - He is the King of Kings (gold speaks about thrones and crowns).
  - He is pure and holy (gold is a metal with all the impurities removed).
  - He lives in Heaven (the street of Heaven is pictured in the Bible as being of gold).
- ✓ By comparing the gold page to light, to golden blazing sunshine as a picture of the “brightness” and goodness and holiness of God. This would then be in stark contrast to the dark page

which follows.

You should choose which method to use. The first is more comprehensive; the second more simple.

➤ **The dark page speaks about sin:**

*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3 v23)

(Don’t use the word “black”. The Bible speaks about sin as darkness (John 3 v19; Colossians 1 v13; 1 Peter 2 v9; 1 John 1 v6) and does not use the word “black”. Also, if you use the latter word you may offend listeners who have black skins).

✓ Sin is disobeying God and His commands.

✓ God is just and must punish our sin.

➤ **The red page speaks about the Precious Blood of Christ:**

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him”* (Romans 5 v8, 9).

✓ God loved each of us so much that He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to this earth to be our Saviour.

✓ He died to save us from our sins.

✓ He took God’s punishment for all the wrong things we have done.

➤ **The white page speaks about justification and the imputed righteousness of Christ:**

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5 v21).

(It is biblical and correct to use the word “white” with regard to salvation and the righteousness of Christ (Psalm 51 v7; Isaiah 1 v18; Daniel 12 v10; Revelation 3 v4; Revelation 7 v14). )

✓ When we trust Jesus Christ as our Saviour, God forgives all our sins.

✓ He also sees us as pure and as clean as Jesus Christ.

➤ **The green cover speaks about growth:**

*“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”* (2 Peter 3 v18).

✓ The grass, flowers and trees all grow. And so God expects

and wants the children who have trusted Christ to grow spiritually.

- ✓ As these children read, study and obey the Word of God they will grow.

### **What Should You Say When You Use the Wordless Book?**

You could use the following outline as a basis for your use and presentation of the Wordless Book when evangelizing children.

#### **Gold Page**

*“Do you believe there is a God? Of course you do. When you look around and see all the wonders and beauties of nature you know that they did not just happen. Someone made them, and that Someone is God.”*

*“Do you know what God is like? The Bible is God’s Word and it tells us what God is like. The most important truth about God is that He is holy. What does that mean? He is completely pure and completely without sin. When I look at this gold page I think of the metal gold. Gold is not just a very precious metal; it is also very pure. It has been heated and heated, until all that is not pure has been removed from it. So, in a little way, this gold page reminds us of God Who is pure, holy and without sin. The Bible says, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts’ (Isaiah 6 v3). The gold page also reminds us of Heaven where God lives, and where there is no sin. The Bible says that the heavenly city, and the street of that city, are ‘pure gold as it were transparent glass.’”*

*“But God is also just. This means that He is fair and that He must punish sin. He cannot close His eyes to it nor turn His back on it.”*

#### **Dark Page**

*“This second page is a picture, not of God, but of ourselves. We were all born with dark sinful hearts, and because of that we find it so easy to do things which are wrong. The Bible says that ‘all have sinned and come short of the glory of God’ (Romans 3 v23). God in His Word has given us a number of commands such as ‘honour and obey your father and mother’; ‘do not steal’; ‘do not tell lies’; ‘do not worship anyone else or anything else except God.’ But as we read*



*these commands we know that we have broken them or disobeyed them – or at least some of them. That means we have sinned. God is holy. There is no sin in His Presence. Therefore we cannot go to heaven to be with Him when we die, unless our sin is forgiven.”*

*“God is also just and fair. This means that He must punish our sin – unless someone else takes our place and takes our punishment instead of us.”*

### **Red Page**

*“This red page reminds me of Someone Who did take our place, and Who did take the punishment for our sin. That Someone is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God the Son. God the Father loved us so much that He sent His Son to this earth, almost 2,000 years ago, to live for 33 years and then to die on the Cross for us and for our sin. That is why this page is red. On the Cross the Lord Jesus Christ was punished by God the Father – not for His sin (because He never sinned) but for our sin – so that we would not be punished for it. He poured out His Precious Blood for us. The Bible says that, ‘While we were yet sinners Christ died for us’ (Romans 5 v8). Oh how much He must have loved us!”*

*“But He did not stay dead. After three days He rose from the dead, and He is alive for evermore. Forty days later He went back to Heaven, and today He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And He wants to be your Saviour and your Lord.”*

### **White Page**

*“Isn’t that a nice page? It is very different from the dark page, isn’t it?”*

*“The Lord Jesus died for you and He wants to save you so that you won’t be punished for your sins, and so that you will be changed and begin a new life. But there is something you need to do to be saved.”*

*“Do you know right down in your heart that you have sinned? Do you really want to be saved? Do you want to be different? The Bible says ‘Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved’ (Romans 10 v13).”*

*“Let me tell you a story. Tim was on holiday. He loved the beach, he loved the ocean and he loved to swim. While his daddy sat and*

*nodded sleepily on the beach, Tim went in for a swim. But he went out too far. The water got deeper and deeper. His feet could not touch the bottom. He became afraid and he felt he was going to drown.”*

*“What do you think he did? What would you have done? He called to his father, “Daddy, save me!” And his father rushed in and saved his son from drowning.”*

*“The Bible says that a child who knows he is a sinner, and wants to be saved should call to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to save him. If you call Him and ask Him to save you He will do so - not from drowning - but from sin, so that you will not be separated from God. And if you call today, in your heart, to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to save you, the Bible promises that He will do so - immediately!”*

*“If you would like to be saved, but you are still not sure how to be, I would be glad to talk with you afterwards and show you more clearly what you need to do. When the meeting is over just remain seated and I will come over and speak with you.”*

*“Do you really want to be saved? Do you want to have your sins forgiven? Do you want to be changed and start living a life which pleases God? If so, why not speak to the Lord Jesus in your heart, even as you sit there? You do not need to speak out loud. Just call to Him and ask Him to save you and He will. He has promised that “whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved” - and He always keeps His promises!”*

*“If you do that God will see you as clean and as pure as the Lord Jesus Himself. You will be like this white page in God’s sight. All your sin will be forgiven for ever, you will start a new life, and you will be sure of going to Heaven when you die. Don’t wait - do it today.”*

## **Green Page**

This page can be used later to show the saved child how he can grow (1 Peter 2 v2) and how he can become more and more like the Lord Jesus.

*“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may **grow** thereby” (1 Peter 2 v2).*

- He will grow by reading and obeying his Bible.
- He will grow by talking to God on a regular basis.
- He will grow by telling others that he has trusted the Lord Jesus.

- He will grow by confessing his sin to God, if he has done something wrong. He does not need to be saved again.
- He will grow by meeting regularly with other Christians, and by attending a good church.

### ***When Should You Use the Wordless Book?***

Once you understand the “message” of the Wordless Book you are ready to use it in one of three ways:

- If you have a relatively brief time (e.g. ten minutes) to give a children’s talk in a church service, or elsewhere, you can use the Wordless Book – all five pages – to give a short, simple and logical presentation of the Gospel.
- If you are teaching a Bible lesson you can use the Wordless Book, here and there, to explain what you are teaching. The emphasis here is not on the Wordless Book but on your Bible lesson. You are only using the Wordless Book to give a clearer description of some of the things you are teaching. It can be very helpful when used in this way to explain the gospel message.
- If you are counselling an unsaved child and seeking to lead him to Christ, you can use the Wordless Book in the early part of your counselling procedure – especially to give a clear, simple and brief presentation of the Gospel, and to ensure that the child understands the Gospel. But you should use the Bible, and especially a Bible verse, when leading the child to Christ.

## Chapter 9: Feed Them

### *How Can I Help Saved Children to Grow?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Your second responsibility is to help saved children to grow.)*

- **Six basic principles to understand.**
- **Accept as a Christian the child who has professed to trust Christ.**
- **Watch and pray for the fruit of the Spirit in his life:**
  - ✓ If he is saved there will be some evidence – even if it is a little change.
  - ✓ Rejoice if you see it.
  - ✓ Find the problem if you don't see it.
- **Understand the saved children's needs.**
- **Teach the saved children what they should do:**
  - ✓ to eat
  - ✓ to walk
  - ✓ to talk
  - ✓ to obey

**I**t is essential that you evangelize the children who have not yet trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. But that is only one part of your ministry, and only one of your responsibilities. There will also, probably, be in your class some children who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and your second responsibility is to feed them spiritually, in every class programme, so that they will grow spiritually. The command of the Lord Jesus is “*Feed My lambs*” (John 21 v15). Peter in his first letter recommends the sincere milk of the Word to those who have trusted Christ, so that they might grow:

*“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2 v2).

But it is your job to prepare this milk and to give it to them. You must

feed the child with the milk and help him to grow. If he is not fed he won't grow, and you may have a stunted baby showing little signs of new life.

When children have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour they are born again and they start a new life. God now wants them to grow spiritually, but they won't do so if they are not fed. They need to be taught to eat, walk, talk and obey.

### **Six Basic Principles**

There are six basic principles concerning your follow-up ministry to saved children which you need to understand:

#### **Follow-up Work Is Biblical**

Jesus Christ gave His disciples, and us, a command to "*preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16 v15). But He also gave us a second command:

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28 v19, 20).

This second part of His last and great commission emphasizes the importance and necessity of follow-up work. He, in His ministry, set us a good example, because He spent much of His time following up, teaching and helping the little group of men who were His disciples to grow. Paul also in his ministry devoted himself, not only to evangelism, but also to the edification and teaching of those he had led to Christ.

#### **Conversion Is Just the Beginning**

When a child trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour it is not the end, but rather the beginning. His new life has just begun. You and I still have a great responsibility towards the child – to teach him and help him in his Christian life. If the saved children are not helped and taught, they will generally not grow, but remain "babes in Christ". Also, they often find it difficult to feed themselves, because their reading ability and powers of concentration are limited, and because they do not have access to as many sources of help as adults do.

This therefore places a great responsibility upon you as the child's

teacher, shepherd and guide to feed him and help him as often as you have opportunity and, as you prepare your weekly programme, you need to keep him and his needs in mind. The Bible makes it clear, over and over again, that spiritual growth comes from, and depends upon, the teaching and absorption of Scripture.

### **Without Follow-up Work the Children Will Not Grow**

Follow-up work is essential if the saved children are to grow in the Christian life.

Evangelism among children has often been criticized because there has been little or no follow-up work. Each children's worker should therefore seek to follow up every saved child as well and as thoroughly as possible.

### **All Follow-up Work Is Dependent Upon God**

The Apostle Paul wrote:

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase**. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who **gives the increase**" (1 Corinthians 3 v6, 7).*

Follow-up work is first and foremost God's work. He alone can make a saved child grow in grace. This is His work and we are simply workers together with Him (2 Corinthians 6 v1).

### **You Do Have a Responsibility**

But God uses people to accomplish His purposes. You are one of those people. God wants you to feed the saved children in your class or group so that they will grow.

Consequently, every week you should ask yourself this question:

"Have I given my saved children spiritual food to help them in their Christian lives?"

Your main tool in the feeding process is the Word of God. Children may not be able to read it for a long time, or with great concentration, but they will listen to a capable teacher expounding it.

*"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17 v17).*

*"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2 v2).*

The main place in your teaching programme to give this spiritual

food is, of course, in your Bible lesson. But you can also feed these children in one or all of the following ways:

- By teaching a short, separate doctrinal lesson.
- By teaching about missions and witnessing.
- By encouraging them to learn Bible verses.
- By showing them how to pray publicly (and privately).
- By teaching them the value and necessity of a daily Quiet Time.

### **What Do They Especially Need to Know?**

The truths which saved children need to know and to be taught include the following:

- The assurance of salvation.
- The inspiration of the Bible, and the importance of reading it every day.
- The importance of prayer as a practice.
- An understanding of basic Bible doctrines.
- The need to consecrate their lives to Jesus Christ, and submit to His Lordship.
- An outline of Christian conduct, and what God expects from them.
- How to handle sin in their lives and overcome it.
- How to witness to others.
- The importance of obeying parents.
- The need to attend church and Sunday School.

Having outlined and understood the six basic principles we need to study some of the steps we need to take in our follow-up ministry.

### ***Accept as a Christian the Child Who Has Professed to Trust Christ***

If the child seems to have truly received Christ, accept him as a born-again Christian, unless later events prove otherwise. Our legal system says that a man on trial is innocent until he is proven guilty. So it is with your approach to the child convert. He should be regarded as a Christian, unless, or until, he shows conclusively that he is not. It would seem that the early church accepted as born-again believers those who professed faith in Christ (see Acts 2 v41; 16 v33). The other alternative is to doubt his salvation,

until he has passed through a trial period. Unfortunately, such an attitude, which tends to be critical and unsympathetic, communicates itself easily to the child and discourages him. It is difficult for him to grow spiritually in an atmosphere of doubt.

On the other hand, you do not want to encourage a child to believe that he is born-again if, in actual fact, he is not. Only God knows. But the new birth will become evident in the process of time through what the child says, what he does and what he is. Meanwhile, unless his life shows otherwise, you should accept him for what he claims to be.

### ***Watch and Pray for the Fruit of the Spirit in His Life***

You must not watch the child critically, ready to blame him when he does something wrong. If he is really born again, there WILL be a change in his life. This change may be small, and it may be slow in coming, but it should be there.

*“Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7 v20).*

*“Therefore, if anyone (or any child) is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5 v17).*

There are three important guidelines to follow:

#### **➤ Do not expect too much from the child who has received Christ**

Many teachers make a mistake here. They expect saved children to become similar to mature adult Christians immediately, and are disappointed when they don't. They see children, whom they have led to Christ, do things which are wrong, and their immediate reaction is to think that they are not saved at all. A lady once said to me, “I have a young girl in my Sunday School class who says she is a Christian but she is not.” I asked her how she knew. “Because she has a very bad temper”, was her answer. I asked her if the same reasoning applied to adults!

You should not expect too much from the saved child, and you should not expect him to behave like an adult. You cannot judge him by your own standards, or expect old heads on young shoulders. If a boy, who was the greatest mischief-maker in the children's meeting, trusted Christ, it does not mean that he will be an angelic being from now on, with no more mischievous tendencies. When he does something wrong, when he loses his



temper, when he uses a swear word or tells a lie, you should not automatically come to the conclusion that he is not a Christian. You must not judge a child's conversion just on those grounds. There are at least three ways in which a saved child is different from an adult believer:

- ✓ A child is very much under the influence of his family and friends:

The child comes to Good News Club, or Sunday School, for one hour each week, but he is at home for a much longer time. When you hear a child who has come to Christ using bad language, for example, you need to remember that this may have been the kind of language he has heard at home for years.

- ✓ A child is under the authority of his parents:

An adult can choose where he wants to go and what he wants to do. A child cannot do so. For example, a child who has trusted Christ in Good News Club may not be allowed to come back again. A child who has received his first Bible correspondence course may be prevented from sending it back again.

Incidentally, this emphasizes the importance of establishing, where possible, good contact with the child's family.

- ✓ A child's emotions are on the surface.

The child "wears his heart on his sleeve". He is not able to hide his feelings like an adult. For example, if he feels like striking another child, he probably will; or if he feels like displaying anger, he probably will. He is not able to exercise self-control in the way an adult can.

Therefore, a saved child will often say and do things which an adult believer would not say or do. This is not necessarily because the adult does not desire to do them; it is because he has more self-control than the child. The adult is able to hide his feelings, choke back his words and stifle his anger, but the child often cannot, and does not do so.

➤ **If you see the fruit of the Spirit in his life - rejoice**

Galatians 5 v22 teaches that "*the fruit of the spirit is love ...*" This

fruit is the one you should look for, first of all, in the life of a child who has received Christ.

The child may show this fruit in different ways:

- ✓ Love for the Saviour - a desire to know more about Christ.
- ✓ Love for the Word of God - an interest in the Bible and the things of God.
- ✓ Love for prayer - a growing eagerness to talk to God in prayer.
- ✓ Love for other Christians - a desire to be with others who also love Christ.
- ✓ Love for the lost souls of others - a concern to see others come to Christ.

Or you may see a change in his conduct (be it ever so small) which would be in keeping with one or more of the other eight fruits of the Spirit (*joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance or self-control*).

If you see the child manifest love in one or more of the ways listed above, or if you see a change of any kind in his conduct, you can rejoice and be encouraged. Such fruit may be still quite small and immature, but it is **fruit** and could well be evidence of the new birth.

One or more of these fruits should appear in the young Christian's life at some time. It may be by a word, or a glance, or a tear, or a quiet attitude in the meeting, or it may be a few sincere words in conversation with you. But, if you watch carefully, new life, if it is there, will flicker through. This "flicker" may show itself in some little way, at first, and then increasingly later, if the teaching of, and care for, the child are persistent, intensive, kindly and well prepared.

When lighting a coal fire, you place paper in the fireplace, then wood, and then coal on the wood. You light the paper and leave the fire to ignite. The burning paper ignites the wood and that, in turn, causes the coal to burn. Thinking the fire is burning well, you attend to some other household task, but when next you look at the fire it appears to have gone out. All that you can see is black coal! You start to remove the unlit coal and wood to make a new beginning. Then you see, among the pieces of coal, a

little flicker, a little flame! It is not very much, but it is there! You do not need to start all over again! Instead, you need to encourage the flame so that it will grow. As the flame grows, the black coal disappears. If you only watch the black coal, you will become discouraged; but your task is to feed the flame so that it will grow, and this will, in turn, consume the coal.

So it is with saved children. You must not be discouraged by those parts of their lives (“the black coal”) which are not being conformed to Christ’s likeness. Seek to feed “the flame”. Encourage them in the positive Christian virtues which they are showing. In this way, the other parts of their lives will be changed too.

➤ **If there is no fruit in his life, find the problem**

If there is no change whatsoever in the child’s life after a period of time, speak personally with him, and find out what is wrong. There are several possible reasons for lack of fruit, and lack of growth, in the Christian life:

- ✓ Lack, or loss, of assurance of salvation.
- ✓ Some confusion, or incomplete understanding, concerning the step he has taken. Perhaps he is confused, for example, about the way of salvation, thinking that a person is saved by good works or by faith and good works, but not understanding that salvation is by faith alone. The person who led him to Christ may not have explained this simply and clearly enough.
- ✓ Wrong influences or pressures at home, at school, or from other boys and girls.
- ✓ Some sin in his Christian life, which he has not put right with the Lord.

If you find that any of these are true, take the child back to the Bible, and explain the answer to his problem, using appropriate Scriptures.

- ✓ Often, if a child who has received Christ is not growing spiritually, it is because of unconfessed sin. In this case, you should explain 1 John 1 v9 to the child, and allow him to pray, and confess his sin to the Lord, claiming His promise of forgiveness.

- ✓ Another reason for his lack of growth could be your failure to feed him and follow him up properly. You need to be sure you have not neglected him. If you feel this is the reason tell him so and apologise to him, and then determine to make a new beginning in your follow-up of the child.
- ✓ The other possibility for a lack of fruit and growth is that he was not saved at all.

If it is obvious that the child has not at all understood what he has done, and has not trusted Christ, tell him so, and then go over it all again simply and clearly until you are certain he understands. Then you can ask him if he now wishes to trust Christ. If so, you should lead him to Christ. There may be other reasons, apart from a lack of understanding, for a child professing to be saved when he is not. He may not have been sincere when someone tried to lead him to Christ, or he may have made an outward profession just to please someone or because he was simply curious. If you feel that any of these reasons are valid, and that his life seems to deny completely his acceptance of Christ, be ready to counsel him all over again. If he now sincerely wants to trust Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord, show him simply, step by step, how he can do so. You should, of course, only evangelize him and lead him to Christ if you are reasonably sure that he was not truly born again. Be careful, otherwise you may give the impression that he is to come back and get saved every time he has doubts, or has made mistakes.

If you are in doubt about what to do, it is best to encourage him to talk to Christ, and clear the matter up once and for all. Tell him that both you and he are not sure whether he is saved or not; and that it is better for him to tell the Lord Jesus that he is not sure if he is saved or not, and ask the Lord Jesus to save him now – if he is not saved.

### ***Understand the Needs of the Saved Child***

Instead of just simply **waiting** for the child to prove that he is a truly born-again Christian, you should understand that he has present needs and

you should seek to meet these needs now.

He needs:

- **Love.** Love is a language which is understood by all children. The saved child needs to know that you are truly interested in him, and that you want to see him grow in the Christian life.
- **Patience.** The saved child will make many mistakes, especially at the beginning of his Christian life. Be patient with him.
- **Understanding.** You need to understand that the child who has been saved is still a “babe in Christ”.
- **Spiritual food.** You have a responsibility to teach the Word of God to the saved child. This is his greatest need. Babies without food don’t grow. So, without spiritual food, he cannot grow in his Christian life.

### ***Teach the Saved Child the Four Things He Needs to Do***

A child who receives Christ is a newborn babe in Christ and needs, like any newborn babe, to learn how to do four things:

#### ➤ **To eat**

*“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2 v2).*

It is absolutely necessary for the child to eat – and the Word of God is his food. If he doesn’t eat he will starve and suffer. At first he will learn to drink (spiritual) milk (1 Peter 2 v2) and then he will learn to eat (spiritual) meat (Hebrews 5 v14).

- ✓ **He needs to “eat” with you.** At first he will depend, to a large extent, on your feeding him, and your teaching him from the Bible. Always include teaching for saved children in your Good News Club or Sunday School class. For example, the central truth of every Bible lesson should be applied to the saved children – if at all possible.

- ✓ **He needs to “eat” by himself.** He needs to be taught how to feed himself from the Bible. This means teaching him how to have his Quiet Time, and how to read his Bible for himself, every day.

#### ➤ **To walk**

*“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5 v25).*

*“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called”* (Ephesians 4 v1).

The Bible uses the word “walk” with reference to Christian living, and, just as a baby needs to learn to walk, so should the saved child learn to walk.

- ✓ **He needs to walk with God** (Colossians 1 v10). He needs to be taught Christian conduct, with reference to his duty to God. This includes teaching on reverence, obedience, faith and love to God.
- ✓ **He needs to walk before others** (Ephesians 4 v1). He needs to be taught Christian conduct with reference to his duty to others. This includes frequent teaching on the need to display the fruit of the Spirit in his Christian life as a witness to others (Galatians 5 v22,23).

We must remember, and we also need to remind the child, that it is not easy for a baby to learn to walk:

- he will stumble and fall
- he must keep trying
- he needs help
- he will gradually improve

#### ➤ **To talk**

Christian children need to learn how to talk and use their gift of speech in the correct way.

- ✓ **He needs to talk to God** (Matthew 7 v7). He needs to be taught how to talk to God in prayer. Just as parents love to hear their children talk, so does God, even though the child cannot say much, or say it very expertly. And he needs to understand that the best way to learn how to talk is to go ahead and do it.
- ✓ **He needs to talk to others** (Acts 1 v8). He needs to be taught how to talk to others about God. Children are the best children’s evangelists. They should be taught how to lead other children to Christ.

#### ➤ **To obey**

Over and over again the Bible teaches the importance of obedience and submission. *“To obey is better than sacrifice”* (1 Samuel 15 v22).

- ✓ **He needs to obey God** (Acts 5 v29). He needs to be taught

how to obey God. Teach the child that God speaks to him through the Bible, and that he should obey God's Word implicitly and completely.

- ✓ **He needs to obey his parents.** He needs to be taught to obey his parents, as commanded in Ephesians 6 v1 and in Colossians 3 v20. Paul stresses the importance of children obeying their parents. You should also stress it.

Remember, it takes a baby a long time to learn – both physically and spiritually. He does not become an adult instantaneously. Many mistakes will be made before he learns properly.

So be patient as you teach these truths to the child who has received Christ. Do not expect too much too soon. Growth takes time.

(I have outlined in much more detail how to follow up a saved child, and how to help him grow, in my book "*Growing Up*". Do feel free to write for a copy of this book – if you don't have one).

## Section II

### ACTION STATIONS

Having studied and understood the basic principles of a ministry to children, and having found the answers to all the relevant questions about these principles, we are now ready to look at what we should DO. Understanding comes first; but understanding needs to be followed by action.

In the chapters which follow we will try to answer the following questions:

- How can I plan my 60-minute teaching programme in the best possible way? (chapter 10)
- How can I best prepare for my meeting with the children? (chapter 11)
- How can I teach the children to sing? (chapter 12)
- How can I teach the children to pray? (chapter 13)
- How can I encourage the children to memorize Scripture? (chapter 14)
- How can I review what I have already taught? (chapter 15)
- What should be the basis, and main subject, of my teaching ministry? (chapter 16)
- What teaching plan should I follow? (chapter 17)
- How can I tell a Bible story? (chapter 18)
- How can I be a good teacher? (chapter 19)
- How can I teach a Bible lesson? (chapter 20)
- How do I find the central truth of the passage? (chapter 21)
- How can I teach the central truth of the passage? (chapter 22)
- How can I apply that central truth to the children? (chapter 23)
- What steps should I follow in the preparation of my Bible lesson? (chapter 24)



- How can I encourage the children to listen to my Bible lesson? (chapter 25)
- What does it mean to “make yourself available” to children? (chapter 26)
- How can I counsel an unsaved child and lead him to Christ? (chapter 27)
- How can I counsel saved children? (chapter 28)
- How can I teach Missions and Bible doctrines to children? (chapter 29)
- How can I use visual aids? (chapter 30)
- How can I have good discipline in my meeting? (chapter 31)
- How can I build up attendance in my meeting? (chapter 32)

## Chapter 10: Every Minute Counts *How Can I Plan My Teaching Programme?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need to plan, carefully and prayerfully, what you will do in your class.)*

- **Understand how to make your programme attractive.**
- **Understand what should be in your programme:**
  - ✓ Fixed items
    - Singing
    - Prayer
    - Memory verse
    - Review time
    - Bible lesson
    - Counselling time (if needed)
  - ✓ Flexible items
    - Missionary time
    - Doctrine
- **A typical programme**
- **Should you include handwork and games in your teaching programme?**

**W**e are now in a position to think more specifically about our actual teaching programme and its constituent parts. I will presume, as a basis, that you have a meeting, or class, which lasts for sixty minutes, and that you need to determine how to use **all** of this time in a way which will be of maximum spiritual benefit to all the children who come. Of course the length of your teaching programme will depend upon your circumstances. It might be longer or it might be shorter.

Remember that there are 168 hours in every week, and you just have

the children for one of those hours. So it is vital that you make use of every opportunity you have to help the children spiritually. This is not a time for games or handwork. These can be included when you have more time available – as in a camp or Holiday Bible School. But in your one-hour meeting the time is limited, and you want to use every minute of it profitably.

### ***The Features of an Attractive Programme***

There are several phrases which can be used to describe an effective and attractive teaching programme:

- It should be well planned.  
Your teaching programme is like a meal. It needs to be well prepared, and you need to “mix together” the different “ingredients” so that it will be interesting and eagerly “consumed”.  
You should plan your sixty minutes carefully, well in advance, and you should write your plan down clearly. Careful planning will achieve maximum effectiveness. You should refer to your plan throughout the hour. Also you should make a copy of your plan available to anyone who is helping you in your meeting.
- It should be smooth running.  
Your programme should move along smoothly. You need to move from one part to another without interruption. You should avoid long prayers and long detailed explanations.
- It should be interesting and relevant.  
The key to a good teaching programme is that the children are interested in every aspect of it. They will be especially interested when what is being presented, or taught, is relevant to their everyday lives.
- It should be varied.  
It is good to have a number of different activities in your programme. If you stay too long with one activity you risk losing the children’s interest.  
Also, it is a help to change the order of your programme from time to time, or even to include something new.
- It should be focused.  
You should focus the entire teaching programme on the central

truth of your Bible lesson, and the application of that truth to both groups of the children. If for example, the central truth is apparent in the choruses sung, and in the memory verse learned, it will give more unity and greater effectiveness to the whole programme, and especially to the Bible lesson itself.

➤ It should be punctual.

It is most important that your teaching programme starts and finishes punctually. This should mean that you are there at least fifteen minutes or, better, thirty minutes before your class or meeting starts. Rushing into class late and out of breath is no way to begin teaching God's precious Word. Your lack of punctuality will affect and upset the children and will also encourage **them** to be late! You can, by being punctual, ensure that everything is ready for your meeting, and it will also give you the opportunity to speak personally with children who arrive early.

- ✓ By arriving early you increase the length (and value) of your class. Before the meeting starts you can also use the time to have the children repeat the verses they have memorized.
- ✓ By arriving late, or by wasting time during your class looking for tunes and visuals, you decrease the length (and value) of your class.

Also, your class should finish punctually. Children will be expected home at a certain time, and parents will be concerned if they don't come at the time expected.

➤ It should encourage participation.

Children like to take part in your programme, and there are several ways you can encourage this:

- ✓ A child could, from time to time, lead a song.
- ✓ A child could hold a visualized song or a visualized verse for the others to see.
- ✓ All the children can have the opportunity to participate by memorizing the Bible verses together, by taking part in prayer time, and by being involved in review time/Bible quizzes etc.

## ***The Content of Your Teaching Programme***

I have already compared the preparation and presentation of your teaching programme to the cooking of a meal. Just as a cook uses a number of ingredients mixed together in correct proportion, so you need to include in your “spiritual meal” a number of ingredients or activities. Blended well together these will constitute a good, attractive and satisfactory “meal”.

Your programme should therefore consist of a number of quite varied activities. I have outlined these in the remaining part of this chapter, and I have also given an approximate time for the length of each of these activities. We will look at each activity, in more detail, later in the book.

- ✓ Some of these activities are fixed and should **always be** included in your teaching programme - for example, your Bible lesson.
- ✓ Some of these activities are flexible. They should not be included in every teaching programme, but should be taught periodically - for example a missionary time.

### **FIXED ITEMS**

There are several items or activities which you should include in every programme.

#### **Singing** (fifteen minutes)

You should lead the children in about fifteen minutes of choruses and hymns. These should not all be clumped together – but should be interspersed throughout the programme. Singing can be a wonderful way to teach, and it can also be very interesting and enjoyable for the children.

Choose the songs and hymns to be sung beforehand and, if possible, have the words of any new one written out for the children to read. But you certainly should not teach more than one new chorus at any one meeting.

Keep in mind the central truth of your Bible lesson, and link your singing in with that truth.

#### **Prayer** (five minutes)

About five minutes of your programme should be devoted to prayer.

- You yourself should open and close the meeting with prayer – but

keep it very brief.

- You should also teach the children to pray, and give them the opportunity to do so. This applies especially when you have a number of believing children in your meeting. If necessary you could encourage the children to write out a little prayer which they could use.

### **Memory Verse** (five to seven minutes)

You should choose a verse for each meeting, explain it to the children, and encourage them to memorize it. It may be necessary to have the same verse in two meetings, if it is longer or more difficult to remember. It is important that the children learn it by heart, and this will involve frequent repetition in the meeting (at least ten times). But try to make the repetition interesting. Also, you should link the verse learned with the central truth of the Bible lesson.

You could also give each child a little token, that is, a slip of paper with the verse on it, to take home – so that he can continue to learn it and review it.

### **Review time** (five to ten minutes)

It is essential to revise what you have taught in previous weeks, and especially in your last week's meeting, so that the children can really retain the truths taught. Visualizing it can be a real help. You need to make your review time interesting, and one of the best ways to do this is to have a Bible quiz for either teams or individuals, using questions you have carefully selected. This will help the children to remember and learn, and will also help you to know how well you have taught.

### **Bible lesson** (twenty minutes – or, with a younger group, the time may be shorter)

This is the main section, and the heart of your programme and it involves four main parts:

- The outlining of a Bible passage, and its narrative, in an interesting way.
- Teaching the central truth of that passage to all the children.
- Applying that central truth to the saved children.
- Applying that central truth to the unsaved children.

**Counselling time** (at least twenty minutes after the meeting)

You need to ensure that, in your plan, you always have time, after the meeting, to counsel unsaved children who want to trust Christ and who need your help, or to counsel Christian children who have problems or questions. It is necessary to allocate time for this every week in your programme, but you will, of course, only utilize this time if children come to you and request your help and counselling.

**FLEXIBLE ITEMS**

You should also include one of these two extra activities in your weekly programme – missionary time or a doctrine lesson. You might do this alternately, with one activity one week, and the other the next week. Or it would probably be better to have a series of, say, five short missionary presentations over a period of five weeks, and then a series of, say, five short doctrinal lessons over the following five weeks.

**Missionary time** (ten minutes)

You will use this time to teach about missions and create an interest in them. You can also present a missionary project and challenge the children to participate by prayer and giving.

**Doctrine lesson** (ten minutes)

You may want, from time to time, to give an explanation of a basic Bible doctrine, and to make this interesting you can use flashcards, such as those which we have produced. So far we have published five series of visualized doctrinal lessons, each containing five lessons.

*“Questions Children Ask”*

*“Who Is God?”      “What Is God Like?”*

*“The Bible”          “The Lord Jesus Christ”*

More series will be published in the future.

European CEF has also published an excellent series entitled *“What Every Child Ought to Know”*.

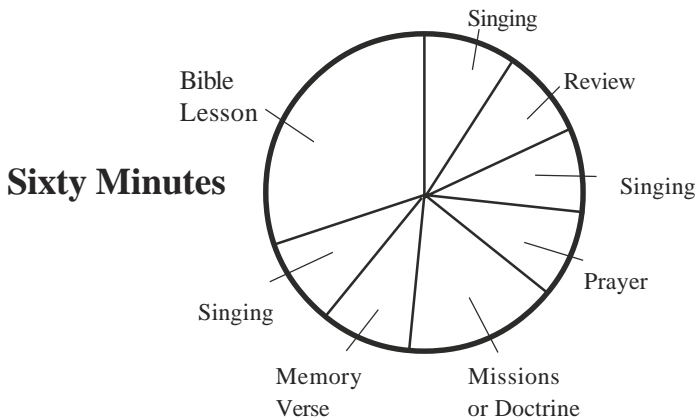
**A Typical Programme**

So taking into consideration all we have outlined so far, your teaching programme could read as follows:

- Singing (five minutes)
- Welcome and brief prayer (one minute)
- Review time (five minutes)
- Singing (five minutes)
- Prayer time (five minutes)
- Missionary time or doctrine lesson (ten minutes)
- Memory verse (five minutes)
- Singing (three minutes)
- Bible lesson (twenty minutes)
- Prayer and closing announcements (one minute)
- Counselling time (twenty minutes) (after meeting)

Total time sixty minutes (plus twenty minutes available for counselling if required).

As I have already explained, it is important that your club should not last more than an hour in length. Children will be expected home at a certain time, and parents will become concerned if they do not return as expected.



It is, as we have already seen, good to build your whole teaching programme around one theme – the central truth of your Bible lesson. For example, on the next page, I outline a possible programme for your children’s meeting which is based on the truth “God loves sinful boys and girls”. I am taking it for granted that all these choruses are already



familiar to the children. That is why I have included so many. You might want to have fewer choruses in your programme – especially if any of them is unfamiliar to the children.

Opening choruses:           *“Wide, wide as the ocean”*  
   *“Jesus loves me, this I know”*  
   *“I am so glad that our Father in Heaven”*

Brief prayer

Short quiz on last week’s lesson

Chorus                           *“Love, love L-O-V-E”*

Devotional chorus:       *“God is so good”*

Prayer time for the children – especially thanking God for His love, for the Death of Christ, and for salvation

Missionary story           Amy Carmichael and her love for India’s children

Memory verse             John 3 v16

Chorus                       *“Just because He loved me so”*

Quiet chorus               *“For God so loved the world”*

Bible lesson               Zacchaeus – a sinner loved by the Lord Jesus  
   (Luke 19 v1-10)

Brief prayer

Closing chorus             *“Jesus help us to remember”*

### **A Question**

I have several times been asked if a teacher should include other items such as handwork and games in his teaching programme. My answer would depend upon the amount of time available:

- If the meeting lasts sixty minutes, or a comparable time, I would answer “No”. The time available is, I believe, too short to allow the inclusion of such extra items. When you only have one hour with the children you want to make the very best use of it – and utilize every minute to teach God’s Word, in one way or another. Two Bible College students came to me after I had spoken at their

College about children's work and asked me if I could solve a problem they had. They taught a group of boys each week in a Bible Club attached to the College, but were having problems with discipline. I asked them what they did with the boys during the hour they had with them; and they told me that they played games (like football) for forty-five minutes, and then they had a Bible lesson for fifteen minutes. But the boys would not settle, or listen to the lesson. The problem was obvious to me. Firstly, they were not using the one hour they had in the best possible way; and, secondly, it would be difficult for the boys to settle down and listen after forty-five exciting minutes of football.

I suggested to them that they should make better use of the hour they had (especially as it was the only time these boys were exposed to the Bible and the Gospel). But they asked me, "How could we possibly fill sixty minutes, and make it interesting – without games?"

I went over what I have outlined in this chapter and I told them, "My problem is that I have so much to share, and so much to do which is interesting, that it is difficult to fit it all into one hour."

- However, on the other hand, you may have much more time available than sixty minutes, for example in a camp programme, or a Holiday Bible School, or in a uniformed organisation held for a whole evening weekly in your church. You should, in this situation, feel free to introduce other items such as handwork, competitions and games to utilize your time. But, even when you introduce such activities, you should endeavour to make some of them not just interesting and exciting, but also profitable. For example, when you use handwork, you should try to link it in with the Bible lesson, and with the central truth you have been teaching the children that day.

## Chapter 11:

### Ready For Anything

#### *How Can I Best Prepare for My Meeting?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need to make preparation your first priority).*

- **Prepare yourself**
  - ✓ by walking with God
  - ✓ by praying to God
  - ✓ by studying the Word of God
- **Prepare your programme and lesson**
  - ✓ by working on it
  - ✓ by practising it
- **Prepare your materials**
  - ✓ your notes
  - ✓ your teaching materials
  - ✓ your visuals
- **Prepare your room**
  - ✓ Is it clean?
  - ✓ Will the children be comfortable?
- **The results of good preparation**
- **How to handle a crisis** (for which you are not prepared)

**T**here are three letters which every children's worker needs to have after his name. These are R.F.A. – ready for anything. We need always to be ready because in children's work anything can happen. And the best way to be R.F.A. is to be well prepared.

You need to plan your programme, as we have seen, but there is more to plan and prepare than just that. The secret and foundation of a good and successful children's meeting is adequate and thorough preparation of every possible aspect or part of your meeting. Time spent in preparation, and in "building your foundations", is time well spent.

### ***Prepare Yourself***

The top priority in the scale of preparation is self-preparation. This involves the following:

- Living a **life** which is consistent with what you plan to teach, and continually making it your goal to walk with God.
- Taking time each day - to **pray** for the children – and especially for your planned meeting - that God will help you teach, and that He will work in the hearts of the children.
- Taking time regularly – preferably every day – to study the Word of God systematically so that you will better understand it and the doctrines contained in it.

### ***Prepare Your Programme and Lesson***

- You need to set aside time each day to prepare each part of your programme, as outlined in the previous chapter. Write down an outline of your programme.
- It is especially important that you spend much time preparing your Bible lesson. You must always make it your goal to be as efficient as possible in your ministry – “to be the best that I can be”.
  - ✓ Read your Bible and pray.
  - ✓ Study your lesson until you know it.
  - ✓ Write down an outline of your lesson.
- You need to practise, practise, practise. Practice makes perfect. It is a help to practise your lesson once or twice in the room where you will teach.

### ***Prepare Your Materials***

Throughout the week preceding your meeting, you need to prepare and get ready, all the materials and visual aids you will use in your meeting. You also need to put them together in a well organized way, so that they will be ready to use without any fuss:

- Your Bible and your teaching notes, including the programme outline and your lesson outline.
- The flannelgraph figures you will use – in order of use.
- Your flannelboard and, if you use them, backgrounds.

- Your visualized songs and memory verses.
- Whatever you will use for review purposes.
- Visuals for your missionary story or doctrinal lesson.

### ***Prepare Your Room***

It is most important that the children find the room in which their meeting is held to be attractive and interesting. If it is, it will encourage the children to attend. You should be there early so that you can get the room ready or ensure that it is.

There are several simple guidelines which will help you to prepare the room for the children and the meeting:

- Make sure the room is clean – that it is tidy and not cluttered.
- Be sure that the children will be comfortable. The chairs should be the right height – or, alternatively, you should arrange for comfortable seating on the floor. Try to avoid congestion.
- Ensure that all the children, when they come, will be able to see you and the visuals. Otherwise you will have problems.
- Check on the ventilation. Some fresh air is needed – but not too much.
- Check on the heating. You don't want the children to be cold – or too warm.
- Check on the lighting. Is there enough light, but no glare? Be sure there are no windows in front of the children's eyes, and that the sun is not shining directly into their eyes. Also, if you use a flannel board, make sure you position it so that the light falls on the front of it – and does not come from behind it.
- Some attractive pictures or charts on the walls can be a help – and even some flowers on the shelves. These can make the room and surroundings more pleasant and attractive.
- You need to arrange for a place where children can hang their overcoats or, if necessary, place their shoes.
- It is helpful to have a chair, or small table, close to the place where you will stand, on which you can place your Bible, visuals and teaching materials.

### ***The Results of Good Preparation***

The teacher who is really well prepared – in every way- can generally expect to see several consequences, as a result of his teaching:

- He will be more relaxed, because he knows exactly what he is going to do, and is aware that everything is under control.
- The children are more likely to listen well, and enjoy the meeting, because they will also feel more relaxed, and will be aware that everything is well prepared and well organized.
- There will be less possibility of any discipline problems.
- The meeting will be a happy place to come to, and everyone will enjoy themselves.
- He will be R.F.A. – ready for anything.

### ***Crisis Management***

However, to be realistic, times of crisis do occur in our ministry from time to time, despite all our preparations. And we need to be ready to handle those crises as efficiently (and as quietly) as possible. A child falls ill, a flannel board collapses, a little one cries, a dog growls and barks, a drunk man intervenes, some parents remove their children – the possible list is endless. These situations may seem far-fetched, or unlikely, but I have had personal experience of all of them.

There are several ways you can handle such crises:

- Be calm, and do not allow yourself to be agitated.
- Deal with the problem in as quiet and as reasonable a way as possible.
- Ask your helper or assistant (if you have one) to look after the problem, while you continue teaching. It is very helpful to know someone who can be of assistance in situations like these.
- Keep going – and don't give up.
- Above all commit the situation to the Lord with a quick quiet "call" to Him for help.

## Chapter 12:

### Making A Joyful Noise

#### *How Can I Teach the Children to Sing?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Singing is an essential part of your programme.)*

This chapter answers a number of questions:

- **Why should the children sing?**
- **What should the children sing?**
- **How can you encourage the children to sing?**
- **How should you teach a new chorus?**

**S**inging should form an important part of your teaching programme. About 15 minutes of your hour long programme will usually be devoted to singing. Its purpose is not to fill up time; you are not using it to enable the children “to let off steam”; and you are not just doing it because they enjoy it. There are a number of good reasons why you should teach, and encourage, the children to sing.

#### ***Why Should They Sing?***

Singing is important for the following reasons:

- Singing is taught and encouraged in the Word of God, and is commanded by God:  
*“Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Colossians 3 v16).  
 (See also Psalm 92 v1; Psalm 100 v1, 2; Psalm 47 v7; 1 Corinthians 14 v15; Psalm 40 v3; Ephesians 5 v18, 19).
- Singing teaches truth.

The children can learn Bible truths as they sing. They can sing their doctrines! These truths can include the gospel message, or doctrinal truths, or truths about missions. But you need to choose choruses which do this. In addition the choruses learned by the children will be sung by them in other places, and the truth contained in them can be a blessing to those who hear them.

- Singing helps in the memorization of Bible verses.  
There are many Bible verses set to music, and the children will learn these verses as they sing.
- Singing expresses worship.  
When children sing they can express their joy, their faith, their needs – and especially their praise to, and worship of, God.
- Singing gives the children the opportunity to participate in the meeting – and to express themselves. In this way they are not now just passive listeners, but active participants.
- Singing can create the right kind of atmosphere for your meeting.  
This should be the atmosphere which the teacher desires to have – a happy atmosphere, or a quiet atmosphere, or a reverent atmosphere. The type of atmosphere you wish to have can vary from one part of the meeting to another.
- Singing and music are part of most children's lives. They often hum, whistle, and sing as they play.

### ***What Should You Sing?***

It is important that you choose beforehand the choruses you will sing in the meeting, and that you write them down on your programme outline. This will help to ensure a meeting which moves along smoothly and without awkward gaps.

There are several different categories of hymns/songs/choruses from which to choose:

- Hymns and choruses addressed to God in worship, praise, adoration, confession or supplication.
- Gospel songs addressed to the unsaved children. These can be songs of testimony, warning or invitation.
- Christian living songs addressed to Christian children, showing them their privileges and/or their responsibility to work for God.



- Choruses suitable for everyone – which are brief, rhythmic, tuneful, easily learned and long remembered.
- Bible verses set to music.
- Seasonal songs sung especially at special times like Christmas and Easter.

When choosing the choruses to sing in your meeting, ask yourself these six key questions:

- Does this chorus teach truth? This is important because you want the children (and others) to learn Bible truths through these choruses.
- Are the words true to the teaching of Scripture? Read them carefully and check them with the Word of God.
- Are the words understandable to children? You may need to explain some of them, but your choruses should be 90% self explanatory. Be cautious about using too many symbolic expressions – without explanation.
- Is the tune easy to learn, and easy to sing? Check the range and pitch, and make sure they are not too high or too low. Does the tune fit in with the words and their meaning?
- Is this chorus in keeping with the central truth of the Bible lesson to be taught? There is no point or value in just singing for singing's sake. It is best to choose choruses which reinforce and support the aim of the lesson.
- Is this chorus suitable for your age group? For example older children do not always appreciate action choruses.

### ***How Can You Encourage and Teach the Children to Sing?***

There are a number of guidelines which will, I feel, help you to encourage, and teach, the children to sing:

- Sing a few good choruses every week with which the children are familiar. But you should periodically introduce a new chorus. Don't keep singing the same choruses all the time.
- It is good to keep a written record of the songs you have taught.
- It is better for the choruses to state facts rather than express feelings (which may not be genuine). For example the chorus "*Happiness*

*is to know the Saviour*” (a fact) is better than “*I am H-A-P-P-Y*” (a feeling).

- Try to stick to facts which are true to the experience of children.
- Show and explain to the children clearly how the chorus relates to their lives, so that it will have spiritual significance for them.
- Avoid choruses which are meaningless jingles – even if they have a nice melody.
- Don’t forget to teach some of the “good old hymns”.
- If you have young children use action choruses. When leading action choruses, make the actions bold and clear, and stay ahead of the children as they will be following your lead. Be sure that the actions emphasize the message and meaning of the song, and are not merely physical movements.
- It is good to visualize some of the choruses you teach by using flashcards or the flannelgraph. If you are using a visualized song invite a child to hold it and, where necessary, turn the pages.
- There are certain parts of your programme where you can use special choruses:
  - ✓ You should use a quiet chorus before your Bible lesson.
  - ✓ You should use a missionary chorus before, or after, your missionary presentation.
  - ✓ You should use a prayer chorus before prayer time.
- Try to avoid asking children for their favourite chorus. This can cause disturbance and even chaos; and it is often the last resort of a teacher who has not properly planned what will be sung. However, if the group is small, or if you plan your programme carefully, giving the children such a choice can encourage them and help them to participate.
- If you feel that you cannot sing and/or you have no musical accompaniment, you can ask someone else to make a tape recording of the tunes of the songs you will teach. Once the children know the tunes the tape recording will no longer be necessary. Or you could ask someone else, with more musical ability than yourself, to lead the singing in your meeting.

Remember, above all, the following statement:

**“Music has a tremendous influence on a child’s life. Therefore you should give the time for singing the importance it deserves.”**

### ***How Should You Teach a New Chorus?***

There are several principles or rules which should help you, when teaching a new chorus to the children:

#### **Before the meeting**

- You, yourself, should learn the words and music thoroughly. It is vital that you are familiar with every new song or chorus before you teach it, and it is also a help, if it is obvious that you enjoy singing it.
- If you have a piano accompanist, practise your songs together beforehand.
- If you use a visual aid to teach a chorus, be sure you are familiar with it, and that you practise its use beforehand. Visualized songs can be purchased from your local CEF office. Or you, yourself, can print the words of the song on a flashcard, or display the words on a flannel board or black board. It is helpful to use pictures to illustrate the words.

#### **During the meeting**

- Introduce the chorus with a brief story, to illustrate its meaning or to give a reason for singing it.
- Hold up the words of the song if it is visualized, so that the children can see them.
- Read through the words twice.
- Let the children hear the tune. If there is no musical instrument available you will need to sing it through for the children.
- Briefly explain any difficult words. Remember this is not a time to preach. Don't try to explain everything at one time.
- Let the children hum the tune while you yourself sing it with the words.
- Sing the chorus together several times. You will need to lead the singing and conduct it with your hand.
- If more explanation is needed intersperse it with the singing.

## Chapter 13: Talking To God

### *How Can I Teach the Children to Pray?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Children need to be taught how to pray.)*

This chapter answers two main questions:

- **Why teach children to pray?**
- **What should we teach them?**
  - ✓ Teach the principles of prayer:  
What? Why? Where? When? How? Why?
  - ✓ Teach how God answers prayer.
  - ✓ Teach children to pray privately.
  - ✓ Teach children to pray publicly.

**T**he greatest need of the Christian today is prayer. Rev. Derek Prime, a well known pastor in Scotland, writes:

*“Prayer isn’t simply a most important activity. **It is the most important.** There is no other similar activity upon which every other activity in the Christian life depends.”*

It is therefore our responsibility to teach our children to pray. If the habit of prayer can be moulded into the fabric of their developing characters, then this need will be met.

#### ***Why Teach Children to Pray?***

When you and I realise, as teachers, how important prayer is, we will want to teach our believing children to pray, so that they will enjoy the blessings it will bring to them (and to others):

- God commands us to pray:  
*“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18 v1).*

- "Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5 v17).
- God answers prayer:  
*"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened"* (Matthew 7 v7, 8).
  - Prayer helps the child to maintain a close relationship with God:  
*"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you"* (James 4 v8a).
  - Prayer is essential to their spiritual growth and development:  
*"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him"* (Psalm 91 v15).
  - Prayer brings peace in the midst of trouble and worry:  
*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Philippians 4 v6).
  - Prayer helps the child to face and deal with his daily problems. A healthy prayer life is a child's greatest asset. It will give him a source of strength otherwise unavailable:  
*"This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"* (Psalm 34 v6).  
*"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4 v16).
  - God saves and blesses others through their prayers:  
*"Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me"* (Romans 15 v30).

But children need to be taught to pray. If they are not taught they will not do it – or they will do it in the wrong way. Just as the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Luke 11 v1), so we must teach the children to do so.

### **What Should We Teach?**

We want the children, and particularly the saved children, to do three things:

- Learn the principles of prayer.
- Put these principles into practice in their own prayer life.
- Be able to take part in corporate prayer with other children.

We will now look at each of these in detail.

## Teach the Principles of Prayer

These principles can be found by answering the following questions. They can also be taught to the children, over a period of time, by asking and answering these questions.

### What is prayer?

Prayer is talking to God, our Heavenly Father, Who loves us and Who is all powerful. It is not just saying words which someone else tells us to say. It is better to teach children how to pray – rather than to teach them prayers.

### Who can pray?

Prayer is the privilege of those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and who now have God as their Heavenly Father:

*“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6 v9).*

But God loves and wants to hear the sinner’s prayer asking for salvation and forgiveness.

*“And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’”(Luke 18 v13).*

### Where can we pray?

We can pray anywhere! Jonah prayed in the fish’s belly (Jonah 2 v1-9); Lydia by the river bank (Acts 16 v13-14) and Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16 v25).

### When can we pray?

We can pray at any time:

*“Praying **always** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for*

*all the saints*" (Ephesians 6 v18)

*"Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice"* (Psalm 55 v17).

But there are specific times when we should encourage children to pray:

- During a Quiet Time each morning.
- Before meals.  
*"Thank You for the world so sweet;  
 Thank You for the food we eat,  
 Thank You for the birds that sing;  
 Thank You God for everything."*
- In church and during the children's meeting or Good News Club.

### **How do we pray?**

To God the Father (Matthew 6 v9; John 16 v23), in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son (John 14 v13 & 14) and as guided by God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8 v26)..

Several other "rules" for prayer can be helpful and can be mentioned from time to time:

- Pray in faith, believing that God can and will answer (James 1 v6; Hebrews 11 v6; 1 Timothy 2 v8).
- Pray according to God's Will, as revealed in His Word (1 John 5 v14-15).
- Pray with thanksgiving (Colossians 4 v2).
- Pray persistently (1 Samuel 12 v23; Colossians 4 v2).
- Pray with an obedient spirit (Psalm 66 v18; John 9 v31; 1 John 3 v22; Isaiah 59 v1-2).
- Be specific, and not vague in your prayers (Philippians 4 v6, 7).
- Prayer is most effective when backed by a godly life (James 5 v16).
- Prayer can be hindered by disobedience (John 15 v7), selfishness (James 4 v3), a wrong attitude (1 Peter 3 v7) or deliberate and persistent sin (Psalm 66 v18).

The child's position in prayer is of secondary importance – whether sitting, standing or kneeling. It is a help for the child to close his eyes – simply to lessen the danger of distraction, and a bowed head indicates

reverence.

### What do we say?

“Dear Heavenly Father ..... Forgive me ..... Thank You ... Please ..... I love You .. In the Name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.”

In more “theological language” prayer consists of:

- Confession (1 John 1 v9) – “Forgive me.”
- Thanksgiving (Colossians 4 v2) – “Thank You.”
- Intercession (Ephesians 6 v18; James 5 v16) – “Please.”
- Worship (Psalm 95 v6; Revelation 19 v5) – “I love You.”

Usually we finish our prayers as follows:

- “*In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ*” – it is because of Him, and what He has done, that we can come into the presence of God and talk to Him.
- “*Amen*”. This word means “And it will be so”, which expresses our trust in God, and our confidence that He will answer our prayers.

### Why should we pray?

The main reason is because God wants us to, and commands us to (Luke 11 v9; James 4 v8a).

### How does God answer prayer?

God answers prayer in three ways:

- Sometimes His answer is “yes” – if it is His will and it is best for us (James 5 v17, 18).
- Sometimes His answer is “no” – if **this** is best for us (2 Corinthians 12 v9; James 4 v3).
- Sometimes His answer is “wait” – if the time is not right (John 11 v6).

These three ways can be illustrated with a “traffic light visual”:

- Red – no!
- Yellow – wait!
- Green – go!



### **Teach the Children to Pray Privately**

The principles on which all prayer (including private prayer) should be based have already been outlined.

But you need to give the child some help and guidance concerning his personal prayer life.

- Show him how important it is to give a short time to God every day. There are ninety-six quarter hours in every day. Could he not give and devote one of them to God? This time is called “A Quiet Time”.
- Give him some guidance as to when to have it:
  - ✓ The morning (as early as possible) is best – if practical.
  - ✓ A second possibility is before bedtime in the evening.
  - ✓ If neither of these is possible, he should find another time during the day when he can be alone.
- Give some suggestions as to where he can have his Quiet Time:
  - ✓ In a room at home – if this is possible.
  - ✓ Outside, if the weather allows it.
  - ✓ In some other building, such as the local library.
- Show him what he should do in his Quiet Time:
  - ✓ Confess any sin he is aware of – “Sorry.”
  - ✓ Thank God for all He has done – “Thank You”.
  - ✓ Pray for others and their needs – “Please.”
  - ✓ Pray for himself and his needs – “Please.”
  - ✓ Worship and praise God for Who He is – “I love You.”
- You can encourage him to have a little prayer diary which will remind him:
  - ✓ Who to pray for each day.
  - ✓ Who to pray for once each week.

### **Teach the Children to Pray Publicly**

It can be a real help, spiritually, for saved children, if they can take part publicly, and openly, in prayer along with the other children during the children’s meeting; and part of your responsibility is to teach, help and encourage them to do so. But never put them on the spot and force them to pray. This can cause the child real problems.

There are several guidelines which will help you to do this:

- First of all you need, over a period of several weeks, to give some

instructions about prayer, using the questions and answers given on a previous page.

- It is especially important to emphasize to the children that they should use simple words and short sentences when they pray. We should set a good example of this when we pray. In addition, the children should be encouraged to use their voices naturally when they pray, and taught that they do not need to have a special ‘praying voice’! You should also emphasize the need for quietness and reverence during prayer time.
- You can start this time of prayer with a prayer chorus:  
*“Before my words of prayer are said;  
 I’ll close my eyes and bow my head.  
 I’ll try to think to Whom I pray;  
 I’ll try to mean the words I say.”*
- You can encourage the children to close their eyes, bow their heads, and fold their arms, by repeating the following lines together:  
*“I fold my arms that I might be;  
 from all my work and play set free.  
 I close my eyes that I might see;  
 nothing to take my thoughts from Thee;  
 I bow my head as I draw near;  
 To the King of Kings my Saviour dear.”*  
 Then you can start with a very **brief** prayer.
- The two “types” of prayer most suitable to public prayer in your children’s meeting are thanksgiving and intercession (that is prayer for others).
- You could start with the basic concept of thanksgiving:
  - ✓ Ask the children what they can thank God for.
  - ✓ Or you can have with you a number of pictures or objects which will remind the children what they can be thankful for – food, water, home, church, the Bible, the Lord Jesus and His death.
  - ✓ You can ask the children which of them would like to say “Thanks” to God for one of these.
  - ✓ Give some simple instructions as to how to do this:
    - Let them hold the picture, or object, which reminds them what to be thankful for.

- Give them a simple phrase to begin with - “Dear Father”.
  - Encourage them to use their own words and speak naturally.
  - Teach them to finish the prayer with the words “In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”
- Then in your next meeting you could introduce the idea of praying for others:
- ✓ Ask the children for prayer requests, especially those related to themselves and their needs.
  - ✓ Add some yourself. Keep the requests brief, and not too many at one time. You can use pictures to illustrate these prayer requests. These pictures could be pasted on praying hands, and different children could hold one as they pray for what is in the picture.
  - ✓ Or you could use your hand as a simple visual aid. Encourage the child who prays to hold one finger as he prays:
    - The thumb (as it points towards us) for our families.
    - The index or pointing finger for our teachers.
    - The big finger for those who rule over us.
    - The ring finger, bent, for the sick.
    - The little finger for ourselves and for other boys and girls.
  - ✓ You can then ask the children which of them will pray for each request.
  - ✓ You can also remind the children from time to time about the three ways God answers prayer (as outlined on page 99):
    - “Yes” if it is according to His will and time (1 Kings 18 v37, 38).
    - “No” if it would not be good for us (2 Corinthians 12 v8, 9).
    - “Wait” if it is not God’s perfect time (John 11 v1- 45).
- From time to time you can introduce, and explain, several practical guidelines:
- ✓ It is good to close their eyes when they pray so that they will not be distracted.

- ✓ It is good to bow their heads to show respect.
- ✓ It is good to fold their hands, so that they can be still.
- You need to emphasize from time to time that prayer is the privilege of Christians, and that it is for those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The main prayer which God wants to hear from unsaved children is “Lord save me.”
- If the children are particularly shy and hesitant about praying publicly on their own, you might want to lead them in prayer, asking them to pray after you, sentence by sentence. Then later they might feel able to pray on their own.

## Chapter 14:

### Learning The Word

#### *How Can I Encourage Children to Memorize Scripture?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Your children need to memorize Scripture verses.)*

- **Reasons** why we should encourage them to memorize Scripture.
- **Choosing** the verse to be memorized
- **Preparing** – before the meeting.
- **Helping them** to understand the verse.
- **Encouraging them** to memorize this week's verse.
- **Reviewing** verses learned previously.

**I**t is important to spend eight to ten minutes in each of your meetings to teach a Bible verse to children, so that they can memorize it, and learn it by heart. This activity can be very fruitful in the lives of the children, both now and later in life.

#### *Why Should We Encourage the Children to Memorize?*

There are a number of specific reasons for encouraging the children to memorize Bible verses:

- God commands that His Word be in the heart, and that is only possible when it is understood, learned and memorized (Deuteronomy 6 v6).
- The Bible is God's Word, the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6 v17), and it is living and powerful – especially when stored in the child's mind and heart. It is also the good seed (Luke 8 v11) which needs to be planted in the children's hearts and minds.
  - ✓ It brings conviction of sin, and a better understanding of the way of salvation to unsaved children (1 Peter 1 v23).

- ✓ It helps Christian children to grow (1 Peter 2 v2).
- ✓ It keeps Christian children from sinning (Psalm 119 v9, 11).
- God promises that His Word “*will not return to Him void*” (Isaiah 55 v11).
- The Bible is spiritual food for the saved children (Jeremiah 15 v16). It is both milk (1 Corinthians 3 v2; 1 Peter 2 v2 &3) and meat (1 Corinthians 3 v2; Hebrews 5 v12 & 14). As it is “chewed, swallowed and digested” it helps Christian children to grow. So we want them to memorize as much as possible. But you need to make it appetizing and digestible, and give it in correct amounts.
- The Holy Spirit uses the memorized Word of God in daily life:
  - ✓ To defeat temptation (Matthew 4 v1-10).
  - ✓ To overcome sin (Psalm 119 v11)
  - ✓ To strengthen during trials (Jeremiah 15 v16). The result is comfort and encouragement during those times of testing (Psalm 119 v49, 50).
  - ✓ To help when making decisions (Psalm 119 v105).

The Holy Spirit will only call to mind that which is in the mind and heart. If unsaved children do not hear or memorize the Word, there is no basis for conviction of sin or conversion (Romans 10 v17). Also, Christians often suffer from the consequences of not really knowing, or memorizing, the Word of God.
- In later life the Holy Spirit can bring back to the mind memorized Bible verses and can speak through them at that time. Scriptures memorized in childhood are never forgotten. It has been said that the years from six to nine are the years of greatest memory in a person’s whole life.
- We want the children to learn that “God’s Word says so” and not “teacher says so”. Memorization of Bible verses will help them, now and later, to know where to go to for the answer to their problems.

### ***Choose the Verse to Be Memorized***

It is essential that you choose the verse(s) which you want the children to memorize carefully and prayerfully. You should keep in mind the following principles:

- Choose a verse which is related to the central truth of your Bible lesson.
- Choose a verse which is relevant and which will help the children with their present problems and experiences. Include from time to time gospel verses for the unsaved, and promises and commands for the saved children.
- Choose verses which are suitable for the age group to which the children belong.
- Choose a verse which the children will be able to understand and memorize.
  - ✓ Choose a short verse or, if it is longer, spread it over several weeks.
  - ✓ Choose a verse with words and concepts within the children's understanding.

*“Teach a little and teach it well and they will learn a little and learn it well.”*
- It is good to keep a list of the verses you have taught, and which the children have memorized.

### ***Prepare Before the Meeting***

There are several steps you need to take to prepare for the teaching and memorization of the verse in the children's meeting:

- You need to learn the verse and reference yourself. It is good to repeat the reference both at the beginning and at the end of the verse.
- It is good to visualize the verse, as this will help the children to remember it. There are several ways by which you could do this:
  - ✓ The simplest way is to print the words on a piece of cardboard, or black board. If you print it yourself make sure that it is well done and neat. Using a computer can be a help.
  - ✓ You could prepare and use a flashcard with the verse printed on one side and the reference on the other side.
  - ✓ You could visualize the words on word strips for the flannel board.
  - ✓ You could use symbols or pictures to visualize the words on

the flannel board – especially if the children are smaller and not able to read the words.

- ✓ You could buy a series of visualized verses from your local CEF office and prepare them for use.
- Some Bible verses have been set to music, and this is a good way to help children to learn them.
- It can help the children remember the verse they have learned, if you can give each child a little paper token with the words of the verse, to take home after the meeting. The shape and design of these tokens could be linked to the meaning of the verse e.g. the word “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6 v35) could be printed on tokens shaped like a loaf of bread.

### ***Help Them to Understand the Verse***

The first key to memorization is **understanding**:

- You need to be sure that the children understand what they are repeating. It has been wisely said, “Where there is meaning, memory will function.” Before the children start to repeat, you could give an explanation – but keep it brief. Or you could tell a little story which illustrates the meaning of the verse. You may also need to explain the meaning of several words in the verse. You could also add a few words of extra explanation here and there as they repeat it.
- Teaching the meaning of the verse should be a vital introduction to the teaching of the central truth of your Bible lesson. Therefore time spent on teaching its meaning is time well spent.
- Make sure that you relate your explanation to the lives and needs of the children and give a clear application of it.
- If the children are old enough encourage them to find the verse in their Bible and read it.

It is most important that you open and use your Bible when you are encouraging the children to memorize a Bible verse. It is not enough just to use the visual aid you have prepared. You need to establish, right from the beginning, that the verse comes from the Word of God, and you need to read it from your Bible, or have someone else read it.



### ***Encourage Them to Memorize the Verse***

The second key to memorization is **repetition**. The children should **hear** the verse, and then if possible they should **see** it, and then they should **say** it – over and over. Children learn something when they repeat it over and over again. So you will want the children to repeat the verse at least ten or fifteen times during the meeting! The children should repeat the reference first, and then the verse, and then the reference again. It is important to memorize the reference as well as the verse. With some children you may need to explain what “reference” means and how verses can be located. For example, you could explain the Bible is like a great country. The books are the towns, the chapters are the streets, and the verses are the numbers of the houses in the streets. In other words, the reference of the verse is its “address”.

But to encourage them to do this you need to make the repetition interesting and challenging. You don’t want it to drag or become a bore.

There are a number of ways you can provide this interest, and you should choose the methods and visuals most suitable for your age group:

- If the words are on the blackboard or flannel board remove more and more of the verse, each time they repeat it, to challenge the children to remember all the verse, and to be able to keep repeating it, even if parts are missing.
- You could write the verse on a piece of paper, or construction paper, or manilla, or card board (possibly shaped like a Bible or a symbol of some kind). Then cut it into pieces like a jig saw puzzle and let the children put it together.
- You could jumble the letters in each word of the verse on the flannel board or on a flashcard and ask the children to decipher the verse.
- If using the flannel board, you could do one of the following:
  - ✓ Have each child who says the verse remove one piece until the whole verse is gone.
  - ✓ Give out the words or pieces of the verse to a number of children and have them come up, one at a time, and put their word or piece on the board until the verse is complete.
  - ✓ You could scramble the words on the board and let a child sort

them out and put them together.

- You could divide the children into two groups – each saying the verse word by word in turn.
- You could divide the children into two groups – with one group saying the first part of the verse and the second the other part.
- You could ask the children with blue eyes or blond hair, or a specific age, to repeat the verse.
- You could use “Bible ping pong”, where the children and teacher say alternative words.
- You could ask each child to say one word in turn.
- You could vary the volume or speed at which the verse is repeated. For example they could say it more softly each time they repeat it.
- You could use actions or motions to illustrate the verse.

### ***Review the Verse(s) Learned Previously***

The third step in memorization is to come back to and **review** the verse(s) in other parts of your meeting.

You need to bring the children back again and again throughout your teaching programme to the verse they have learned, otherwise they are likely to forget it. Review also helps you to see how effective your memorization programme has been.

There are several ways to do this:

- You could bring the verse into other parts of your programme, especially into the Bible lesson. Have the children repeat it when you do so.
- You could have the children repeat the verse, when you have a spare moment during your teaching programme.

You also need to review verses which have been taught in previous weeks. You can do this in a number of ways.

- You could ask the children to repeat the verse they have learned last week to you or your helper before the next meeting starts, as soon as each of them arrives. Verses should be repeated word perfect before they are counted as learned. Keep your standard high.
- You could give awards for individual accurate repetition (e.g. a star on a card with a special reward when the child has, say, ten stars);

or you could paste stars beside the child's name on a large record sheet. But you need especially to encourage the children, so that their main motivation will be a desire to please the Lord in this way.

- In each meeting you could review briefly last week's verse, encouraging the children to repeat it:
  - ✓ With the use of last week's visuals.
  - ✓ As a contest between, for example, the boys and girls.
- You could have a target game for verse review. Make a flannel target with three circles. Make two flannel arrows in different colours. Divide the class into two teams for verse review. When a verse is said correctly, with references, it scores a bull's eye. If the verse is almost right the arrow goes on the second circle. If the reference is wrong the arrow lands on the outer circle. Give points for each answer, depending on which circle they landed on. The team with most points wins.
- You could ask carefully chosen questions about the verse which was learned last week. This can be a great help. For example when reviewing Mark 10 v14:
  - ✓ *Who said "Suffer little children to come to Me?"*
  - ✓ *What does the word "suffer" mean?*
  - ✓ *Why did the Lord Jesus have to give this command?*
  - ✓ *What did He mean when He said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven?"*
  - ✓ *What did the Lord Jesus want the children to do?*
  - ✓ *How can a child come to the Lord Jesus today?*
- You could ask the children what verse they have learned recently, which they would use to solve a certain problem. For example, what verse would they quote to a boy who said that he had never done anything wrong? (Romans 3 v23). Then all the children should repeat the verse.
- At the end of a series of lessons you could encourage the children to repeat all the verses they have learned during the series. Those who do so could receive a small reward.
- You could encourage the children to remember and use the verse during the incoming week, and then tell you how they used it and how it helped them.

- I would remind you again that it is not necessary to have a new or a different verse for the children to learn each week. A verse which is longer can be spread over two or three weeks to help the children really understand and memorize it.

### ***Bible Sword Drill***

Bible Sword drill can help with the memorization of Bible verses, because it can enable the children to find their way around the Bible and locate Bible verses.

The children stand at attention with their Bibles at their side. At the command “present arms” the Bible is brought up to a reading position. The leader gives the reference and then says “charge”. The first child to find the verse reads it.

## **Chapter 15:**

### **Hearing It Again**

#### ***How Can I Review What I have Already Taught?***

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#### ***Summary of Chapter***

*(You need to keep going back over what you have taught.)*

- **The reasons for review/revision**
- **Prepare your review beforehand**
- **Ideas and helps for review**
- **Practical guidelines for review**

**I**t is essential in every children's meeting to review and revise what you taught the previous week.

#### ***Why Is Review Important?***

There are three reasons why "review" should be included in all your regular meetings with children – even if you only assign five or ten minutes to that review:

- Review reinforces what the children have learned previously. It is a known fact that if there is no review and no repetition, that which has been learned can be easily forgotten. One leader in the field of Christian education wrote, "Not to review is to leave the work half done." It is important to note that God in His Word often reviews. Deuteronomy, Chronicles, and sections of the Gospels are all reviews of that which is written elsewhere in His Word.
- Review encourages feed-back and participation from the children and gives them an opportunity to take part in the meeting.
- Review helps you to discern what the children have learned and what they have not understood.

### ***Prepare Your Review Beforehand***

The main method of review is a Bible quiz. Your Bible quiz will be a series of questions, mainly about last week's lesson and about last week's Bible verse, (although questions can be asked about other parts of the programme as well). You will use these questions and answers to accomplish the three results outlined above – to reinforce what the children have learned, to encourage their participation, and to help you know what they have learned.

There are two kinds of questions:

- Questions of knowledge (“who or what questions”) which establish the facts of the story told; and it is good to have several such questions:  
e.g. Who killed Goliath?  
What was the name of the city to which God sent Jonah?
- Questions of understanding (“why questions”) which help you to know if the children have grasped the spiritual truth of the previous lesson. These questions and answers are more valuable and should encourage thoughtful answers:  
e.g. Why was David not afraid of the giant?  
Why did Jonah not obey God?

So in preparation for your children's meeting, and for your review time or Bible quiz, you need to do the following:

- Ask God to guide you in your choice of questions. This needs wisdom.
- Prepare about ten questions – some of them will be factual and some will relate to the understanding of the truths taught.
- Prepare a visual aid for the quiz if you plan to use one. This is strongly recommended as it can be such a great help.

### ***Helps For Review***

There are several steps to take which will help you to review effectively:

- You should establish the structure of the quiz you will use to review. There are two possibilities to consider:
  - ✓ Have two teams competing against each other.

- ✓ Have a competition on an individual basis.
- You should outline the rules for the children to play by, and make them clear to the children. Keep these rules simple and clear.
  - ✓ *“First hand up answers the question”.*
  - ✓ *“No calling out”.*
- You could show the visual aid you will use (if any) and demonstrate it. For example, if you have two teams you could have two racing cars on the flannel board, and each time a team answers a question their car advances. The first one to reach the finishing line wins. Or you could use two rockets racing towards Mars, or a hare and tortoise racing each other, or a butterfly and a bee racing along a row of flowers.
- You could also use a visualized clock for your review. Make up 12 review questions, one for each hour of the clock. Divide the class into two teams. The questions become progressively harder as the hands of the clock are turned. 1-6 o’clock could have easy questions, 7-12 o’clock more difficult ones. Give more points for more difficult questions and the team with most points wins.
- Similar types of review could include any of the following:
  - ✓ Bible Tic Tac Toe, with a child from each team putting an ‘X’ or an ‘O’ onto the flannelgraph grid as the team answers the question.
  - ✓ Bible football with a “field” on the board and advances made (and goals scored) as they correctly answer questions.
  - ✓ A snowman contest. Divide the class into two teams. Have a white flannel snowman and a supply of small flannel snowballs for each team to go on the flannelgraph board. Ask questions, and a child can add a snowball beside each snowman for each correct answer. The snowman with the most snowballs at the end is the winner. Variations of this type of quiz for younger children include feeding carrots to a donkey, or nuts to a squirrel, or bananas to a monkey.  
Your local CEF office has a number of good, up-to- date, ideas for review contests and Bible quizzes.
  - ✓ Building quizzes. Each team could add one piece when a question is answered:
    - building a snowman

- making a caterpillar in sections
- constructing a train, carriage by carriage
- Other types of review include the following:
  - ✓ Give statements. Ask if they are true or false.
  - ✓ Missing word stories. Give a condensed outline of last week's lesson, letting the pupils fill in the blanks which you leave in the lesson.
  - ✓ Ask a child to put on the flannelgraph board the figures used in last week's lesson with him/her, or you or someone else, telling the lesson.

### ***Guidelines For Review***

There are several extra guidelines which could be of help to you when conducting your Bible quiz or review:

- Before starting you could remind the children briefly of last week's lesson (as a whole week has passed by) without giving too much away.
- Do not immediately ask the first child who responds, but wait for others to think and respond. This will give you a clearer idea of how many of the group have remembered.
- Do not allow the "clever" or older children to monopolize the answers, but try to involve as many as possible.
- Be conversational and add information here and there rather than just having questions and answers.
- Make sure everyone hears the answers. So repeat the answer given if necessary.
- Be careful how you react to a well intended answer which is completely wrong. Always correct wrong answers tactfully so that no one is hurt or embarrassed.
- Keep to the time allocated. Reduce the number of questions if necessary. Resist the temptation to let a quiz go on longer in order to fill up time.
- Keep control of the group, especially if the quiz is competitive. You could, for example, inform them that the car or rocket will move backwards if they shout out; or you could take away a snowball or banana if they are too noisy.



- End quickly with a word of praise for everyone (and not just the winners).
- Move quickly into the next part of your programme.

**Chapter 16:**  
**Preach The Word**  
*What Should be the Basis and Main Subject  
of My Teaching Ministry?*

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*Summary of Chapter*

*(Your most important responsibility is to teach the Word of God.)*

- **The Bible is God’s Word**
- **God commands us to teach His Word**
- **God promises to bless His Word**
- **God’s Word is powerful**
- **Therefore you should teach God’s Word**
- **But first of all you need to study it**

**W**e have, so far, considered a number of the essential parts of our teaching programme – singing, praying, memorizing and reviewing. We are now ready to study in the next few chapters the last section of the “fixed items” and the main part of our teaching programme – the teaching of a Bible lesson.

It is most important that teachers of children, and especially those who are just commencing their ministry, should understand that the Bible, God’s Word, must always play a central role in their teaching. While every part of your teaching programme will be based and focused upon the Word of God, your main opportunity to teach His Word will be during the last 20 minutes of your meeting.

However, it may be necessary to have the Bible lesson earlier, if the children are smaller and less able to concentrate. Also, you may wish to vary your programme from time to time by moving your Bible lesson to an earlier part of your programme.

During this time you will be actually teaching the Bible, and the truths contained in it, to the children.

## **The Bible Is God's Word**

You, as a teacher of God's Word, need to be clear in your own mind that the Bible is the written revelation of God and is verbally inspired. That means that the men who wrote the Bible were led and guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote, so that there is no error or mistake in any word of their original writings.

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"*

(2 Timothy 3 v16).

*"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1 v21).

You also need to understand that the Bible has four main functions and purposes:

- It tells us what God is like. It outlines and describes His character, His work and His actions.
- It tells us what we are like. It describes our nature, our words and our deeds.
- It tells us God's answer to our sin problem, and shows what He has done for us in Jesus Christ.
- It tells us what God wants us to do:
  - ✓ To be saved.
  - ✓ To grow in Christ.

## **God Commands Us to Teach His Word**

You also need to remember that God has called and commanded us to teach His Word to the children:

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28 v19, 20).

*"Till I come, give attention to reading, **to exhortation, to doctrine**"* (1 Timothy 4 v13).

***"Preach the word!** Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Timothy 4 v2).

*“And these words which I **command** you today shall be in your heart. You shall **teach them diligently to your children**, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”*(Deuteronomy 6, v6, 7).

*“You shall **teach them to your children**, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”*(Deuteronomy 11 v19).

*“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and **appointed a law** in Israel, which He **commanded** our fathers, that they should **make them known to their children**; That **the generation to come might know them**, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children. That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments”*(Psalm 78 v5-7).

Consequently, when you are teaching a Bible lesson to children – a lesson which explains and applies the Word of God to the children – you are obeying God’s command.

### **God Promises to Bless His Word**

God has made it clear in His Word that His blessing will rest upon His Word as it is faithfully taught and applied. Therefore, what you teach needs to be centred, at all times, on the Word of God, and your desire is that the children will obey that Word. You do not need to depend upon “gimmicks” or “gadgets”. Nor should you endeavour to entertain or amuse the children. Your task is to teach – not entertain. Your ministry is a ministry of the Word of God, and God has only promised to bless His Word as it is taught.

*“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; **It shall not return to Me void**, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isaiah 55 v10, 11).

### **God’s Word Is Powerful**

The Bible emphasizes, over and over again, that there is power in the Word of God, as it is taught, and that God uses His Word to speak to the hearts of children.

- He speaks through that Word to unsaved children:

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1 v16).*

*“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10 v17).*

*“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1 v23).*

- He speaks through that Word to saved children:

*“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17 v17).*

*“That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5 v26).*

*“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5 v13).*

The Bible describes itself and its power by a number of vivid illustrations:

- ✓ It is a sword to pierce and discern (Hebrews 4 v12).
- ✓ It is a seed to produce fruit (Luke 8 v11).
- ✓ It is a light to illuminate (Psalm 119 v105).
- ✓ It is a hammer to break the rock (Jeremiah 23 v29).
- ✓ It is food to nourish, and help, growth (Jeremiah 15 v16).
- ✓ It is rain and snow to refresh (Isaiah 55 v10, 11).
- ✓ It is a mirror to reflect sin (James 1 v22-24).
- ✓ It is honey to enjoy and satisfy (Ezekiel 3 v3).

God has given His Word to accomplish seven results in the lives of those who hear it, understand it and believe it. These results are outlined in 2 Timothy 3 v15-17:

*“And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

These two verses teach us that God’s Word is given:

- ✓ For salvation.
- ✓ For doctrine.
- ✓ For reproof - especially with regard to conduct.
- ✓ For correction – especially with regard to doctrine.
- ✓ For instruction in righteousness.
- ✓ That the child be perfect, fitted and ready.
- ✓ That the child be equipped for all good works.

### ***Teach the Word of God***

You should now see that your primary responsibility is to teach the Word of God to all the children in your family, class, or group, and that your primary opportunity to do this is during your teaching of a Bible lesson. This will usually be during the last 20 minutes or so of your teaching programme; but, as I have already explained, there might be some situations where you would want to include your Bible lesson at an earlier time in your programme. Much of the rest of this book will show you how to teach a Bible lesson. But there are several simple and elementary rules and principles you need to understand from the beginning, and follow as closely as you can:

- Teach the Bible **simply**. Make sure that your language and concepts are easy to understand.
- Teach the Bible **attractively**. While your task is not to entertain or “put on a show”, you should teach in such a way that the children will listen. You could use visuals to help you to do this; but the best visual aid is yourself, and your method of teaching should be animated, enthusiastic and with frequent illustrations.
- Teach the Bible **logically** and **systematically**. Each lesson should build upon the previous one. Don’t jump about from one part of the Bible to the other, or from one truth or theme to another. Plan your programme carefully.
- Teach the Bible **specifically**. That means that you should not try to teach too much. It is best to have one central truth in each lesson and concentrate your teaching on that one truth.
- Teach the Bible **practically**. The truth which you teach should be applied carefully to the everyday life of every child in your class,

showing them what they should do as a result of that truth.

As we have already seen you will have two groups of children in your class:

- ✓ Those who are saved, who have spiritual life, and who need spiritual food.
- ✓ Those who are not saved, who are spiritually dead, and who need the Gospel.

So you should apply the truth you have taught practically to both groups.

- ✓ Apply the central Bible truth to saved children to help them to grow.
  - ✓ Apply the central Bible truth to unsaved children to show them the way of salvation.
- Teach the Bible **prayerfully**. You are dependent upon the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. He is come to guide into all truth. (John 16 v13):
- ✓ The unsaved children are spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4 v4) and cannot understand the truth in their hearts, without the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2 v14).
  - ✓ The understanding of the saved child on its own is limited and dull, requiring the Holy Spirit to give enlightenment and clear understanding (Ephesians 1 v17, 18).

Therefore you will need to spend much time in prayer for the children and for your teaching of your lesson – that God the Holy Spirit will use His Word and work in the hearts of all the children.

### ***You Can Only Teach What You Know***

The first step for every teacher is to LEARN. A teacher must be a student before he can teach. Teaching is based upon knowledge. Every teacher of God's Word must therefore be, first of all, a student of God's Word. You can improve and deepen your knowledge of the Bible in several ways:

- By a daily and devotional study of a portion of Scripture in your Quiet Time each day. Your studies should be systematic. You could read and study right through the Bible over an extended period of

time; or you could read and study in a more concentrated way by going through each chapter of one Bible book verse by verse; or you could follow a theme or doctrine, and study all the verses and passages which deal with it.

- By setting aside a time each day (apart from your Quiet Time) to study the Bible – and especially to study the main doctrines or truths of the Bible. There are books which can help you in this study; for example my book “*How to Teach Bible Doctrines to Children*”, which is available from the address given at the front of this book.
- By attending a sound evangelical Bible-believing church, and by sitting under the teaching ministry of your pastor.
- By attending a good teacher training class. You should find out if Child Evangelism Fellowship has any such classes near where you live – and go to them regularly. If there are none, ask the local CEF director about the possibility of starting one.
- By using fundamental Bible-based teaching materials to help you prepare your Bible lessons. Those produced by my Mission, Child Evangelism Fellowship, are excellent.

The chapters which follow will go into all these “rules” in much more detail and show you, step by step, how to teach a Bible lesson effectively.



## Chapter 17: Be Systematic *What Teaching Plan Should I Follow?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need to have a well planned teaching programme.)*

- **Teach chronologically** – step by step through a book of the Bible.
- **Teach thematically** – step by step through a major doctrine.
- **Decide which you wish to do (or both)**
- **Teach the children also about the Bible and its background**
- **A 5-year teaching plan**
- **A sample file card to record what you have taught**

**A** Bible lesson is usually based on a passage of Scripture. So when you are teaching a Bible lesson you will probably choose a Bible passage and then narrate a story based on the passage you have chosen. But you will use that story (as we will see later) to teach truth to the children.

You need to follow a system in your Bible lessons. It is important that you follow an overall plan or system if you are teaching the Bible regularly to a group of children. Try to teach in an organized way over a period of time. Be systematic and build your teaching, with each lesson following on from the previous one, in an orderly and logical way. Otherwise the children hear some passages and stories in the Bible over and over again – and many others they never hear at all!

### ***Teach Chronologically***

The best system to follow is a chronological system – the way in which much of the Bible is written. This means that you choose the life of a Bible character, or the chronological events of a Bible book and go through

it systematically step by step, and lesson by lesson. The narrative provides the continuity from one week to the other.

One possibility, for example, would be to start at the beginning of the Bible and the beginning of the book of Genesis – teaching right through that book step by step. Genesis is a wonderful book. It is the book of beginnings and really provides the foundation for all that follows in the Bible.

It is not necessary to teach every little detail in Genesis. It would be sufficient to cover the book of Genesis in fifteen lessons with the titles and references as follows:

- Creation – Genesis 1 and 2
- Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden – Genesis 3
- Cain and Abel – Genesis 4
- Enoch – Genesis 5 v21-24 and Hebrews 11 v5
- Noah – Genesis 6-8
- The call and obedience of Abraham – Genesis 12 and 13
- The birth of Isaac, and Abraham's offering of his son – Genesis 21 and 22.
- A bride for Isaac – Genesis 24.
- Jacob and Esau, and Jacob's departure – Genesis 27, 28.
- Jacob's time with Laban, and his return home – Genesis 29-33
- Joseph at home and in the pit – Genesis 37
- Joseph in Egypt and in prison – Genesis 39 and 40
- Joseph in the palace – Genesis 41
- Joseph and his brothers – Genesis 42 – 45
- Revision of the whole book – showing how it all fits together. You could, for example, place one key picture from each of the preceding lessons on the flannelboard as you revise.

Other chronological series of lessons which could follow your lessons on Genesis could include the following:

- The life of Moses
- The life of Joshua
- The life of David
- The life of Jesus Christ
- The Acts of the Apostles

You can see a number of such chronological series of lessons in the five-year teaching plan which follows.

### ***Teach Thematically***

Instead of teaching your Bible lessons in chronological order, you may decide to choose a truth which you will teach over a period of weeks. Then look for and select, Bible passages and stories which will help you to teach that truth. Each lesson will then follow on from the previous lessons in a logical and systematic way.

For example you could teach a series of five lessons on God:

- God is Creator – Genesis 1.
- God is holy – Isaiah’s vision in Isaiah 6.
- God is powerful – The crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14).
- God is love – The death of Jesus Christ for sinners (Matthew 27).
- God is faithful – God looks after Elijah (1 Kings 17).

Or, if you wanted to teach a series on the Bible, you could teach the following five lessons:

- The Bible is God’s Word – The discovery of the Law in Josiah’s reign (2 Kings 22 and 23).
- The Bible is true – The Christmas story and prophecies concerning Christ (Matthew 1 and 2).
- The Bible is everlasting – Jeremiah and Baruch (Jeremiah 36).
- The Bible shows us Christ – Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8).
- The Bible is for me – Ezra reads God’s word to the people (Nehemiah 8).

Using outlines like these you are following and developing a systematic theme, doctrine, or truth, but your teaching of Scripture is not systematic because you are choosing passages of Scripture “here and there”. On the other hand, the previously mentioned chronological system follows the Scripture systematically, but the themes or doctrines are not systematic!

You can see a number of thematic series of lessons in the five-year teaching plan outlined in the pages which follow.

### ***Which Plan Should You Follow?***

It is probably better to combine both systems in your long-term planning of a teaching programme. You can see how these two systems can be combined in the five-year teaching programme outlined on the next pages. But whichever plan you follow you should give careful thought to the truths you will teach, so that your teaching is comprehensive, and no areas of truth are neglected. In addition, you should keep a balance between your use of the Old Testament and the New Testament, as you can see again in the plan on the following pages.

It is good to have planning sheets (as on page 137) on which you can plan the lessons you will teach over the next year. These sheets will also provide you with a record afterwards of what you have taught. Or, you might prefer to file separate cards for each lesson, as on page 138. You should also keep and file all your lesson outlines for record purposes and possible re-use.

### ***Don't Forget the Background***

It is important not just to teach Bible lessons, but also in your overall teaching programme to give the children teaching about the Bible itself and its background. This is especially needed for children with little or no knowledge of the Bible:

- You need to teach the children that the Bible is the Word of God and how you know it is.
- You need to explain the structure of the Bible, its two divisions, and its 66 books.
- You need to explain how the Bible was written, and also how it has been translated into your language.
- You need to show the children why the Bible is so important, and why they should study it, read it and listen to it.
- You want the children to have Bibles, and to treat them reverently.

These subjects should be dealt with from time to time, as a background to your presentation of Bible lessons to the children.

We have produced a series of five visualized doctrinal lessons entitled “*The Bible*” which helps to “fill in the background”.

## **A 5-Year Teaching Plan**

To help you in the planning of your teaching programmes, I am including here a possible five-year plan, which could help you teach your children the Word of God and the truths contained in it. I am estimating that you will have 40 meetings each year, as you might not have meetings during holiday times. However, if you have more than 40 meetings each year, you would need to adjust your plans to include more lessons.

### **First Year**

The two main series used in the first year's programme are 15 lessons on the book of Genesis and 12 lessons on the first part of the Life of Christ. These are supplemented with 5 evangelistic lessons using the Wordless Book and 5 lessons on the Bible.

- ☐ ***The Wordless Book*** visualized (5 lessons)  
(These lessons give a clear presentation of the Gospel at the very beginning of your teaching year).
- ☐ ***The book of Genesis*** (15 lessons)  
(The first book of the Bible gives a good foundation, both for evangelism and Christian growth).
- \* ***The Bible*** (5 lessons)  
(It is important for the children to understand, right from the beginning, that the Bible is God's Word – as this is the source of, and basis for, all your teaching).
- ☐ ***The Life of Christ*** Part I (12 lessons)  
(These lessons form the "centre-piece" of this year's teaching programme)
- **A Christmas lesson**
- **An Easter Lesson**
- **A Gospel-focused lesson to be used when especially needed**

### **Second Year**

The two main series of lessons are the "*Life of Moses*" (from the Old Testament), and the second part of the "*Life of Christ*" (from the New Testament). These two series continue on from the two series taught during the previous year. and are supplemented by an introductory series of evangelistic lessons, plus ten lessons on the doctrine of God.

- \* ***Questions Children Ask*** (5 lessons)  
(Gospel-focused doctrinal lessons which are a good introduction to the second year of teaching, and start the teaching year with a clear and strong emphasis on evangelism).
- □ ***Life of Moses*** (10 lessons)  
(These lessons continue on from the lessons on Genesis taught during the first year).
- \* ***Who Is God?*** (5 lessons)  
(These doctrinal lessons give simple and basic teaching about God).
- □ ***The Life of Christ*** Part 2 (12 lessons)  
(These lessons continue on from, and complete, the series on the “*Life of Christ*” started the previous year)
- \* ***What is God Like?*** (5 lessons)  
(These doctrinal lessons follow on from the lessons on God taught earlier in the year – and give detailed teaching and applications on five of God’s attributes).
- **A Christmas lesson**
- **An Easter lesson**
- **A Gospel-focused lesson**

### Third Year

The two main series taught this year follow on from the two previous years. In the Old Testament lessons are taught from Joshua, Judges and Ruth; and in the New Testament the lessons are taught from the Acts of the Apostles.

There are also two supplementary series of systematic doctrinal lessons on the themes of Jesus Christ and sin.

- \* ***The Lord Jesus Christ*** (5 lessons)  
(These doctrinal lessons on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ are a good follow-up to the two series on “*The Life of Christ*” which were taught during the previous two years. They are also a good introduction to this year’s teaching programme).
- □ ***Joshua*** (6 lessons)
- □ ***Judges*** (5 lessons)
- □ ***Ruth*** (4 lessons)

(These 15 Old Testament lessons follow on, chronologically, from the series on Genesis and Moses taught during the previous two years).

➤ \* ***What is Wrong with this World*** (5 lessons)

(These are doctrinal lessons which teach the children systematically about sin – its origin, its results and God’s solution to it).

➤ □ ***Acts Of The Apostles*** (12 lessons)

(These lessons follow on from the “*Life of Christ*” taught during the previous two years)

➤ **A Christmas lesson**

➤ **An Easter lesson**

➤ **A Gospel-focused lesson**

#### Fourth Year

The Old Testament series continues with lessons on David and Elijah; and the New Testament series this year outlines the parables taught by the Lord Jesus. These are supplemented by 10 doctrinal lessons which cover every aspect of God’s plan of salvation – systematically and logically.

➤ \* ***Salvation - The Gift of God*** part 1 (5 lessons)

(This is the first part of a systematic study of God’s salvation, which will be helpful to both saved and unsaved children).

➤ □ ***Life of David*** (10 lessons)

➤ □ ***Elijah*** (5 lessons)

(These two series continue, chronologically, the teaching of the Old Testament).

➤ \* ***Salvation - The Gift of God*** part 2 (5 lessons)

(The second section of this vital doctrinal series).

➤ □ ***The Parables Of The Lord Jesus*** (12 lessons)

(These would be a fitting climax and conclusion to the year’s teaching and will continue to keep your teaching programme focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ).

➤ **A Christmas lesson**

➤ **An Easter lesson**

➤ **A Gospel-focused lesson**

## Fifth Year

This is the last year of the five-year teaching programme bringing the Old Testament teaching to a close with lessons on Elisha, Esther, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah. It also brings the New Testament series to a close with a further five lessons on Jesus Christ and 3 lessons on Peter.

In addition there is a series of much needed lessons on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

- \* ***The Holy Spirit*** (5 lessons) (Available in 2007)  
(These are vital doctrinal lessons which the children need to hear and understand)
- □ ***Elisha*** (5 lessons)
- □ ***Esther*** (6 lessons)
- □ ***Daniel*** (6 lessons)
- # ***Ezra and Nehemiah*** (7 lessons)  
(These lessons complete the Old Testament series of lessons).
- # ***A Saviour For You*** (5 lessons)  
(This series continues to focus our teaching on the Lord Jesus Christ).
- □ ***Life Of Peter*** (3 lessons)  
(This series completes the New Testament series of lessons).
- **A Christmas lesson**
- **An Easter lesson**
- **A Gospel-focused lesson**

If you wish to have detailed outlines of the series given in the above programme, and if you want to have flannelgraph figures or flashcards to use as visual aids with these lessons, you should contact one of the following three addresses:

□ - Series available from CEF Inc., PO Box 348, Warrenton, Missouri 63383, USA.

# - Series available from European CEF Headquarters, Kilchzimmer, 4438 Langenbruck, Switzerland.

These series are only available for sale.

\* - Series available (or soon to be available) from Child Evangelism Fellowship Specialized Book Ministry, PO Box 308, Lisburn, BT28 2YS, N Ireland.

The number of lessons in each series as indicated in this 5-year teaching plan may vary a little from the number contained in the series published by CEF.



SAMPLE PLANNING AND RECORD SHEETS

Date	Lesson	Central Truth	Application for unsaved child	Application for saved child

Date	Lesson	Central Truth	Application for unsaved child	Application for saved child

Explanation: The first three columns need to be used for every lesson. You will, in addition, use one or both of the other columns.

Each card can be used to record a series of, say, six lessons. You may need to enlarge them to do so.

**SAMPLE FILE CARDS FOR EACH LESSON TAUGHT**

Date	
Lesson	
Central Truth	
Application to unsaved child	
Application to saved child	

Date	
Lesson	
Central Truth	
Application to unsaved child	
Application to saved child	

Date	
Lesson	
Central Truth	
Application to unsaved child	
Application to saved child	

## Chapter 18:

### Capture Their Attention

#### *How Can I Tell a Bible Story?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need, first of all, to know how to tell a Bible story.)*

- **Choose your beginning**
  - ✓ Direct approach
  - ✓ A question
  - ✓ An exciting part of the story
  - ✓ An illustration
- **Progression of events**
- **Climax**
- **Conclusion**
- **Make out your story plan**

**T**he first step for those who want to know how to teach a Bible lesson is to learn how to tell a Bible story. Children like to listen to a story, and a story which is well told will always capture their attention. However, as we will see later, we need to see the difference between a Bible story and a Bible lesson. A Bible story is a narrative of events and actions; a Bible lesson teaches truth. But because a Bible lesson is generally based upon a Bible story we need to know, first of all, how to tell or relate a Bible story. The next step will be (in the chapters which follow) to see and understand how to turn that Bible story into a Bible lesson by including truth in it.

A Bible story should have a structure which includes a beginning, a progression of events, a climax and a conclusion.

#### ***The Beginning***

It is important to begin the story well. “Well begun is half done”. This

is the best place to capture the attention and interest of the children, and the worst place to lose it. If you do not have the children's attention it will be impossible to teach them anything. So try to establish a point of contact with the children; talk about something which is within their experience, something with which they can identify or which will arouse their curiosity.

The beginning should always have a clear link with what follows. It is pointless to have an outstanding and arresting introduction which does not lead into the rest of the story. You will succeed in getting the children's attention, only to lose it! Make the beginning a 'stepping stone' to the rest of the story. Keep the beginning brief. Remember that the main body of the story has to follow!

Be careful not to give away the secret of the story in the beginning:

*"Today we're going to hear about a man called Jonah who was swallowed by a big fish."* That is the story told, in 17 words! Avoid introductions like, *"Now sit up, fold your arms! I'm going to tell you a story"*, or *"I'm sure you've heard this story before ..."* or, *"Today we are going to learn about the need to repent."* That may be what you are going to teach, but you must first of all get the children's attention. If you ask, *"Have you ever heard the story about ...?"* you will have a problem on your hands, if someone says "Yes!"

There are four main ways to begin a story; but if you discover other effective ways, don't hesitate to use them! The story on Naboth's vineyard (in 1 Kings chapter 21), for example, could begin in one of the following ways:

### **Direct approach**

You may start with the action of the story. Think of several sentences which will capture the attention of the children.

*"It was just the vineyard the king wanted, and right beside his summer palace! The king thought about it, and thought about it. You see, he had a big problem: the vineyard didn't belong to him!"*

If you are teaching a well known story, do not divulge the names of the main characters at the beginning. If you do, you may have to cope with *"We know that story"* or, *"We heard that story in school and I don't like it!"*

## Question

You could ask a question which is related to the beginning of the narrative, or in the case of a Bible lesson is related to the truth you will be teaching.

*“Is there something that you would really like to have? (Listen to the children’s answers). There was something King Ahab wanted very, very much.”*

If you teach a small group of children this is a good way to get them involved. But remember that children’s answers can last for a very long time! Control the questioning and answering so that you do not waste valuable time.

## An exciting part of the story

This is the flashback approach, when you begin with an outstanding part of the narrative, and then go back to the beginning to tell how it came about.

*“He had lots of money, servants, lovely food, the best house in the land ... and he was king. You’d expect him to be happy. But just look at him ... he’s in bed sulking! Whatever is wrong? I’ll tell you what happened.”*

## Illustration

You may begin with a little everyday story with which the children can identify. Make sure that it is kept short, and that there is a clear link between it and the narrative which follows.

*“The gleaming racing bicycle shot past Philip once more. ‘I wish I had it,’ he thought for the hundredth time as he pedalled his very ordinary, rather rusty bike. When he arrived at school, there it was again. He stopped and looked at all those extra fittings. He’d never wanted anything as much as he wanted that bike. King Ahab felt just like that – not about a bike, but about a vineyard.”*

Alternatively, when you are teaching a Bible lesson, you may begin with an illustration linked with the truth you are going to teach in the lesson.

*“Is anybody fair?” muttered Alan as he kicked a stone along the road on Friday afternoon. He’d been kept in after school all week because some of the boys in his class had been caught throwing stones*

*at cars. He had been there but had not thrown one stone. In fact he was just waiting for a friend who had gone into a shop.*

*‘And you expect me to believe that story?’ the teacher asked. When he explained she didn’t believe. Little wonder Alan muttered, ‘Is anybody fair?’ Teachers do make mistakes like that; so do mums and dads; but God never does. The Bible tells us that God is just, that He is fair.”*

### ***Progression of Events***

This is the main part of the narrative. This is not a list of unrelated happenings, but a sequence of events, held together by the main thread of the story.

It is a progression, with one event leading to the next. Do not be side tracked into including incidents which are unrelated to the narrative. Avoid long, descriptive detail. The progression of events should be listed in the order in which they will be taught, using simple phrases to summarize each event.

The progression of events in a lesson on Naboth’s vineyard could be written as follows:

- A.Ahab covets Naboth’s vineyard*
- B.Ahab asks Naboth for it*
- C.Naboth refuses sale or exchange*
- D.Ahab sulks*
- E. Jezebel intervenes*
- F. Jezebel writes letters*
- G.Naboth is murdered*
- H.Ahab goes to take vineyard*
- I. Ahab meets Elijah*

Having a list of the events helps you develop the plot clearly. There should be this clear development, or progression, in the story. Each event will be leading to the next, and nearer to the climax.

### ***Climax***

This is the high point of the story; the other events have led up to it. This is where the hero wins, the problem is solved, or the mystery ends. The children’s interest is at its greatest height, and you satisfy their curiosity,

suspense or anxiety, as the threads of the plot are untangled.

The climax of the story on Naboth's vineyard might be: Elijah's warning from the Lord: *"Where Naboth died, you will die!"*

Work on the climax to make it really exciting. In some stories there will be several possible climaxes. Choose the one which pinpoints most clearly the truth you are teaching. It should also end the action of the story. Make sure the climax is near the end, otherwise you will have an anticlimax as well! Occasionally you may have a problem finding the climax. If you cannot find it, keep the main events moving, and make sure there is action in the story right to the end.

### **Conclusion**

This should come immediately after the climax. Sometimes teachers have finished but cannot stop, and this can spoil a good story. So it is important to give careful thought to how you are going to finish the story. Keep the conclusion brief. In a few sentences "round off" the narrative. (When teaching a lesson urge the children to act towards God on the basis of the truth you have taught). Nothing new should be introduced at this stage. The ending to a story on Naboth's vineyard might be something like this:

*"What happened to Ahab and Jezebel? Ahab went out to fight in a battle. He disguised himself so that the enemy would not know he was the king, but he was struck by an arrow and he died. Some time after that, Jezebel his wife was thrown down from a high window by her enemies and killed; and so what God said would happen to them did happen. What use was Naboth's vineyard to them now?"*

### **Your Story Plan**

We can now write down a simple outline of this story which will show us the plan we should follow when telling it.

#### **I. Beginning**

"Is anybody fair?" muttered Alan.

#### **II. Progression of events**

- A. Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard
- B. Ahab asks Naboth for it
- C. Naboth refuses sale or exchange
- D. Ahab sulks
- E. Jezebel intervenes
- F. Jezebel writes letters
- G. Naboth is murdered
- H. Ahab goes to take vineyard
- I. Meets Elijah

III. **Climax**

Elijah's warning from the Lord:

*"Where Naboth died, you will die!"*

IV. **Conclusion**

- A. Ahab's death
- B. Jezebel's death



## Chapter 19:

### Follow The Rules

#### *How Can I Be a Good Teacher?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You should understand and follow the principles of teaching.)*

- **Be sure to teach – and not just talk**
- **Keep it simple**
- **Don't try to teach too much**
- **Use illustrations**
- **Repetition is essential**
- **Don't forget the practical applications**

**B**efore continuing with a detailed study of how to teach a Bible lesson, we need to understand clearly what it means to teach.

Teaching is governed by a number of principles. The teacher who understands these principles and puts them into practice will generally be a good and effective teacher; and the opposite is also true.

I have outlined all these principles of teaching in detail in a previous book entitled *“The Principles of Teaching”*; and you can receive a copy of this book, if you wish, by writing to the address given at the front of the present book – outlining your ministry and how you feel this book would help you.

But in this chapter I wish to draw your attention to six of the most important and basic principles of teaching. Your teaching of God's Word in your Bible lesson will be greatly helped if you follow these principles.

#### ***Teach – Don't Just Talk***

The principle of explanation encourages us to teach and not just talk.

*Effective teaching necessitates the careful and thorough clarification and explanation of the truth(s) to be taught.*

One of the first principles a teacher needs to learn is that he is supposed to **teach**. His primary responsibility is to teach and not just talk. So often we say things to the children and expect them to understand on the strength of what we have said; but that is not teaching.

You will usually base your lesson on a Bible story. You will tell the story from the Bible in narrative form, making it as interesting and exciting as possible. But the story is only the vehicle or channel through which you will teach a truth to the children. Telling a story on its own is not sufficient; your aim is to teach truth – the truth which is illustrated by the story.

However, it is not sufficient just to state the truth once or twice during the story; and it is certainly not good or helpful to leave the “teaching” of that truth until after the story is finished.

Instead, in several places throughout the story, you will weave in the truth you are teaching and use each introduction of the truth to explain another aspect of that truth. In other words, you will **explain** the truth from time to time throughout your story. Each introduction should be natural and should be linked with the narrative, and each time the truth is introduced into your lesson you will take it one step further – so that by the end of the story the truth has been thoroughly **explained**.

### **Watch Your Words**

The principle of simplification shows us that we should watch the words we use.

*Effective teaching demands that the words used and the concepts taught be simple enough for the listeners to understand.*

One of the main mistakes most teachers are guilty of is the use of words, concepts, and images which are not known to the children. This is especially true with regard to the words used. We so often use big words with which the children are not familiar; and, even more often, we use theological words (and concepts) which we understand perfectly – but they don’t. (Indeed sometimes we ourselves don’t understand them fully).

Teaching is the art of communication. The teacher has a truth or concept in his understanding and he wants it to be transferred to, and absorbed in, the children’s understanding. But to do so he must use language and concepts which the children also understand:

- This does not mean the use of “baby language”, nor does it mean

talking down to the children. They don't appreciate either of these. But it does mean talking simply and understandably.

- This does not mean that we should never use longer words or theological words. It is permissible, even advisable, to do so from time to time - but only if they are properly explained. In this way we are expanding both the children's understanding and the children's vocabulary.

### ***Don't Try to Teach Too Much***

The principle of concentration emphasizes that we should not teach too much.

*Effective teaching demands that the teacher makes it his goal to teach less and to teach it more thoroughly.*

If you have twenty minutes to teach a Bible lesson you must be careful not to try to teach too much. Because we know so much, and the children know so little, we want to pack as much as possible into those twenty minutes. But there are two problems - or rather two limitations:

- We are limited in how much we can teach. If we are going to teach and explain (rather than just say something) we need to take time to do so; and we are not able to teach a number of truths during those twenty minutes.
- The children are limited in what they can understand and learn. If we want them to understand we should teach less, and do it thoroughly.

Surely it is better to teach less, so that the children understand what we are teaching – rather than teaching more, so that the children understand little or nothing.

Consequently, as you will learn later in the book, it is better for you to teach one truth only in each Bible lesson. By explaining that truth thoroughly in your lesson you can expect the children to understand and learn it better.

### ***Switch on a Light***

The principle of illustration teaches us the importance of “switching on

a light”.

*Effective teaching necessitates the use of illustration – to let the light in.*

As you are teaching truth to the children you are, in a sense, leading them into the darkness. You are leading them to where they have never been before. The truth is new and difficult for them to understand. One of the best ways to dispel darkness is to “switch on a light”! As the light appears, the darkness disappears.

The word “illustrate” means “to light up” or “to throw light upon”, and one of your responsibilities is to illustrate and make visible the truth you are teaching. Consequently, in every Bible lesson you need to use illustrations. An illustration is a story which is interesting, clear and understandable to the child, and to which he listens well. At the same time that illustration helps to explain, or light up, the truth being taught so that the child can say “Oh, now I see it!”

- When your lesson is based upon a Bible story or narrative, that narrative should itself provide the illustration of the truth it is teaching. In this case you may not need many, or even any more illustrations.
- However, even when telling a Bible story it can be a help to include at least one, or at most two illustrations, to cast more light on the truth – and especially when you are applying the truth.
- When your lesson is not based on a Bible story, but is aimed at the teaching and explanation of a Bible truth or doctrine, then it is strongly recommended to use several illustrations, provided they really do illustrate the truth. These illustrations will help to keep the children’s attention. Their attention might wander if there was only explanation of the truth on its own, and without illustration.

### ***Say It Again***

The principle of repetition underlines the necessity to keep saying what you want the children to understand again and again and again.

*Effective teaching depends on the constant repetition of the truth being taught.*

We are all so slow to learn. This applies as much to us as teachers as it does to the children we are teaching. Very few people learn

something the first time they hear it. They need to hear it again – and again – and again.

Consequently, you need to be sure to keep coming back to the truth you are teaching:

- You should in your Bible lesson repeat your teaching of the central truth at least three, four or five times. You will do this if you weave the truth into your lesson at different places, as I explained on a previous page. But you need to be sure not just to say the same words over and over again. That is not what I mean by repetition. You should keep coming back to the same truth – but each time you should explain a different aspect of it. It is the same truth, but looked at in a different way.
- You should include the truth being taught in your Bible lesson in other parts of your teaching programme, including the songs you sing and the verse you help the children to memorize.
- You should keep coming back to the truths you have taught in previous lessons to reinforce your teaching of those truths. You can do this through the use of a chorus or song which contains the truth you have previously taught, or a memory verse, or a short doctrine lesson, or in the Bible quiz, or in the missionary story – or the truth you have already taught may appear again in another Bible lesson.

### ***Be Practical***

The principle of application reminds us to be practical in our teaching.

*Effective teaching always includes a direct application of the truth taught to the hearts and lives of the children.*

It is most important that you do not teach truth or doctrine on its own. The truth you teach needs to be applied. You need to show the children what they should now **do**, because of the truth they have just **learned**. Action should follow learning.

At the same time, you need to be careful not to give applications when you haven't taught truth. Your task is not firstly to tell the children what to do; it is to teach the children what they should understand and believe – and then teach them what to do on the basis of what they have learned.

We have already seen that there are two groups of children – those

who have trusted Christ and who are spiritually alive, and those who have not trusted Christ and who are spiritually dead. The first group needs to be fed, the second group needs to be evangelized.

The teacher's task, therefore, is to teach one central truth to all the children in his group using the Bible lesson to do so – and then to apply that truth in two ways:

- You should apply the truth to the saved children to show them what they need to do (on the basis of that truth) to grow spiritually.
- You should apply it to the unsaved children to show them what they need to do (on the basis of that truth) to be saved.

### ***Summary***

Your teaching of a Bible lesson, as outlined in more detail in the chapters which follow, should be based upon six principles:

- Teach the truth, and don't just say it.
- Simplify the truth, and don't be complicated.
- Concentrate on one truth, and don't try to teach too much.
- Illustrate the truth so that the children can "see it".
- Repeat the truth so that the children will remember it.
- Apply the truth so that the children will know what to do as a result of it.

## Chapter 20:

### Use The Story To Teach Truth

#### *How Can I Teach a Bible Lesson?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Now you are ready to learn how to teach a Bible lesson.)*

- **Study your passage of Scripture**
- **Understand the purpose of your lesson – to teach truth**
- **Teach the truth which is in the passage**
- **Teach one truth thoroughly**
- **Apply the central truth to both groups of children**
- **A sample lesson outline**

**W**e learned in chapter 18 how to tell a Bible story. The next step is to learn how to turn your Bible story into a Bible lesson, keeping in mind the six principles of teaching which are outlined in chapter 19, and basing your teaching on them. Your goal is not just to narrate a story – no matter how interesting and attractive it is – but to teach truth to the children. The story is just the vehicle you use, and a way to teach truth, attractively and effectively.

#### ***Study Your Passage of Scripture***

It is obvious that before telling a Bible story, or before teaching a Bible lesson, it is absolutely necessary to study carefully and prayerfully the Bible passage on which the story or lesson is based:

- **Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to understand what God is saying in this passage.**
- **Read the passage thoughtfully and carefully at least eight or ten times. Approach it with an open mind. Allow the Scripture**

passage, rather than any preconceived ideas of your own, to determine its teaching.

- Get the narrative of the passage clear in your mind. Try to visualize the story in your mind in preparation for telling it.
- Study the passage in detail to find the truth you are going to teach through the story.

### **A Bible Lesson Teaches Truth**

The beginning, the progression of events, the climax and the conclusion form the structure of a story. They also form the structure of a Bible lesson, and your task is to use that story and its structure to teach truth. It is good for the children to know that Ahab was a king, that he wanted Naboth's vineyard, that Elijah met him there; but it is vital and even more important that they should know about the God whom Ahab offended, what God's justice means, and the results of disobeying Him.

The Bible is much more than a story book, and this should be evident as you teach it to children. Consequently, you need to use the narrative to teach truth. It requires much more thought and effort to teach Bible truths, but this is what the children need to know.

*"And you shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** shall make you free"* (John 8 v32).

As you consider teaching truth, remember the command of the Lord Jesus Christ:

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28 v19, 20).

The Great Commission is not fulfilled by telling stories – even Bible stories. It is fulfilled by the teaching of truth. Two aspects of teaching are clearly included in this verse. The initial teaching – *"make disciples"* – is done with a view to bringing children into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, thus becoming His disciples: this is teaching evangelism. The other aspect of teaching is that of *"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"*. This is instruction to edify believers. Keep this two-fold responsibility of evangelizing and edifying in mind as you teach Bible lessons. The purpose of a Bible lesson is to bring to salvation and/or



edify the individual or group listening. The teaching of biblical truth is the basis of both evangelism and edification; and this underlines the absolute necessity of teaching truth in every Bible lesson.

### ***A Bible Lesson Teaches the Truth in the Passage***

As you read the passage of Scripture on which the lesson is based, you should not have preconceived ideas about particular truths you will use to teach the passage. Do not try to “fit in” truths. Rather, read and study the Bible passage, and look for the truth or truths which this particular portion of Scripture teaches. Do not **teach** truths which are not in the passage, or force the passage to say what **you** want it to say. It is the Bible passage which should determine what you should teach.

You need to address yourself continually to the portion of Scripture and the truth it contains. For example, the account of Elijah’s struggle with the prophets of Baal does not teach the Second Coming of Christ; it teaches that “the Lord is the only true God”. The account of David being chosen as king teaches that “God looks on the heart”.

As you study you will see a truth or truths emerging from the passage and **this** is what you will teach the children. The starting point is the passage of Scripture and this determines the truth which you should teach in your lesson.

In the passage which we selected in our last chapter to use as the basis of our Bible story (Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21) you will find a number of truths:

- *Coveting is sin (verse 2).*
- *Lying is sin (verses 13).*
- *The human heart is deceitful (verses 7-10).*
- *Murder is sin (verse 14).*
- *God knows everything (verse 18).*
- *God is just and punishes sin (verses 19, 21-24).*
- *Sin always has consequences (chapter 22 v37, 38; 2 Kings 9 v30-37).*

### ***The Bible Lesson Teaches One Truth Thoroughly***

Often as you read a passage of Scripture you will see many truths in it

(as we have just seen in 1 Kings 21). If you try to teach or even mention all of these truths as you teach, the children will become confused and not learn any of them. Be selective. Choose the truth which dominates the passage, the one which is apparent several times in the narrative. The central truth should be a truth which the Scripture passage teaches easily and naturally. It will usually be the main truth emerging from the narrative.

Then you should teach thoroughly this central truth in your lesson. You should not teach the other truths, because they would detract from the teaching of the central truth. But other truths can be mentioned, if they help in the teaching and application of the central truth.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the *“teacher come from God”*, gave us a wonderful example of this principle in the parables He taught. Each parable has a central truth, although other truths are often included. When He taught the ‘Good Samaritan’, the Lord Jesus was teaching especially: *“God wants you to love your neighbour”*. In the parable of the ‘Ten Virgins’, He was teaching *“The Son of Man is coming back again – perhaps today”*.

When we looked at the passage concerning Naboth we saw a number of truths in that passage. You should now choose **one** of these truths and teach it thoroughly throughout the lesson.

For example, you could choose as your central truth *“God is just (fair) and must punish sin.”*

You could, as I have already said, also **mention** other truths which would help you teach and apply this truth. But your teaching should concentrate on the one central truth.

Ordinarily a teaching ministry to children is conducted on a regular basis in a weekly Sunday School class, a weekly Good News Club, a weekly children’s meeting, or in a daily ministry in camp or Holiday Bible Club. When you are teaching children on a regular basis your aim should be to teach thoroughly one truth in each lesson.

This does not mean that you spend most of your lesson time on the narrative, because you are going to teach only one truth! You will spend a good proportion of your lesson time explaining and applying the central truth. It does not mean that your lesson is weak in content. You will thoroughly teach the central truth so that the content certainly is not shallow.

### ***The Bible Lesson Applies the Central Truth***

It is very important not just to teach truth, but also to apply it. So throughout your lesson you will be doing three things:

- You will **teach** the central truth to **all** the children.
- You will **apply** the central truth to the **unsaved** children to challenge and invite them to trust Christ.
- You will **apply** the central truth to the **saved** children to help them grow spiritually.

We chose as the central truth of 1 Kings 21 “*God is fair and must punish sin.*”

- You should teach **that** truth right through your lesson – to ensure that all the children understand it.
- You should apply **that** truth to the unsaved children.  
*“(Therefore) you need to trust Jesus Christ or you will be punished for your sin.”*
- You should apply **that** truth to the saved children.  
*“(Therefore) God wants you to be fair and honest at all times.”*

The subject of application is dealt with, in more detail, in chapter 23.

### ***Lesson Outline***

We have already written out the story outline of 1 Kings 21 on page 142. Now we will write it out again on the next page; but this time as a complete lesson outline which will also include the teaching and application of truth. Each time the central truth is touched upon and taught put the letters CT on your outline. When it is applied to the unsaved children use the letters CTU, and when it is applied to the saved children the letters CTS:

**Central truth**

*God is fair and must punish sin.*

**Application to unsaved children**

*“(Therefore) you need to trust Jesus Christ or you will be punished for your sin.”*

**Application to saved children**

*“(Therefore) God wants you to be fair and honest at all times.”*

I. Beginning

**CT** “Is anybody fair?”, Alan muttered  
(*God is fair*).

II. Progression of Events

- A. Ahab covets Naboth’s vineyard  
(*Speak about sin. We are all sinners*)
- CTS** B. Ahab asks Naboth for it  
(*Christian children should not covet*)
- A. Naboth refuses sale or exchange
- B. Ahab sulks
- C. Jezebel intervenes
- F. Jezebel writes letters  
**CTS** (*Christian children should be honest*).
- G. Naboth is murdered  
**CTS** (*Christian children should not harm or hurt others*)
- H. Ahab goes to take the vineyard
- I. Ahab meets Elijah  
**CTU** (*Speak about God knowing everything and that He knows you and your sin*)

III. Climax

**CTU** Elijah’s warning from the Lord  
(*God is fair, and promises to judge your sin if you are not saved*)  
“Where Naboth died you will die ”

IV. Conclusion

A. Ahab dies

B. Jezebel dies

**CTU**

*(God dealt fairly with them and punished their sin. He will also deal fairly with you and punish your sin, unless you trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour)*

## Chapter 21: Study The Word *How Can I Find the Central Truth?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need, first of all, to find the central truth of your passage.)*

- **Pray for guidance**
- **Find all the truths in the passage**
- **Choose which one is the central truth:**
  - ✓ The one which appears most often
  - ✓ The one through which God speaks to you
  - ✓ The one most needed by your children
  - ✓ Different from those you have taught recently
- **Write down your central truth**
- **Be sure to vary your central truths**
- **Keep a record of your central truths**

**W**e have already seen that when you are teaching a Bible lesson to children there are two basic facts to keep in mind:

- The ability of the children to understand what you are teaching is limited. They cannot take in too much.
- Your ability as a teacher is also limited. You cannot really teach effectively if you are trying to teach too much.

Therefore it is best, as we have already seen, when teaching your Bible lesson, to teach one truth – and to use your story or lesson to teach that one truth thoroughly to all the children. This truth is known as the central truth.

Many teachers of children discover that the most difficult part of Bible lesson presentation is to **FIND** the central truth of the passage on which their lesson is based.

However, it is not really difficult to do so if you follow these steps.

### ***Pray for Guidance***

Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to see and understand all the truths in the passage of Scripture on which the lesson is based, and later that He will help you to have the discernment to know which of these is the central truth that He wants you to teach the children.

### ***Find the Truths in the Passage***

A truth is something you want the children to hear, understand, learn and apply to their lives – and it should be expressed in a short, simple statement or sentence.

Read and study the Bible passage on which your lesson is based very carefully, and then ask yourself a number of questions to help you find and identify truths:

- Is there a truth about God which I want the children to understand?
- Is there a truth about Jesus Christ?
- Is there a truth about the Holy Spirit?
- Is there a truth about themselves?
- Is there a truth about sin?
- Is there a truth about salvation?
- Is there a truth about sanctification and holiness?
- Is there a truth about the Bible?
- Is there a truth about the future?
- Is there a truth about some other subject?

You will probably find several truths in your passage. For example, in the story of Noah and the flood in Genesis chapter 6, 7 and 8, you could find the following ten truths:

- God is just and must punish sin (Genesis 6 v6).
- There is only one door (one way) of salvation (Genesis 6 v16; 7 v7, 16).
- Man is sinful in his nature and actions (Genesis 6 v5).
- God is faithful, and always keeps His promises (Genesis 6 v7; 6 v18:7 v21; 8 v1, 18, 21, 22).
- God cares for and looks after those who obey Him (Genesis 6 v18;

- 8 v1).
- God is powerful, and can do anything (Genesis 6 v13; 7 v11, 12; 8 v1).
- God does not want us to allow other things to take His place. (Link passage with Matthew 24 v37-39).
- The person who trusts God is saved and blessed by Him. (Link passage with Hebrews 11 v7).
- God promises to keep safe all those who enter through the door of salvation (Genesis 6 v18; 8 v18).
- God wants you to obey Him as Noah did (Genesis 6 v22; 7 v5 etc).

### ***Choose Your Central Truth***

It is obviously not possible to teach all the truths you have found in your passage. You will need to choose the one on which you want to concentrate and teach right throughout the lesson.

You can find this central truth by asking yourself these five questions:

- **Is there a truth which appears several times in the passage – and which is obviously the dominant truth?** The more dominant it is, and the more often it appears in the passage, the easier it will be for you to weave it into your lesson and teach it thoroughly to the children.
- **Why has God put this passage in the Bible?** There must be a reason and purpose for it being there, and seeing that purpose will help you to see the main teaching and the central truth of the passage.
- **What does God the Holy Spirit especially teach you through this passage?** This is probably the most important question of all. As you study the Scripture passage and note the different truths in it God will speak to **your** heart and life; and one truth will especially grip your heart and become part of you. What you learn in this way is what you are best fitted and able to teach others.
- **What are the needs of your children?**  
It is important that the truth being taught is relevant to the children and their needs.  
Which of these truths would help meet their needs in the best possible way? What new knowledge would you like the children to acquire?



What changes would you like to see in them?

- ✓ If they are a new group of children, who know very little, you should teach them the most basic truth.
- ✓ If most of the children are unsaved you should choose a truth which especially lends itself more to evangelism.
- ✓ If most of the children are saved you should choose a truth which would especially help them grow spiritually.
- ✓ If both groups are more or less equal in number you should choose a truth which would allow two clear and separate applications for these two groups of children.

Effective teaching must have definite and clearly understood aims which are based on the needs of the children. The teacher can discover the children's needs by getting to know them personally. Therefore, as you teach this lesson, your objective is to meet those needs through the teaching of this one central truth.

➤ **What truths have you previously taught?**

You are endeavouring to give to the children a comprehensive understanding of the truths of Scripture. Over a period of time you want them to hear and learn "*all the counsel of God*". Do not therefore keep teaching just one truth, or a few selected truths, over and over again. This would result in the omission of many other truths.

The answers to these five questions should enable you to establish the central truth of the passage which you are going to teach to the children.

For example, if you were teaching a Bible lesson on Noah, you would now need to look at the ten truths which you outlined from this passage on the two previous pages and, using these five questions, decide which one will be your central truth.

### **Write Down Your Central Truth**

After you have chosen your central truth write it down in a short simple sentence which the children will easily understand. It should be

brief enough to remember, clear enough to write, and specific enough to be achieved.

Write it down at the top of your lesson plan. You could also write it down in large letters and pin it on the wall or put it on your flannelgraph board. Or you could write it on a piece of cardboard and show it to the children each time you refer to it in your lesson. This is, I believe, the best way. You could even write your central truth on something which symbolizes it, or helps the children to understand it. For example a central truth about God could be written on a circular piece of cardboard – symbolizing that He is eternal, and without beginning or end.

- You should avoid complicated statements as central truths. For example:  
*“Salvation involves and results in the justification, regeneration, and adoption of lost sinners.”*  
 Keep your central truth simple. It would be better, in this instance, to restrict it to *“God forgives all the sin of the boy or girl who trusts Jesus Christ.”*
- You should avoid long detailed statements which would not be suitable as central truths. For example:  
*“We all need a new heart because of our fallen nature and God gives us a new heart when we trust the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us – and He will live in us for ever.”*  
 These truths must be taught, at some time, but this sentence is too long, includes too many truths, and uses theological terms which the children would not understand. You could, instead, have as your central truth *“God gives a new heart and nature to all those who trust Jesus Christ.”*
- You should avoid vague or incomplete sentences as central truths.
  - ✓ For example *“The Holy Spirit”* is too vague and is neither a statement nor a sentence. Instead you could have *“The Holy Spirit convicts sinners of their sin.”*
  - ✓ *“Jesus calming the storm”* is a title but it is not a sentence and doesn’t really say or teach anything. Instead you could have *“Jesus Christ shows us He is God by calming the storm.”*
  - ✓ *“Loving others”* or *“Being a Christian”* are likewise

incomplete statements, and not central truths. Instead you could have “*God wants Christians to love other Christians at all times*” or “*A Christian is a person who has trusted Jesus Christ as his Saviour*”.

- ✓ “*Following Jesus*” is not a good central truth. Instead, a good central truth statement would be “*The Lord Jesus commands us to follow Him*”.
- You should, if possible, avoid using the word “you” or “us” in the central truth, unless it can be applied to both saved and unsaved children. You could use “*God created you (or us) for His Glory*” as a central truth because the “you” or “us” could be applied to both groups. But you should not have a central truth such as “*God the Holy Spirit lives in you*” or “*God the Holy Spirit lives in us*”. This truth is only for those who have trusted Him. Rephrase it to read, “*God the Holy Spirit lives in those who have trusted Christ*.” As we have already seen, the word “you” can then be used in both applications.

Central truth “*God the Holy Spirit lives in those who have trusted Christ*”.

- ✓ Application to the saved children “*(Therefore) Be careful where you go and what you say.*”
- ✓ Application to the unsaved children “*(Therefore) Trust Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will come to live in you*”.

The following are good examples of central truths:

- God is everywhere.
- Jesus Christ is the only Saviour.
- Sin separates us from God.
- God promises to be with His children at all times.
- Jesus Christ commands us to follow Him.
- God the Holy Spirit lives in every believer.
- The Bible says we should not be jealous.

### ***Vary Your Central Truths***

Your ministry is to teach “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20 v27), and you must be aware of the danger of concentrating on the teaching of a few central truths, over and over again, to the exclusion of many others.

There are several truths which could easily be found in many lessons.

- ✓ “*God is all-powerful*” could be the central truth in “The crossing of the Red Sea”, “Gideon’s victory”, “Creation”, “The fall of Jericho”, “God’s care for Elijah during the drought” – and many more.
- ✓ You could teach “*Jesus Christ is God*” in many of the lessons on the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

But there are other possible truths in these lessons which the children also need to hear and learn.

Also, if you keep choosing the same truths, over and over again, you will lose the attention and interest of the children.

If you exegete, properly and thoroughly, the passages on which your lessons are based, and if you teach the truths which are actually in those passages, it is certain that there will be a real variety in your teaching. The Bible contains a wide panorama of truth and does not concentrate on a few truths which are repeated over and over again.

Varying your central truths as much as possible will bring vitality and depth to your teaching. You may teach stories and lessons which the children have heard before but, because you use them to teach new truths, they will come with freshness to your hearers. The children will be less likely to feel that they have outgrown Bible stories. They will learn that, no matter how often we come to a familiar passage of Scripture, God has always something more to teach us.

However, there are a number of key Bible truths which will normally, and naturally, appear more often than other truths, and you should recognize and incorporate that fact in your teaching. Such truths would include, for example, the following:

- *Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners.*
- *God is holy.*
- *Salvation is by faith alone.*

### ***Keep a Record of Your Central Truths***

You should have a note book, or a recording system of some kind, into which you write the central truth which you teach each week. A sample of a planning and record sheet is included on page 137.

You can then periodically look back over what you have recorded, and see if there are any truths which you haven't taught, or if there are other truths which you have included too often.

Truths which have been omitted could be included in future lessons, as the exegesis of the passage allows it; or could even be included as a flashcard lesson, focused on that "missing truth", or in a song which you could introduce to the children to help you teach it.

## Chapter 22: Accomplish Your Goal *How Can I Teach the Central Truth?*

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### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Now you are ready to learn how to teach the central truth.)*

- **Understand the central truth.** You cannot teach what you don't understand.
- **Simplify the central truth.** Keep it simple.
- **Explain the central truth.** Don't just say it. Teach it.
- **Include other truths** – if they help you teach and apply the central truth.
- **Illustrate the central truth** – so the children can see it.
- **Repeat the central truth** – once heard is quickly forgotten.
- **Apply the central truth.** Weave the truth into your lesson several times.
- **Teach a Bible verse to back up your central truth**

**T**here are six main steps to follow in your teaching, if you want to be effective, and these are clearly based on the teaching principles we outlined in chapter 19. You need to understand, simplify, explain, illustrate, repeat and apply the central truth, before you can expect the child to have learned it. This takes time; and that is why you should concentrate on teaching one central truth in a Bible lesson, rather than trying to include many truths. This is especially necessary when you are teaching today's children, who have little or no knowledge of the Bible.

Your goal is that every child leave your class or meeting, knowing and understanding the central truth of the lesson, and what it means for each of them personally.

### ***Understand the Central Truth***

It is not possible either to simplify or explain a central truth if you don't

understand it yourself. So before asking yourself the question “How can I teach this truth to the children?” you need to ask several other questions.

*“What does this central truth mean?”*  
*“What is its application to me, myself?”*  
*“Has this truth had an effect on my own life?”*

The more you, yourself, understand a truth, and the more you apply it to your own life, the better you will be able to teach it to the children.

### ***Simplify the Central Truth***

We have already looked at the question of simplicity earlier in the book and have seen that the central truth should be a **simple**, complete, concise statement.

- *It needs to be simple with regard to the words which it uses, and they must be words which a child can understand.*
- *It needs to be simple with regard to the concepts being taught. These concepts should all be understandable to the average child, if properly and thoroughly explained.*

The truth will be simple if it is well understood by the teacher. The more and better you understand it, the more simply you can teach it. The reverse is also true.

It is especially important to watch the words which you use. You need to avoid evangelical terminology and clichés, unless they are properly explained.

### ***Explain the Central Truth***

It is not sufficient to say one or two sentences about the truth, and to hope that by doing so you have taught it.

*You need to take time throughout the lesson to make sure that the children understand the truth being taught. Use simple and concrete terms and make your explanations interesting and as clear as possible. You cannot impart spiritual understanding, but you do have a responsibility to teach truth thoroughly and carefully.*

You should try to include your central truth in the lesson, at least four or five times, where the Bible passage allows you to do so. The first time you introduce the truth into the lesson you should give a simple basic introduction to it, and an explanation of it. After that, each time it comes into your lesson you should develop it and take it one step further – building on that first simple introduction.

If, for example, you were teaching “*God is just*” (or fair), you could, at the first opportunity, give an explanation of the word “just”. You could then later on, and as the passage allows, explain how God can be just - that He knows everything and all His decisions are right and correct. Then, still later, you could include teaching on how the Death of Jesus Christ on the cross shows God’s justice, and how He can forgive sinners and still be just. These different aspects and explanations of the central truth would be woven into the narrative of the story with a **short** time spent on each.

### ***Include Other Truths***

Many teachers when introduced to this concept of teaching one central truth to **all** the children, ask this question:

*“Should I restrict my teaching to the central truth, or can I include other truths?”*

The answer to both questions is yes.

- *Yes, you should confine your **teaching** to the central truth.*
- *Yes, you should include other truths – not to teach them, but to help you teach and apply the central truth.*



We have already seen, over and over again, how necessary it is to teach one central truth, and to do so as thoroughly as possible.

But other truths may be included, provided the following “rules” are understood and followed:

- Other truths may be included, provided it is understood that these other truths are not truths to be taught. It is the central truth which is being taught, and the purpose of these other truths is to help in the teaching of **that** truth.
- Other truths should therefore only be included, if they are linked to, and will help teach and/or apply, the central truth.

It is difficult, and even unlikely, to teach a central truth in absolute and complete isolation. Other truths are generally needed to make the central truth understandable.

For example, if the central truth is “*Salvation is only by faith in Jesus Christ*” it would help in the teaching of this truth if the following truths could be mentioned and included:

- ✓ “*The holiness of God makes salvation necessary*”.
- ✓ “*Because of sin, salvation is necessary*”.
- ✓ “*Jesus Christ died to make salvation possible*”.
- ✓ “*Jesus Christ lives today to save those who trust Him.*”

You are not teaching these other truths. You are mentioning them to help you teach your central truth.

- The other truths you are mentioning may be in the passage being taught, and may be part of the story. In this case attention can be drawn to them in the story, as the lesson develops, and as the central truth is being taught.

However, truths which are in the passage may be omitted, if they do not help to teach or explain the central truth.

- On the other hand, and this is more common, the other truths you are mentioning do not need to be in the passage on which your lesson is based. You should feel free to introduce them anyway – provided they help in the teaching (and application) of your central truth. It is, of course, a real help if these other truths have been taught previously to the children, and this is quite possible when you have a regular ministry to these children.

### ***Illustrate the Central Truth***

One of the most important and valuable ways to help children understand the great truths of Scripture is by the use of illustrations.

*Illustrating a truth means that you use something, or some story with which the children are already familiar, to help them understand something with which they are not familiar.*

These illustrations are usually either stories or examples from everyday life which throw light on the truth you are trying to explain – or they might be stories from another part of the Bible. They are like windows which let in the light of understanding. They are introduced during the lesson to shed light on what you are teaching.

Obviously the more light you can throw on a subject the better. But you should not ordinarily use more than two or three illustrations in one Bible lesson.

If, for example, you were teaching the children that they could only come to God through Jesus Christ, you could use the following illustration:

*“The little boy was very upset as he leaned against the wall beside the palace gate. ‘Why wouldn’t the guard let me in?’, he thought, ‘I do want to see the king.’ But the guard wouldn’t allow him through the gate. Just then the little boy saw a young man coming near the gate, who, stopping beside him, and looking at his tear-stained, disappointed face, kindly asked, ‘What is the matter?’*

*‘I want to see the king but they won’t let me in’, he replied.*

*‘Come with me’, the young man said. And he took his hand.*

*Together they approached the guard, who saluted and opened the gate through which they passed. On they went until they entered the great front door of the palace. The young man led the way along the corridors and right to where the king was.*

*The little boy was very excited and very puzzled. At last he plucked up enough courage to ask, ‘Why did the guard let you through?’*

*‘The king is my father’, was the reply.*

Of course, if a Bible story is the basis of your lesson, the narrative

of the story itself is, or should be, an illustration of the central truth you are teaching. There will then be less need for illustrations.

For example, if you are teaching a lesson based on Elijah's life during the years of drought, and your central truth is "*God cares for His children*", the story itself will provide you with adequate illustrations of this truth.

On the other hand, if you are teaching a straightforward doctrinal lesson using flashcards on, say, the truth that "*God is holy*", you will need several illustrations to shed light on the different points which you include, because you do not have a Bible narrative on which to base your lesson. These illustrations will help you get and hold the attention of the children in the absence of a story narrative.

There are several important points to remember with regard to illustrations.

- Be sure that the illustration used does illustrate and explain the truth you are teaching – or the result will be confusion.
- Do not use tear-jerking illustrations, which will merely arouse the children's emotions.
- Be sure that your illustrations are not too long, or too vivid, or too funny – as they may be a hindrance. There is a danger of the children remembering the illustration, but not knowing or remembering what it was supposed to help teach.
- Do not lose the thread of the story by the use of too many illustrations.

### ***Repeat the Central Truth***

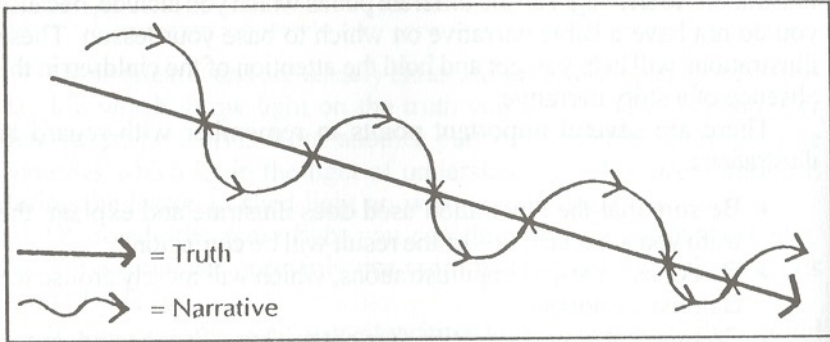
It is unlikely that children will understand or learn something if they only hear it once.

*Repetition is therefore an essential part of teaching. Children are more likely to understand and remember truth which has been repeated and reviewed.*

Remember, however, that, when you repeat the central truth you should vary your way of presenting it, and you should not just repeat the words of the central truth sentence. A teacher should present and repeat the same truth a number of times, approaching it in several different and interesting

ways, and in a deeper and more progressive way each time.

You can see this illustrated in the following diagram. As you tell your story, and give the narrative of that story, you will plan to come into contact with, and include, the truth you are teaching (as indicated with an X) from time to time. But you will not do so at the same level, or with the same words each time. Instead you will aim to teach the truth at a deeper level every time you come to it:



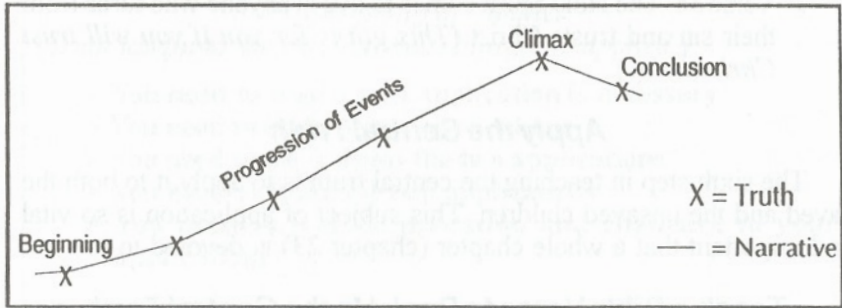
We have seen that we should repeat the central truth several times in the lesson we are teaching. We should also make it our goal to repeat the central truth in other parts of our teaching programme – through the selection of appropriate choruses (which also teach or refer to the central truth), by learning a related memory verse, and/or by telling a missionary story which illustrates that truth. Also, we should frequently return, in later meetings, to the central truths we have taught to revise and reinforce them.

### **Weave In the Central Truth**

One concept which has been of great help to those teachers, who want to repeat the central truth several times in their Bible lesson, is called “weaving in the truth”.

It is not good to leave the teaching of the truth and the application to the end of the lesson because it is more difficult to get the children to listen at that time. It is better to weave the truth throughout the story, as you would weave a thread through a piece of tapestry. The

central truth should be an integral part of your Bible lesson, or story, and woven throughout it. The truth should, in this way, be closely linked with the story, and you will teach it as you narrate your story. You can see how this is done in the diagram below. The truth will be taught at each point marked with an X, and will not be left until the end of the lesson:



In this way you will keep the flow and continuity of the narrative and hold the children's attention. It must however be remembered that it is not sufficient just to state the truth in a short sentence, from time to time in the lesson, but as we have already seen, you will need to explain and apply it, and not use the same words each time.

The central truth is thus brought into your lesson or story each time it emerges naturally from the narrative. If you are teaching the main truth contained in your Bible passage, you will normally find that it appears in, and comes out from, the text of the passage a number of times.

If you are, for example, teaching a lesson based on Acts chapter 2 v1-40 (the day of Pentecost), your central truth could be "*The Holy Spirit lives in all believers.*"

You could weave this truth in at various places in the lesson, and include a different aspect of the same truth each time.

- Verses 1-4 The Holy Spirit came to live in all the disciples. (*The Holy Spirit does not just live in special Christians. He comes to live in all Christians.*)
- Verse 17. The gift of the Holy Spirit was promised in the Old

Testament (*God always keeps His promises, and He will keep His promise to live in you if you trust Christ*).

- Verse 33. It is Jesus Christ Who gives us the Holy Spirit. (*Just as eternal life was a gift from Jesus Christ, so is the Holy Spirit*).
- Verse 37. The Holy Spirit Who now lived in the disciples convicted their listeners of their sin and their need. (*He will also help you in your witness*).
- Verse 38. The Holy Spirit comes to live in anyone who turns from their sin and trusts Christ (*This gift is for you if you will trust Christ today*).

### **Apply the Central Truth**

The sixth step in teaching the central truth is to apply it to both the saved and the unsaved children. This subject of application is so vital and important that a whole chapter (chapter 23) is devoted to it.

### **Teach a Bible Verse to Back Up the Central Truth**

It is important to select a Bible verse which helps to clarify and explain the central truth. You will then quote this verse during your Bible lesson. Remember that there is power in the Word of God, and that is why you want to be sure to include quotations from the Word of God in your presentation. At the same time, you must be sure to explain what the verse means, and show how it links in with the central truth.

For example, if you are teaching the central truth “*God is holy*” you could use 1 Peter 1 v15a as your key Bible verse.

*“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy .....”*

Or if you are teaching as the central truth “*Jesus Christ died to save you and He will save you if you ask Him*”, you could use Romans 10 v13:

*“For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”*

It would be good to choose this key verse as your memory verse. It will help the children to understand, and to remember, the central truth.

## Chapter 23:

### Show Them What It Means

#### *How Can I Apply the Central Truth?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Truth taught to the children must always be applied.)*

- **You need to realise that application is necessary**
- **You need to find the two applications**
- **You need to write down the two applications**
- **You need to make the two applications**
- **You need to include invitation and challenge in your applications**

**W**e have already seen in the earlier chapters of this book that there are two groups or types of children:

- Children who have not trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They are spiritually dead and need **life**.
- Children who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They are spiritually alive and need **food**.

We have also seen that, as a consequence, you, as a teacher of children, have two responsibilities:

- To **evangelize** the children who are not saved.
- To **feed** the children who are saved.

Therefore you should use your Bible lesson to accomplish these two purposes. This means, as we will see in this chapter that, while you should teach the central truth of your lesson to all the children, you should apply it in two ways – to the saved children and to the unsaved children.

### ***Application is Essential***

It is not enough to teach the central truth to children. You also need to apply it to them, and show them what God wants them to **do** as a consequence of what you have taught. Understanding comes first, but it should be followed by action. Application is the practical outworking and result of the truth which has been taught. The truth is the root from which the application comes; the application is the fruit which springs from that root. Consequently, every lesson should have both truth and application.

But, as we have seen several times, there are two groups of children. Therefore you need two applications – one to the unsaved children and one to the saved children. You should teach the central truth to **all** the children, but you should apply it in two different ways according to the spiritual needs of each group:

- You should use and apply the central truth to show the unsaved children what they need to do to be saved.
- You should use and apply the central truth to show the saved children how they can grow.

For example if your central truth is “*The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again – perhaps today*”, you could apply that truth to the unsaved children to warn them of the danger of unbelief and urge them to trust Christ. You could also apply it to the saved children to encourage them to live in a way which pleases Him.

### ***Find the Applications***

To find, and decide upon, the applications of the truth you need to ask yourself questions – and you need to ask these questions for both groups of children:

- What response does God want from each child as a result of his understanding of **this truth**?
- How should **this truth** affect the lives of the children you teach?

The answers to these questions will help you to find the applications.

It is a special help to use the word “therefore”. Write the word “therefore” down after the central truth statement, and then determine how you would conclude each of the two application sentences. Those



sentences would then be your applications.

For example, if your central truth is “*God is holy*” your two applications could be:

- **To the unsaved children** – “*(Therefore) you cannot, as a sinner, enter Heaven when you die.*”
- **To the saved children** – “*(Therefore) He wants you to be holy.*”

There are three possibilities to keep in mind as you look for the applications. All three possibilities are visualized in the three diagrams on the next three pages.

- The central truth may have applications to both the saved and the unsaved children (Diagram 1).  
This is probably true of well over ninety per cent of central truths.
- The central truth may only have an application to the unsaved children (Diagram 2).

In this case do not try to force an application to the saved children. Give them some teaching and spiritual food in another part of your teaching programme. Also, it will be a help to the saved children to hear again the evangelistic application of the truth. It will refresh their memory as far as the Gospel is concerned, and will encourage them to share this message with others.

- The central truth may only have an application to the saved children (Diagram 3).

In this case do nothing to force a gospel application. You can include something specifically directed to the unsaved children in some other part of your teaching programme. Also, it will be a help to the unsaved children to hear the application to the saved children. It will help them better to understand what is involved in the Christian life.

### ***Write Down the Applications***

You have already written down the central truth in a simple, brief, concise statement at the top of your teaching plan. You have considered carefully how to apply this truth to the unsaved children and to the saved children, and you have found your two answers.

Now write these two answers down underneath the sentence which

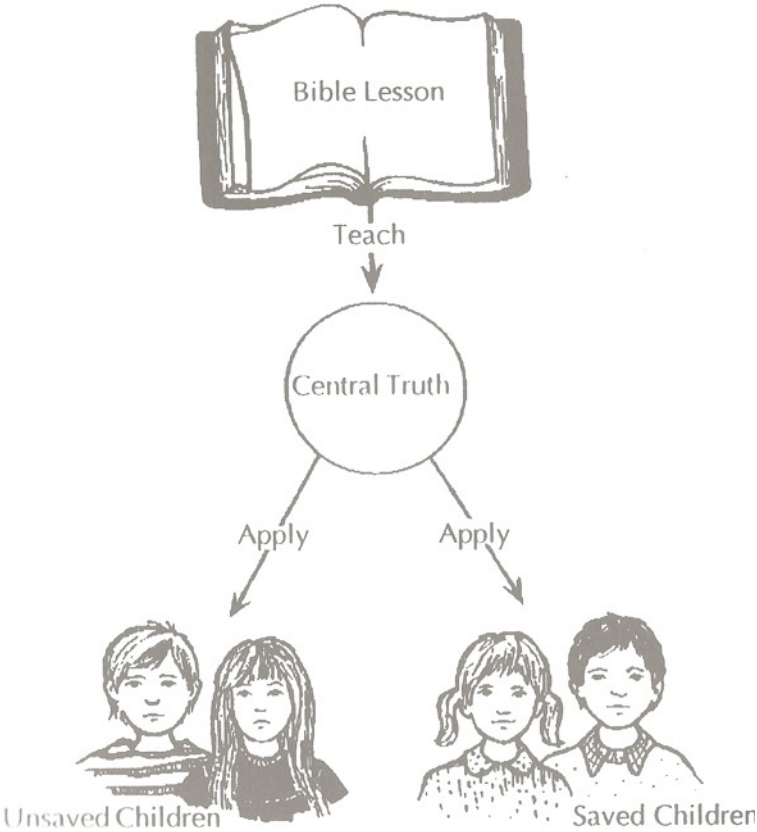


Diagram 1

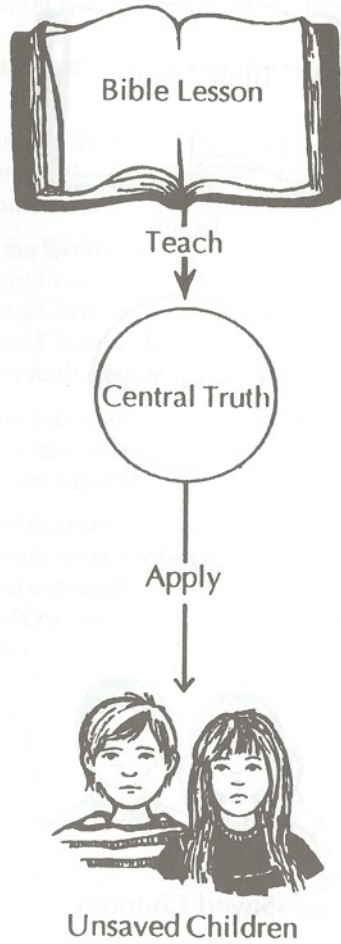


Diagram 2

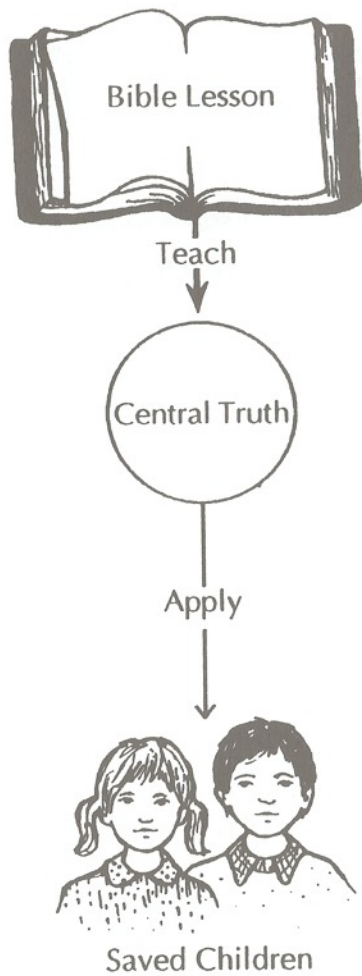


Diagram 3

summarizes the central truth:

- The application sentences should also be simple and concise.
- Each application should be a single sentence, and not a multiple one.
- You can, and should, generally use the word “you” in each of your applications.

What, for example, is the application(s) to the children of the following central truths? Use the word “therefore” after each truth and complete the sentence to find the application.

- The Bible is the Word of God.
- The Holy Spirit lives in every believer.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is all-powerful.
- Salvation is by faith alone in Jesus alone.

Now reverse the procedure. What are the central truths on which the following applications are based? You can use the question “Why?” in each case to help you find the central truth.

- *Read your Bible every day* (an application for all children).
- *Don't take drugs or you will harm your body* (an application for all children but especially for saved children).
- *Be careful where you go and what you do* (an application for saved children).
- *The Lord Jesus is able to save you no matter how bad you are* (an application for unsaved children).
- *Trust Jesus Christ and you will be saved* (an application for unsaved children).

Did you notice that these are applications of the five truths stated previously? Put each truth and application together. Notice again that you should be able to use the word “therefore” as the connecting word which makes the link between the truth and the application.

Central Truth	Application
<i>The Bible is the Word of God .....T</i>	<i>Read your Bible every day</i> (for both groups).
<i>The Holy Spirit lives in every believer .....E</i>	<i>Don't take drugs or you will harm your body</i> (especially for saved).
<i>The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again .....E</i>	<i>Be careful where you go and what you do (for saved).</i>
<i>The Lord Jesus Christ is all-powerful.....O</i>	<i>The Lord Jesus is able to save you no matter how bad you are (for unsaved).</i>
<i>Salvation is by faith alone in Jesus alone.....E</i>	<i>Trust Jesus Christ and you will be saved (for unsaved).</i>

Can you see, from the above diagram, how the word “therefore” links, in each case, the central truth and the application?

Of course all the truths which I have applied to one group of children above can also be applied in some way to the other group.

If your applications to the children are always the same then there is something wrong. It is the central truth which determines what the application is and, because central truths vary, applications should also vary.

### ***Make the Applications***

As you teach the central truth throughout your lesson you should, at the same time, apply it. Don't leave your applications to the end.

You will not usually include any applications when you first introduce the central truth into your lesson. The children need to understand the central truth before it can be applied.

Later in the lesson you should take the opportunity to apply that truth to the two groups of children. Because the two applications are different, you should keep them apart, and apply them to each group at different times.

At the same time you should make it clear that the children know to whom you are applying the truth – the Christian children or the non-Christian children:

- *“If you have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour ....”*
- *“If you have trusted Jesus Christ to forgive you and you are saved ....”*

Your lesson will probably finish with a closing application of the truth and a challenge to respond. This concluding application is what remains most clearly in the children’s minds. Therefore, if most of the children are unsaved, it is good if the closing application is addressed to them. On the other hand, if most of the children are saved, the final application will probably be addressed to them.

There are three points you should especially remember, and put into practice, when making your applications:

- Make your applications relevant to the every day lives of children, and directed towards their needs.
- Make your applications interesting and understandable by using illustrations from other parts of the Bible or from modern life.
- Make your applications personal by using the personal word “you” to bring it home to the children. You want each one to realise that this is God’s message for them.

### ***Include Challenge in Your Application(s)***

Application should always include challenge. So your two applications should challenge the two groups of children to respond, and to **DO** something:

- *You need to challenge the saved children to respond to what God has taught them in the lesson, and to what they have been exhorted to do in the application.*
- *You need to challenge the unsaved children to respond to your evangelistic application of the central truth. This challenge is more often called the invitation. The unsaved children are invited or challenged to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.*

It is obvious that in both cases there should be a note of urgency and earnestness in the application, encouraging the children to obey God on the basis of the truth which you have been teaching and applying.

You could use phrases such as:

- *Are you willing to .....*?
- *Will you say “yes” to God today .....*?
- *Do not disobey God any longer .....*
- *The promise is for you today, will you believe it .....*?

However be sure that you do not put any pressure upon the children to respond, either by long emotional appeals, or by asking the children to make a physical response (such as standing up or coming to the front). The response of the child needs to take place first of all in his heart, and then be worked out in his life – and this response is only possible as the Holy Spirit works within the child, as, and after, you have taught and challenged him.

### Challenge and Invite the Unsaved Children to Trust Christ

We dealt with this subject in detail back in chapter 7 “Start Fishing”.

It is important that when you are teaching a Bible lesson (and applying the central truth of the lesson), and when you are evangelizing the children, you clearly challenge and invite them to trust Jesus Christ.

Giving the invitation is not asking children to raise their hands or come to the front. The invitation is from Jesus Christ – inviting boys and girls to **come to Him** for forgiveness and salvation. You are simply the messenger who brings this invitation to the children – but you must be sure that you do bring it, because it is an essential part of the gospel message:

- This invitation tells the children what they must do to be saved:
  - ✓ Be willing to turn from their sin.
  - ✓ Trust Jesus Christ.
- This invitation tells the children what God will then do for them:
  - ✓ Forgive all their sin.
  - ✓ Change them.
- This invitation should use a verse which makes clear both of these factors (what they need to do, and what God then promises to do) such as any **one** of the following:

*“**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you **will be saved**, you and***



*your household*" (Acts 16 v31).

*"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"* (Acts 3 v19).

*"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10 v13).

*"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"* (John 6 v37).

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1 v12).

Your invitation could be as follows:

*"Trust Jesus Christ and you will be saved. That is what God says in His Word. God wants you to put your trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, as the jailer in our story in Acts chapter 16 did; and the moment you do that He will forgive all your sins and give you a new nature. Do you want to be different? Do you want to have your sins forgiven? Then tell Jesus Christ that you want Him to be your Saviour, and trust Him. You can do that right now as you sit there, or at any other time. But don't wait; don't put it off. Today is the day of salvation.*

*Let us pray.*

*"Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that you will help some boy or girl who is here today to trust your Son, Jesus Christ, as his or her Saviour. Amen."*

You have now given the invitation and the results are in God's Hands.

### **Challenge the Saved Children to Respond**

Don't just teach the truth to the saved children. Don't just apply it in a perfunctory way. Challenge them to respond. Show them clearly what they should do, as a result of the truth you have taught, and then encourage them to do it. At the same time, you could give a clear example and illustration of what this would mean in their Christian lives, and what the results will be.

For example, if you have been teaching the central truth "*Jesus Christ is God and can do anything*" you could apply it to the saved children "*therefore if you are a Christian He can help you overcome*

*any problem in your life.”*

But you need to proceed further and challenge the saved children to respond to what they have heard.

*“Perhaps you have a bad temper and you often lose control of yourself and the words you use. You may have tried to control yourself but you have failed. Jesus Christ is able and willing to help you. But you need to ask Him to do so. Why not ask Him today, right now? You can say to Him, ‘Dear Lord Jesus, I need You. I find it hard to control myself and my words. Please help me and give me the strength to do so.’ And He **will** help you.”*

## Chapter 24: Get To Work

### *What Steps Should I Follow in the Preparation of My Bible Lesson?*

#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(There is a systematic plan which you should follow in the preparation of your Bible lesson.)*

- **Pray about the lesson**
- **Read the Scripture passage**
- **List the progression of events**
- **List all the truths in the passage**
- **Select the central truth of the passage**
- **Write down the two applications of the central truth**
- **Write down any other truths which would help you teach and apply the central truth**
- **Read what others have written**
- **Choose a Bible verse**
- **Prepare your visual aids**
- **Prepare and write out your outline – in note form:**
  - ✓ Beginning
  - ✓ Progression of events
  - ✓ Climax
  - ✓ Conclusion
- **Include on your plan where you would teach and apply the central truth and where you would mention other truths**
- **Practise, practise, practise**

**W**e should now be ready to actually prepare a Bible lesson and get it ready for presentation.

We will use Acts 16 v9-34 as the Bible passage on which to base the story, and the lesson we plan to teach, and we will outline and consider each step in the preparation of that particular lesson.

### **Step One – Pray about the Lesson**

Ask the Lord to teach you, yourself, from this passage, because this will help you to teach the children from it. The Holy Spirit is the Author and Interpreter of the Scriptures. Both you and the children are dependent upon His divine illumination. The Lord Jesus said, *“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . .”* (John 16 v13). All preparation must begin, continue and end with dependence upon God and in prayer.

### **Step Two – Read the Scripture Passage**

You should begin your preparation by reading the Scriptures, rather than either your lesson book, or what others have written about the passage, or about your lesson. Your calling as a teacher is to teach the Word of God, and especially to teach what God has said **to you** through His Word.

You should read through the passage and narrative (in this case, Acts 16 v9-34) time and time again – at least six, eight or ten times. The first time you read it should be six or seven days before you will teach the lesson. Then you can be turning the contents of the passage over and over in your mind as you travel to work, or do housework. Then read it again once, twice or three times the next day, and then the following day and so on. A brief look at the passage each night before retiring will also help.

Be sure to read also the context of the passage (that which is recorded before it, and after it). Also, if there are parallel passages in other books of the Bible, be sure to read them also.

As you read this passage try to get the feel of the narrative and the story:

- Who are the characters?
- What do they do?
- Visualize the setting, and imagine the possible conversations that might have taken place.
- “Soak yourself” in the atmosphere and background of the passage and story.
- You could now think through the story and how you would tell it.
- You might even want to practise telling the story to yourself!

### ***Step Three – List the Progression of Events***

The next step is to write down, in sequence, all the events of the story, one underneath the other, as described on pages 131 and 132. You will follow this progression of events as you tell your story, and teach your lesson. The progression of events for this story/lesson could be as follows:

- A. *Paul and team leave for Macedonia.*
- B. *Arrival in Philippi.*
- C. *Preaching at the riverside.*
- D. *Lydia's conversion.*
- E. *Lydia's baptism and hospitality.*
- F. *Girl shouts at Paul and Silas.*
- G. *Paul commands the Spirit.*
- H. *Girl healed.*
- I. *Paul and Silas accused.*
- J. *Paul and Silas are beaten and put in prison.*
- K. *Paul and Silas sing and pray.*
- L. *The earthquake.*
- M. *The jailor's attempt to kill himself.*
- N. *The jailor's question.*
- O. *Paul's answer – "Trust Christ".*
- P. *Jailor is saved.*

### ***Step Four – List All the Truths in the Passage***

After you feel that you have a good understanding of, and feel for, the narrative, and the main people in the story, and you have written down the progression of events in the narrative, you should now look for the central truth which you will teach. Your next step, therefore, is to go through the passage and write down every truth you can find in it. The passage in Acts 16 is well known and especially rich in truth. That is one reason why I have chosen it.

I can find the following truths in these verses:

- Verse 6 – God shows His servants what He wants them to do.
- Verse 10 – We should obey God when He speaks to us.
- Verse 13 – God wants us to witness for Jesus Christ.
- Verse 14 – God opens the hearts of those who believe.
- Verse 15 – Christians should be friendly and helpful.
- Verse 16 – God wants His children to pray.
- Verse 17 – Jesus Christ has power over all kinds of evil.
- Verse 22 – The Christian who witnesses might suffer.
- Verse 25 – Christians can have joy in the most difficult of circumstances.
- Verse 26 – God is all-powerful and can do anything.
- Verse 31 – Salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Verse 33 and 34 – Jesus Christ changes people.
- Verse 34 – Salvation results in a changed life.

There are in this passage at least thirteen truths, and it is obvious that you cannot teach, or even mention, all of them. So it is necessary to select one of these truths and make it the central truth of the passage.

### ***Step Five - Select the Central Truth of the Passage***

We have seen that there are five questions (see pages 160 and 161) which you need to ask yourself to help you identify your central truth:

- **Is there a truth which appears several times in the passage and is the dominant truth of the passage?**

Different people may have different answers to this question. I feel personally that the dominant truth in this passage is “*Jesus Christ changes people*”. This truth can be evidenced:

- ✓ By the conversion of Lydia, her baptism and her hospitality to the itinerant missionaries (verse 14, 15).
- ✓ By the deliverance of the girl possessed by an evil spirit (verse 18).
- ✓ By the conversion of the jailor, his baptism and his subsequent acts of kindness (verse 32-34).

- **Why has God put this passage in the Bible?**

One reason, at least, for the passage we are studying and teaching is to show that Jesus Christ changes people.

➤ **Which of these truths is the one which God the Holy Spirit uses to speak to your own heart and life?**

When He especially lays one truth from the passage upon your heart you are better able and fitted to teach it to the children. Has He shown you from this passage that Jesus Christ changes people?

➤ **Which of these truths is the truth most needed by your children?**

Would the one I have mentioned be a help to your children? Are a number of your children unsaved, and needing to hear that Jesus Christ is willing and able to save them and change them? If not, find another one. If it would help them your choice would then be confirmed. Also, the Christian children need to be reminded that it is important for unsaved people to see the change in **their** lives.

➤ **What truths have you previously taught?**

Have you taught the one suggested above recently?

*Now write this central truth down in one brief simple, concise and clear sentence e.g. “**Jesus Christ changes people**”. This will be written at the top of your teaching plan, and it could also be written on a word strip for the flannelboard or on a flashcard or piece of cardboard, possibly in the form of a symbol which the children will see as you teach your lesson.*

### **Step Six – Write Down the Two Applications of the Central Truth**

We have already seen that there are two groups of children:

- Those who have trusted Jesus Christ, who are saved, and who need to be fed.
- Those who have not trusted Jesus Christ, who are not saved, and who need to be evangelized.

So you need to ask yourself if the central truth you have chosen can be applied to both these groups? (I have found that well over ninety per cent of central truths can be applied to both groups.)

As I have mentioned several times, it is a help when looking for an application, that you insert the word “therefore” after the central truth, and before each of the two applications. This helps you to see the link between the central truth and the application.

I would suggest the following applications of this central truth “***Jesus Christ changes people***”:

- (Therefore) ***He will change you if you trust Him*** (application to the unsaved children).
- (Therefore) ***You can be a witness to others by your changed life*** (application to the saved children).

### ***Step Seven – Write Down Any Other Truths Which You Could Mention to Help Teach and Apply the Central Truth***

If these truths are in the passage – fine! But they don’t need to be. You can introduce these truths briefly to back up, explain and clarify your teaching and applications. You are not teaching these truths. You are only mentioning them to help you in your teaching and application of the central truth. It is very possible (and helpful) that, in a regular weekly ministry to children, the truths which you mention are truths which you have taught in previous Bible lessons.

You could, for example, mention the following truths in this lesson, because they would help you with the teaching and application of this truth – “***Jesus Christ changes people***”:

- ***You need to be changed*** (you are a sinner like the three people in this lesson). This truth **is** in the passage.
- ***Jesus Christ died for your sin*** (that is why He can change you). This truth is not in the passage.
- ***Jesus Christ is alive today*** (He is here and ready to change you). This truth is not in the passage.
- ***You will be changed if you trust Christ***. This truth is in the passage, and is especially emphasized in verse 31.



### **Step Eight – Read What Others Have Written**

It would be good, at this time, to read your lesson manual and see how others have dealt with this lesson. There might be some new thoughts, insights, or ideas, which would help you, and you might need to retrace your steps and make some changes in what you have already decided.

However, if at all possible, it is better to stick with your own conclusions. These are what God has laid upon your heart, and it will be easier to teach them to the children because they are your own conclusions.

But the lesson book, and any Bible commentaries or Bible knowledge books you have available, can also give you snippets of background information which will enable you to make your lesson more interesting. And these books can also help you to have a deeper understanding of the lesson. This is important, for the teacher should always know more than those he is teaching – and even more than he plans to teach.

### **Step Nine – Choose a Bible Verse**

You should now select a Bible verse which is closely related to the central truth you are teaching. You can refer to this verse from time to time and encourage the children to learn it.

I would suggest for this lesson Acts 16 v31:

*“So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household”.*

### **Step Ten – Prepare Your Visual Aids**

You are now ready to prepare your visual aids at this early stage, so that you will know what is available.

- If you use a flannelgraph lesson, cut out or prepare the figures, try putting them on the flannelboard, and arrange them in the order they will be used.
- If you use flashcards make sure they are ready. They may need to

be coloured in, or stuck onto cardboard, or words may need to be printed.

- If you intend to visualize a verse or a song, which goes along with your central truth, make sure that it is ready for use.

### ***Step Eleven – Prepare and Write Out Your Outline***

You should now be ready to write out the teaching plan which you will refer to (discreetly) as you teach your lesson.

At the top of your plan write your central truth and the two applications.

Then you will write out the four parts of your lesson as outlined in chapter 18.

- **The Beginning**

Decide how you will begin the lesson. Write down your opening sentences so that you will know exactly what to say.

- **Progression of Events**

From the notes you have already made you can compile an orderly, well organized, list of the main events in the lesson.

- **The Climax**

Look for the high point in your lesson. I would suggest that the jailor's question in verse 30 is the high point or climax. You should write down briefly the exact words you plan to use. This will help to fix it clearly in your mind.

- **Conclusion**

Write out at the end of the outline how you will bring the lesson to a close and how you will challenge the children in your application(s). It is good to know and practise the exact words you will use.

Consequently, your preliminary story plan will look something like the outline on the following page:

***CENTRAL TRUTH – Jesus Christ changes people.***

***APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED – (Therefore) He will change you if you trust Him.***

***APPLICATION TO THE SAVED – (Therefore) You can be a witness to others by your changed life.***

***BEGINNING – Ben’s problem – I wish I could be different.***

***PROGRESSION OF EVENTS –***

***A. Paul and team leave for Macedonia.***

***B. Arrival in Philippi.***

***C. Preaching at the riverside.***

***D. Lydia’s conversion.***

***E. Lydia’s baptism and hospitality.***

***F. Girl shouts at Paul and Silas.***

***G. Paul commands the Spirit.***

***H. Girl healed.***

***I. Paul and Silas accused.***

***J. Paul and Silas are beaten and put in prison.***

***K. Paul and Silas sing and pray.***

***L. The earthquake.***

***M. The jailor’s attempt to kill himself.***

***CLIMAX – the jailor’s question***

***A. Paul’s answer – “Trust Christ”.***

***B. Jailor is saved.***

***CONCLUSION – The jailor’s baptism and hospitality and the salvation of his family.***

It would be good for you to add to an outline such as this more detail on your opening and concluding sentences, plus the words you would use for your climax as suggested on the previous page.

### ***Step Twelve - Include Central Truth, Applications and Other Truths on Your Plan***

Now go back through this story plan, and write down the letters **CT** wherever you will introduce and teach the central truth. Also include the

letters **CTU** where you will teach and apply the central truth to unsaved children, and **CTS** where you will teach and apply the central truth to the saved children. You will find that this lesson gives quite a number of opportunities to teach and apply this central truth.

Also, if there are any additional truths you feel you should mention, write them in abbreviated form at the appropriate place. The final lesson plan could then look like the plan below. In this lesson plan, and in the lesson outline in chapter 21, I have shown every place where it would be **possible** to teach the central truth, and where it would be **possible** to apply it to the saved and unsaved children. I wanted to give you as much help as possible. But you will probably not want to use all of these.

	<p><b>CENTRAL TRUTH (CT)</b> <b>-Jesus Christ changes people.</b> <b>APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED(CTU)</b> <b>- He will change you if you trust Him.</b> <b>APPLICATION TO THE SAVED (CTS)</b> <b>-You can be a witness to others by your changed life</b></p>	Other Truths Mentioned
<p><i>CT</i></p> <p><i>CT</i></p> <p><i>CT</i></p> <p><i>CTU</i></p> <p><i>CTU</i></p> <p><i>CTS</i></p> <p><i>CTU</i></p> <p><i>CTU</i></p> <p><i>CTU</i></p>	<p><b>BEGINNING</b> - Ben's problem - I want to be different <b>PROGRESSION OF EVENTS</b> - A. Paul and team leave for Macedonia. B. Arrival in Philippi. C. Preaching at the riverside. D. Lydia's conversion. E. Lydia's baptism and hospitality. F. Girl shouts at Paul and Silas. G. Paul commands the spirit. H. Girl healed. I. Paul and Silas accused. J. Paul and Silas are beaten and put in prison. K. Paul and Silas sing and pray. L. The earthquake. M. The jailor's attempt to kill himself. N. The Jailor's question. <b>CLIMAX</b> A. Paul's answer - "Trust Christ". B. Jailor is saved. <b>CONCLUSION</b> - The jailor's baptism and hospitality and his family saved Ben is changed</p>	<p>Death and Resurrection of Christ ♦</p> <p>Sin and its results ☒</p> <p>Death and Resurrection of Christ ♦ Salvation by faith ☒</p>

Note that there are four “other truths” mentioned (in the right hand column). Two of them are in the Bible passage (marked ☒ ). The other two are not in the Bible passage (marked ♦). All four help to teach and apply the central truth.

As I have said, it would be a help to add the following to the above plan:

- Your introductory sentences.
- The words used in your climax.
- The sentences used in your concluding challenge and invitation.

### ***Step Thirteen - Practise Your Lesson***

Now all you need to do is to PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE. Go over the lesson several times, using your visual aids and referring, where necessary, to the outline which you have written on a small piece of paper or cardboard and have placed in your Bible.

## **Chapter 25:**

### **Be Sure They Are With You**

#### ***How Can I Encourage the Children to Listen to My Bible Lesson?***

---

#### ***Summary of Chapter***

*(You want to be sure that the children listen to you.)*

- **They will listen if they like you**
- **They will listen if the content of the lesson is interesting**
- **They will listen if your method of teaching is interesting**
- **They will listen if you keep to some basic rules**
- **They will listen if you enjoy your teaching**
- **They will listen if you pray beforehand that they will**

**I** thought it would be helpful and profitable, in this final chapter concerning the presentation of a Bible lesson, to give in summary fashion, a number of ideas and principles which will help you in your teaching of children, and encourage them to listen to you. I would suggest that you use these as a check list, and ask yourself if each idea or principle is evident in you and your ministry.

#### ***Children Will Listen Better If They Like You***

To be effective in your work with children you need to be attractive to them. It is difficult for a child to be attracted to Jesus Christ if he is not attracted to his teacher!

What makes a teacher attractive to children?

- You need to be firm. Children respect firmness, if it is administered in love and in the right way, and they are attracted by it. Children should know that we mean what we say, and that we will do what we say. We need to make it clear to the children that we are in control, and that they must behave themselves.

- You need to be happy. It is possible and necessary to be both serious and happy. Children are attracted to people who are happy, rather than gloomy; people with a sense of humour, a twinkle in the eye, the ability to smile and even, where necessary, to laugh. If you are not bright, cheery and pleasant it will be difficult to capture the children's confidence and affection.
- You need to be enthusiastic. When you come into your class you should look as if you are looking forward to it (and I hope you are), and not as if it is a chore or the most unpleasant task in the world. Enthusiasm (or the lack of it) is contagious. You can't expect children to be interested and enthusiastic if **you** are not.
- You need to be interested in the children as individuals; interested not only in their salvation, but in their daily lives.

### ***Children Will Listen Better If What You Teach Is Interesting***

There are several guidelines which will help you to make your teaching interesting:

- Teach the Word of God to the children. God has promised to bless the teaching of His Word and you can rely upon that promise. There is no substitute for His Word. The Bible is a book full of many wonderful stories – spy stories, love stories, war stories, adventure stories and many others, and many wonderful and relevant truths can be taught through them. If properly prepared and enthusiastically taught, the children will listen. Also, there are many portions of the Bible which the children do not know, and which they need to know, and you could introduce them to these portions.
- Make your teaching relevant to the children. You don't want to be "up in the clouds". Don't give the impression that what you are teaching is out of date. Bring it up to date. You should understand the needs of all the children in your class, and you should endeavour in your teaching to meet those needs. The children will listen better if they can see in your teaching that which will help them with their problems, and which will answer their questions:
- Use words and concepts which the children understand. Remember that you are feeding lambs (John 21 v15) – not giraffes!

- It will help your teaching considerably if there is plenty of variety from week to week during your teaching programme. So vary your meeting from time to time. Change your programme around; introduce something new. Don't keep teaching and repeating the same truths or lessons. Also, have some variety, and a few changes from week to week.
- It is better not to memorize your lesson, then it will be more natural and less stilted. It should be sufficient to know thoroughly all the details of your lesson – and also to have a detailed outline written out and inserted in your Bible, to which you can refer from time to time.

### ***Children Will Listen Better If How You Teach Is Interesting***

You cannot speak to children in the same way as you speak to adults. You cannot take a 5-point message preached to adults and cut it down for the children. Children are different, and they need a different kind of presentation:

- Make your message live. Put life into it. Be enthusiastic and animated as you speak. Let your enthusiasm grip them. If you are not enthusiastic the children will not be.
- Be yourself. Don't try to make an impression. God wants to work through **your** personality. We often cultivate with adults an artificiality – frequently born of self-consciousness, or lack of self-confidence. But children are natural with no put-on and we must be the same with them. You need to have confidence in yourself (“*You shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ*”), confidence in your message (“*My Word shall not return unto Me void*”), confidence in your mission (“*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you*”), and confidence in your Master (“*Lo, I am with you always*”).
- Make full use of visual aids like flannelgraph, object lessons and flashcards (see chapter 30). When properly used, they can make your lessons live, and help your message to be interesting and attractive. Verbal illustrations can also be a great help.
- Above all, use your own natural visual aids to make your lesson really interesting and attractive:



- ✓ Use your voice with all its variations in volume and speech
- ✓ Use your face with all its many expressions
- ✓ Use your hands to give your story and lesson some action
- Live your lesson and put plenty of action into it.

Remember, if you are not interesting, the children will not be interested.

### ***Children Will Listen Better If You “Keep to the Rules”***

You need to remind yourself, at all times, of several basic rules or principles which will help you to teach, and the children to listen. Many of them have already been outlined in other parts of this book. But it might help to be reminded, at this point, of some of them.

- Be sure that your lesson is thoroughly prepared and well practised; and also that your visual aids are ready for use. The importance of early and thorough preparation cannot be over-emphasized.
- Be sure to have a loving, gracious and sincere attitude when you are teaching.
- Be sure that your teaching and applications are clear and understandable to the children, and that they relate directly to their circumstances and needs.
- Be sure to avoid monotony and sameness in your teaching programme “Variety is the spice of life (and teaching)”.
- Be sure to have good eye contact with **all** the children you are teaching. Don’t keep looking at the wall, or the flannel board, or even at one child.
- Be careful about your personal appearance. Be neat and dress suitably. Avoid anything which would distract the children.

### ***Children Will Listen Better If You Enjoy Your Teaching***

Teaching a Bible lesson should be an enjoyable experience, and not something arduous. The more you work at it, and the better you organise yourself, the more you will enjoy it. And the more you enjoy it, the more the children will enjoy it. You must always remember not to become so tied to method and plans that you lose the joy and exuberance your presentation needs.

### ***Children Will Listen Better If You Pray***

Pray! Pray! Pray! Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, “*For without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15 v5). After you have done all you can in prayer, preparation and presentation, you can safely leave the results in God’s Hands.

If you wish to study, and learn more about, the presentation and teaching of a Bible lesson you should read my book “*How to Teach a Bible Lesson to Children*”. This book deals with the subject in much more detail than is possible in this present book, which covers so many areas of our ministry to children. The detailed book can be obtained from the address given on page 2 by writing and giving details of your ministry to children, and how you feel you could benefit from this more detailed book.

## Chapter 26:

### Let Them Know You Are Ready To Help

#### *What Does It Mean to “Make Yourself Available” to Children?*

---

#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Be ready to help and counsel concerned children.)*

- **You need to make yourself available to children who want to trust Christ**
- **Why should you make yourself available?**
- **How should you make yourself available?**
- **When should you make yourself available?**
- **Also make yourself available to saved children**

**Y**ou, as the teacher, should never be remote or distant from the children. You want the children to know that they can come to you and speak with you at any time. You want them to know and feel that you are approachable and available to them. This should be obvious from your attitude to the children. But you also need to make it clear to them by what you say.

#### ***Make Yourself Available to Unsaved Children***

Your first responsibility, as you minister to and teach children who are not saved, is to evangelize them and, especially to use the Bible lesson which you are teaching to present the Gospel to them. As you do so, you are praying and trusting that the Holy Spirit will speak to the hearts of the unsaved children, that He will show them their need of salvation, that He will help them to understand what Jesus Christ has done for them (and what they need to do), and that He will enable them to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour. But some of them might need personal help and counsel, and it is part of your responsibility to let them know that you are available to give them that personal help and counsel.

### ***Why Should You Make Yourself Available?***

Most children are saved “on their own”. They hear the Gospel and trust Jesus Christ during the meeting, or at home, or on their way home. But you need to realise that there are some children who feel, for some reason, that they cannot do this:

- Some don’t yet understand how to be saved.
- Some are confused about what they have heard.
- Some have questions which need answers.

As a result, these children need personal help, and it is vital for you to give that help, or at least to offer to give it. You want to help the children trust Jesus Christ – if they need, or want, this help. It is, as we have said, possible for the children to trust Jesus Christ without your help. It is not necessary for them to talk to you to be saved. But for some children – children in one of the above three situations – it can be a help for them to do so.

Consequently, there might be a child in your meeting who has heard you present the Gospel, who would like to be saved, who is not sure how to be saved, and who needs your personal help and counsel. In addition, he/she is probably too shy to approach you, or any one else, to ask for help. Talking to this child personally on a one-to-one basis, and being able to answer his/her questions, could help him/her to know how to come to Christ and trust Him.

### ***How Should You Make Yourself Available?***

Therefore you have a responsibility to let children such as these know that you are available to them, and that you are ready to help them if they wish. You need to make four things clear to them:

- That you are available to help them.
- Where you will be available.
- When you will be available.
- What they should do if they want to receive this help.

Consequently, at some time during your lesson, you could say something like this:

*“If there is a boy or girl here this afternoon who is not saved, and would like to be, but is still not sure how to be, I would be glad to*

*“speak with you, and help you know how to trust Christ. If you are a child like that, and you would like to speak with me, then after the meeting is finished, you should come and sit in one of the chairs here in the front row. If I see you sitting there, I will know you want me to help you.”*

In this way you have made the four things mentioned above clear to him.

- The child knows you are ready to help him.
- He knows exactly where he should go.
- He knows when you are available.
- He knows exactly what he needs to do, if he wants your personal help and counsel.

The decision is now in his hands. There has been no pressure, or undue influence. You have simply conveyed this information to him, and you leave the next step with him.

I personally would never ask children to put their hands up, or stand up, or come to the front, or even look at me – if they want to be saved, or if they want me to talk with them. I feel that there can be real dangers with this type of immediate physical response:

- There is a possibility that children will react quickly, and without enough thought – especially if the teacher is insistent, very emotional, or has a strong personality.
- There is a possibility that children might “follow the leader” and react physically, and immediately, because they see other children doing the same thing.
- There is a possibility that the children might feel that a physical response such as raising a hand, or standing up is, at the same time, a spiritual response, and automatically results in salvation.

I feel it is better for children who want personal help and counsel to come and speak with you after the meeting – provided they know they can, and provided they know exactly what they need to do. But remember that it is essential that you **are** available, that you are in the place you have designated, and that you are ready to speak with, and counsel children who want to talk with you.

### ***When Should You Make Yourself Available?***

Your children should always know that you are available. If you are conducting open-air meetings or children's meetings where the children keep changing, where different children come each day, and some don't return, then you should make yourself available every time you present and teach the Gospel to these unsaved children. If you are teaching the **same** children every day, or every week, you should keep reminding them from time to time (not necessarily in every meeting) that you are available. It is, always essential that the children know this, and also know what they should do if they want to speak with you and receive your counsel.

### ***Make Yourself Available to Saved Children***

We have seen, over and over again, that there are two kinds of children – those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and those who have not. Consequently, in your ministry you are seeking to evangelize the unsaved children, and also to help the saved children to grow.

You should, as we have outlined in the preceding chapters, make it your goal to teach and apply the Word of God to the saved children, so that it will be for them the spiritual milk (1 Peter 2 v2), and the spiritual meat (Hebrews 5 v14) which they need for their spiritual growth. And you should endeavour to give the solution to the problems which these saved children face while you are teaching, and especially through your Bible lessons.

But, at the same time, you need to realise that some of the **saved** children might also need personal help and counsel, in addition to what you have been teaching them in your meeting. Perhaps they have questions which have not been answered, or doubts which have not been resolved. It is also true that some of these answers and solutions can only be given on a personal level.

So, as an extension to your teaching ministry to these saved children, you also need to **MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE** to them. The Christian children who need personal help and counsel will, generally, not come to you themselves and ask for help, unless you let them know that you are available.

Also, you need to let them, know at least four things:

- That you are ready to help them, to pray with them, and to answer their questions.

- Where they can meet you if they wish.
- When this rendezvous can take place.
- What they should do if they want this help.

You could, for example, say something like this:

*“If there is a boy or girl here, and you have already trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, but you have a problem or a question, I would really like to help you. I would be glad to talk with you and pray with you after the meeting is over. Would you like me to? Then when the others are leaving, just come and sit on one of these chairs in the front row. If I see you sitting there, I will know you want to talk with me, and I will be glad to help you.”*

You will not necessarily make yourself available to Christian children every week. You will do so from time to time – especially when it fits in with your lesson. The important fact is that the Christian children should always know that you are available, and they should always feel you are approachable. Many of these children have no one else who is able or willing to help in this way. So it is a great privilege and a great responsibility for you to do so.

It is better not to make yourself available to Christian children at the same time as you make yourself available to unsaved children. Keeping the two expressions of availability separate will avoid confusion.

**Chapter 27:**  
**Show Them The Way**  
*How Can I Counsel an Unsaved Child  
and Lead Him to Christ?*

---

*Summary of Chapter*

*(10 steps to follow when leading a child to Christ.)*

- **Set the child at ease**
- **Identify the child's problem**
- **Make sure the child understands the Gospel**
- **Use a Bible verse to share the way of salvation**
- **Ask if he wants to trust Christ**
- **Suggest he ask the Lord Jesus to save him**
- **Speak about assurance of salvation**
- **Suggest a prayer of thanks**
- **Start follow-up teaching**
- **Give him a Bible promise**

**T**his is a very important subject, and would need more time and space than is available in this book. I have written a detailed book on the subject entitled “*How to Lead a Child to Christ*” and if you don’t have a copy of it and feel it would be a help to you, write to the address given at the front of this book, and request one to help you in your ministry.

I trust that you have taught the gospel message to the children, and that you have challenged them, and invited them, to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour. I trust that you have also made yourself available to those who want personal help (see previous chapter). But the meeting is now over, and a child remains seated. He wants to be saved and he wants to talk with you.

So, in this chapter, we will look at the ten steps you should follow when counselling this child.



### ***Step 1 - Set the Child at Ease***

The child might be nervous and wondering what is going to happen - especially if he is very young.

**Smile and put him at ease.** Tell him how happy you are that he wants to speak with you.

**Ask him his name and age** (if you do not know these already); and then use his name as you continue to talk with him.

**Find out if someone is waiting for him**, or if he is expected home at a certain time and make whatever arrangements are necessary.

Also, you could ask him if he likes school, and what his favourite subjects are. This type of conversation encourages the child to relax, and to be ready to talk, and open up, to you.

### ***Step 2 - Identify the Child's Problem***

Like a doctor you need to “diagnose” the child’s spiritual problem before you can help him.

#### **The Four Main Groups of Children**

Children who come for help and counselling after a meeting usually fall into one of four main categories or groups, and each group needs to be dealt with in a different way.

Group 1 - The unsaved child who is not sincere or not ready

Group 2 - The unsaved child who does not understand his need of salvation

Group 3 - The saved child who lacks assurance or has a problem

Group 4 - The unsaved child who is sincere, understands - and really wants to be saved

#### **The Three Main Questions to Ask**

You need to ask the child who comes to you a series of three questions, to find out which of the above four groups he fits into, before proceeding any further.

**Question 1 - *Why do you want to talk with me?***

The child's answer should show you if he is sincere, or if he is in the first group listed above.

If his answer indicates that he sincerely wants to trust Christ, then go on to questions 2 and 3.

If, however, it is obvious that he is in the first group, is not sincere, or is not ready to go any further, take time to emphasize to him that trusting Christ is the most important step he could ever take. Tell him that he should think seriously about it, and that he can trust Christ at any time and in any place. Let him know also, before he leaves, that you will always be ready to speak further with him any time he wishes.

You cannot lead him any further than this at present.

**Question 2 - *Have you ever sinned or done anything wrong?***

This type of question will allow both the child, and yourself, to speak about sin.

His answers to this question about sin will help you to know if the child understands his need of salvation. If he doesn't, he is in the second group, and he is not ready to go any further.

However, it is not enough for the child just to know that he has sinned, and to be able to answer "yes" to the above question. There needs to be some conviction of sin, a desire to turn from it, and a desire to be different.

So you could ask further questions such as:-

- *"Do you want to be like this?"* or
- *"How does God want you to feel concerning the wrong things you have done?"* or
- *"Would you like to be different with God's help?"* or
- *"Why do you want to be different?"*

If the child does not have any understanding of sin, and/or seems to have no conviction of sin, he is in the second group of children. You cannot lead him to Christ just now. Tell him that he needs to see his own sinfulness before he can trust Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and when he does so he should then ask the Lord Jesus to save him. Let him know also that he should always feel free to come to you, if he wants help. Pray with him before he leaves.

If, on the other hand, he seems to understand, and to have some

conviction of sin - go on to question three.

**Question 3 - “Have you already asked the Lord Jesus into your heart and life - to forgive your sins?” or**

*“Have you ever done anything like this before?”*

If the child says “yes”, this may show that he is already saved, and that he is in the third group. But you need to ask him to tell you about it. Listen carefully to his answer and question him further if necessary. If you are reasonably sure that he is already saved, he is in the third group - and you should deal with him as a born-again child who has lost his assurance, has a problem, and needs help in his Christian life.

You should, in this case, try to find the reason for his lack of assurance (or his problem), and give him the solution to it from God’s Word.

If the child answers “no” to your question, if you have any real doubt after questioning him, as to whether he is saved or not, then deal with him as a child who is unsaved, and who understands. In other words, he is in the fourth group.

If the child seems to be sincere (see question 1), seems to understand his need of salvation (see question 2), and has not been saved before (see question 3), you should now counsel him as an unsaved child as outlined in the following eight steps.

**Step 3 - Make Sure the Child Understands the Gospel**

This is a good opportunity to use your Wordless Book. But you should not do all the talking. Your purpose is not to preach, but to find out how much the child understands about the Gospel. You should therefore ask the child questions to see how much he understands about God, about sin, about Jesus Christ and about the way of salvation before going any further. And, as you ask the questions, you can at the same time help him to understand better the answers to them.

➤ **GOD (Show the gold page of the Wordless Book)**

*Of whom does this page remind you? What does gold remind you of? Yes, it reminds us of God.*

*What is God like?*

- ✓ *He is wealthy, the Creator and owner of all*
- ✓ *He is the King of kings*

- ✓ *He is pure*
- ✓ *He lives in Heaven and loves you*
- **SIN (Show the dark page of the Wordless Book)**
  - ✓ *What is sin? Give me some examples*
  - ✓ *What does God think about sin?*
  - ✓ *Have you sinned?*
  - ✓ *Do you want to turn from your sin and be different?*
- **JESUS CHRIST (Show the red page of the Wordless Book)**
  - ✓ *Who is the only one who can take away your sin?*
  - ✓ *Why can He take away your sin?*
  - ✓ *Is He still dead?*
- **WAY OF SALVATION (Show the white page of the Wordless Book)**
  - ✓ *What do you need to do to be saved?*
  - ✓ *What will God do if you do that?*

If the child seems to have a reasonable understanding of the gospel message, proceed to the next step. However, don't set your standards too high. Remember you are speaking to a child who has limited understanding and limited ability to express himself. You are just looking for a very basic understanding of the key truths.

However, as you question the child you may discover that the child has very little or no understanding of the truths outlined, or you might find that he is not really interested, or is becoming restless. In both cases it would be better just to outline the gospel message simply to him, and encourage him in his own time to trust Christ.

#### **Step 4 - Use a Bible Verse to Show the Way of Salvation**

This is probably the most important step of all, and the one which needs the most time.

There are several principles to follow here:-

- **Use the Bible** to show the child how to be saved.
- **Choose just one verse.** Concentrate upon it, and explain it thoroughly.
- **Use a verse, if possible, which fits in with what you have already taught** in your Bible lesson, and in your presentation of the

Gospel. For example, if you have been teaching the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19 v1-10), who **came** to the Lord Jesus when called, you could use John 6 v37 *“The one that **comes** to Me, I will by no means cast out.”*

- **Use a verse which is easy for the child to understand** in the short time available, and which uses words and concepts which need a relatively short explanation to clarify. For example, John 1 v12 with its concept of “receiving Christ”, or Romans 10 v13 with the concept of “calling to Jesus Christ”, is easier to explain to a child with little or no Bible background than John 3 v16 with its concept of “believing on Christ”.
- **You need to be very simple with younger children.** For example, Revelation 3 v20 is easy for a younger child to understand.
- **Use a verse which shows the child two things:**
  - ✓ What God wants him to do
  - ✓ What God will do - if he does that

Many verses show these two aspects of the way of salvation including the following: John 1 v12; 3 v16; 6 v37; Acts 3 v19; 16 v31; Romans 10 v13 and Revelation 3 v20.
- **Have the child read the verse**, or if he cannot read, read it for him.
- **Explain the verse carefully and simply** to the child.

If you choose Romans 10 v13 for example, you could say:

*“This verse tells you something that God wants you to do. He wants you to call on the Name of the Lord Jesus. He wants you to call to Him. What should you call to Him for, and ask Him to do? You should ask Him to save you from your sins, because only He can save you from them.*

*Think of a boy who has fallen into a deep well and there is no way out. He tries, but the sides are steep and slippery. It is impossible to climb out. Then he sees someone look over the top of the wall, someone he knows and trusts, someone who is strong, and he calls ‘Please save me!’. And this man who is so strong and loving, lowers himself into the well with a rope, gets hold of the boy, and saves him.*

*If you know you need to be saved from your sin, call to Jesus Christ, ask Him to save you, and He will. That is what this verse promises - to anyone, everyone. If you will call to Him to save you, what does the*

*verse say will happen? You will be saved!”*

If you are satisfied that the child understands, and if it seems to you that God is really working in his heart, proceed to the next step.

***Step 5 - Ask If He Wants to Trust Christ -  
or If He Would Rather Go Home and  
Think More About It***

You are now in a position to ask the child if he really wants to go ahead and trust Jesus Christ.

It is good to phrase your question so as to include an alternative to a simple ‘yes’ answer. If you include an “or would you rather”, the child will find it easier to give an honest answer without embarrassment. It is difficult for a child to say “No” to a concerned counsellor!

You should emphasize how important this decision is for him. As you explain the importance of this decision he is considering, there are three things you should outline to him:

***1. The Lord Jesus will want to be in control of his life***

The Lord Jesus will not come into his life just to save him and forgive his sin. He will also come in to change him, and to live in his life as Lord and Master. He will want to be “his Boss”.

***2. The Lord Jesus will expect to see a change in his life***

Becoming a Christian means a willingness to turn from that which is wrong and to seek to do that which is pleasing to God. He needs to understand that his life will be changed.

***3. Being a Christian is not always easy***

He needs to know that other boys and girls might laugh at him or make fun of him when they know what he has done. Letting him know this serves as both a warning and a preparation, but let him know that the Lord Jesus will help him and strengthen him.

So, after the child has seen what is involved in trusting Christ, you now need to ask him what he would really like to do.

*“Would you like to trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour right now? You need to mean it with all of your heart. Or, would you rather go away and think more about it? We will be quiet for a few moments; and when you have decided you can tell me what you want to do.”*

Allow him a few moments before he answers. If he says that he does not want to trust Christ now, but wants to go home and think about it, let him go. Do not try to put pressure upon him to change his mind. However, you should tell him that he can trust Christ at home, or anywhere, if he really wants to, and explain again to him how he can do so. You can also suggest the possibility of him coming back later to speak with you again, if he wishes.

If the child has said “Yes” to this question, and seems prepared by the Holy Spirit to trust Christ, he is now ready for the next step.

### **Step 6 - Suggest That He Talk to the Lord Jesus and Ask Him to Save Him**

You should now encourage the child to pray and ask Jesus Christ to save him on the basis of the Bible verse you have explained, and using the concept outlined in that verse.

- The best way is to encourage the child to pray audibly, and by himself. In this case, you might like to suggest, beforehand, one or two sentences (related to the Bible verse) which he could include in his prayer.

*“If you really want to be saved, call to the Lord Jesus, speak to Him, and ask Him to save you. This verse (Romans 10 v13) in the Bible promises that He will.”*

Or *“If you really want the Lord Jesus to come into your life, tell Him you are sorry for your sin, and ask Him to come into your life. This verse in the Bible (Revelation 3 v20) promises that He will.”*

The child’s prayer may be a very short and simple one.

- If the child is very young, or quite shy, you might want to lead him in prayer. You could suggest to him that you will help him in what he should say, and that if he really means it he should repeat the words after you:

*“Dear Lord Jesus ..... I am a sinner ..... I want to be different ..... and I would like to have my sins forgiven ..... And so I call to You ..... and ask You ..... to save me ..... And I know You will .... Because You have promised to do so ..... Amen.”*

### **Step 7 - Speak About Assurance of Salvation**

The child needs to learn how he can KNOW that he is saved.

So you need, at this time, to **teach** the child how he can know he is saved. **You cannot give the child assurance of salvation.** So avoid telling the child that **you** are sure he is saved. You don't want him to have the impression that his assurance depends upon what you say. His assurance comes from God and is based upon His Word and not upon yours.

#### ➤ ***Show him what God's Word says***

Tell him that he will not know he is saved because he feels it, nor because you have said it. The important question is "What does God say in His Word?"

Go back to the Bible verse you used in step 4 and read it again together. Then ask him some questions.

- ✓ What did God tell you to do in this verse?
- ✓ Did you do it?
- ✓ What did God say in this verse that He would do?
- ✓ Has He done it?
- ✓ How do you know He has?
- ✓ He promised He would

#### ➤ ***Speak about a changed life***

Tell the child that if he has trusted the Lord Jesus there will be a change in his life, and this will also help him to know that he is saved. Tell him that the change may be very small, but it will be there. You could quote 2 Corinthians 5 v17 *"If anyone be in Christ he is a new creation."*

### **Step 8 - Suggest a Prayer of Thanks**

You should now suggest to the child that since he has trusted the Lord Jesus, and has received the wonderful gift of salvation, he might want to say "Thank You" to Him for all that He has done.

Give him the opportunity to pray and thank the Lord Jesus now.

### **Step 9 - Start Follow-up Teaching**

If time is limited, concentrate on the eight steps I have already outlined - especially if you have the opportunity to see the child again, or if you are



able to meet with him regularly in the future. So it would be possible to finish the counselling session after step 8, if absolutely necessary.

However, if you have time, or if there is a risk of you not seeing the child again at all, or even for some time, you should go through these next two steps reasonably briefly. Or, if time is short, you could arrange to meet with the child later that week, and keep the outline of these further two steps and helps for the Christian life until then.

You could, at this time, bring out your Wordless Book again and show the green page. Explain that green stands for growth. The grass, the flowers and the trees are all green and they all grow. Now that the child has trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, God wants him to grow – and you should tell him that he will grow if he follows these next five steps.

You can encourage him to remember these steps by showing, one by one, the fingers of your left hand, and asking the child to point to, and hold, the equivalent finger on his left hand.

### ***Read and obey the Bible each day***

Point to and hold your thumb - the strong finger. “If you **read** and obey the Bible you will be **strong**.”

You should encourage him to begin with Mark’s Gospel, reading a few verses each day. However, tell him that it is not enough just to read the Bible. God wants him to obey what the Bible says and He will give him the strength to do so.

### ***Talk to God, your Heavenly Father***

Point to and hold your index finger, the one which points upwards, and reminds us to speak to Him.

Tell him he can **pray** or talk to God anywhere, at any time, and about anything. But he should also try to have a special Quiet Time each day when he can talk to God.

### ***Tell others what you have done***

Point to and hold your middle finger, the one which stands straight and tall, and reminds us that we should not be ashamed to take a stand for the Lord Jesus.

Encourage him to **witness**, even though some may laugh at him and make fun of him. Emphasize the importance of witnessing through how he lives, as well as through what he says.

***Ask God to forgive you when you sin***

Point to, and hold, your fourth finger, the one which does not stand so straight when the others are bent. Demonstrate this by trying to straighten this finger when the others are firmly bent.

*“Sometimes we are like this and we sin. If you do anything wrong, you do not need to be saved again. God does not want you to do bad things, but this does sometimes happen in the Christian life. When you sin you should immediately **confess** to God whatever you have done. Tell Him that you are sorry, and ask Him to give you the strength not to do it again.”*

Explain 1 John 1 v 9 to the child briefly.

***Meet together with other Christians***

Point to, and hold, your little finger and then bring all the fingers of the hand together to symbolise unity. The little finger on its own is weak but, along with the others, it can do so much.

Tell him how good it is to go to church, Sunday School, and Good News Club, to learn more about God, and to be **together** with others who love the Lord. Explain that this will help him in his Christian life.

***Step 10 - Give Him a Bible Promise***

Now you should use the five fingers of your other hand to take one final step, and teach one final lesson, by giving him a verse which contains a promise from God to him.

Open your Bible and show him that the Lord says, *“I will never leave you”* (Hebrews 13 v5). Then say the words, pointing to and holding each finger of your right hand in turn, and encourage the child to do the same. Keep repeating the promise, emphasizing a different word and finger each time.

The child should remember the Lord’s promise to be with him always - no matter what happens.

## Chapter 28:

### Help Them With Their Problems

#### *How Can I Counsel Saved Children?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Steps to take when giving personal help to a saved child.)*

- **Set the child at ease**
- **Identify his problem**
- **Ask two questions**
- **Show a Bible verse to deal with his problem**
- **Ask him what he wants to do**
- **Follow him up**

**W**e have seen in previous chapters our responsibility to the saved children.

- We should teach the Word of God (and especially the central truth of each lesson) to them.
- We should apply that central truth to them to help them in their Christian lives.
- We should challenge them to act on the basis of that central truth.
- We should make ourselves available to Christian children who have problems or questions.

After you make yourself available to saved children, and after you offer to help them personally with their problems and questions, it is possible that one or more of these children will come to you for counselling. When counselling a child it can be a great help to have a counselling plan to follow. It does not mean that you must stick to every detail of your plan. Circumstances may arise, questions may be asked, or ideas may come into your mind which would cause you to “stray from” your plan. But it is still good to have a basic idea of what you should do, and the steps you should follow, when you are counselling a child.

You will find, and receive, more help in how to deal with the specific problems which you will come across when counselling saved children by referring to my book “*Growing Up*”.

There are six steps to follow when counselling a saved child:

### ***Step 1 - Set the Child at Ease***

The child may be nervous or embarrassed. He might be sensitive to, and even afraid of, your reaction to what he will say. He is probably not sure what is going to happen:

- Smile, and tell him you are glad that he came to speak with you.
- Ask a few introductory questions which are easy to answer, and which enable the child to feel more comfortable:
  - ✓ How are things at school?
  - ✓ Are you still in the football team?
  - ✓ Are you enjoying Good News Club?
- Be sure that right from the beginning of your counselling time you show acceptance of him, and by your words and the expression on your face, that you are eager to understand him, and whatever problems he has.
- Never give him the feeling that you are superior to him, or that you are judging him. Your attitude is very important.

### ***Step 2 - Identify His Problem***

The obvious way to identify his problem is to ask him why he came, and why he wants to speak with you.

But be very sure to listen to his answer, and listen very carefully. Do not appear hurried, nor give the impression that you do not have much time to speak with him. No-one likes to share their problem with someone who acts this way.

It is important to be patient. The first answer the child gives you may not identify the real problem. Continue talking **and listening**; and it may be that the real problem will eventually surface. If not, and you are satisfied that the first answer given has identified the child's problem, then go ahead and take the next step.

### **Step 3 - Ask Two Questions**

There are two issues to be cleared up, and two questions to be asked to help you do this, before you proceed with your counselling. The answers to these two questions will help you to understand the child's position and problems better, and will also give you guidance on how to proceed. So it is good to deal with these two issues before you deal specifically with the problem or question which the child has raised.

- You need to know if the child is truly saved  
The underlying and basic cause of the child's problem could be that he is not saved, and this would need to be checked out first. Do not take it for granted that the child has trusted Christ. Ask him if he has. Ask him when he did so. Ask him what the results were. And listen carefully to his answers.
- You need to know if the child has assurance of salvation  
Lack of assurance can be an underlying reason for many problems in the life of a saved child; and it is helpful to have this matter cleared up before going any further. Ask him if he knows he is saved. If not, show him how he can have assurance. If he says "Yes", ask him how he knows.

When these two matters have been dealt with to your satisfaction, you are ready to go on to the next step.

### **Step 4 - Show a Bible Verse**

You are now ready to deal with the specific problem the child has spoken about. The key to solving his problem and answering his question is to use the Bible. You should turn to a verse which gives the answer, and let the child read it. Then discuss the problem with the child in the light of that verse, explaining its teaching to him. Try to help him see the solution to his problem from this Bible verse. It may be necessary, of course, to use more than one verse, but try to keep it as simple as possible. (Many examples of Bible verses you can use to help Christian children with their problems are outlined on pages 181 to 235 of my book "*Growing Up*").

You should also share from your own experience if you think this would be relevant and helpful.

### **Step 5 - Ask Him What He Wants to Do**

It is not enough for the child just to understand God's answer to his problem from the Bible verse you have used. He himself needs to take action in some way, and respond to what he has seen in God's Word.

- Encourage the child to believe what God has said in His Word.
- Help him to see that some response is necessary on his part, if he is to overcome his difficulty and solve his problem.
- Discuss the possible action he needs to take. Let him read the verse, and let **him** suggest the response he needs to make.
- Let the child himself pray to the Lord concerning his problem and the response he has decided to make. If he does not want to make the response that is needed, pray with him, let him go and tell him you will always be available to help.
- Pray with him and for him, asking God to help him overcome the difficulty or problem.
- Discuss with the child what he is going to do in the future with regard to this problem.

### **Step 6 – Follow Him Up**

If the child has responded to what the Bible says, and has prayed to the Lord concerning his problem and his response, there are several steps you can take to give him further help:

- Underline, in the child's Bible, the verse you have used in your counselling and discussion. Suggest to him that he memorize it.
- Assure him of your prayers and continued interest.
- Let him know that he should feel free to come back at any time to speak more about this problem – or any other problem.
- Give extra teaching in your class which is related to the subject you have discussed – but without reference to him.
- Never share with others what a child has told you in confidence. However, if the child has shared a problem in relation to some form of serious abuse, you might need to let him know that it could be necessary for you to share what he has told you with someone who could deal with it.

## Chapter 29:

### Complete Your Programme

#### *How Can I Teach Missions and Bible Doctrines to Children?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(There are two subjects you should include regularly.)*

- **Teach Missions**
- **Teach doctrinal lessons**

**W**e have already looked at and examined in detail the five essential parts of every children's meeting. These five activities should be included in every teaching programme:

- Singing
- Prayer time
- Memorization of a Bible verse
- Review (Bible quiz)
- Bible lesson

In this chapter we will consider two other possible parts of your programme. You will not necessarily include these every week, but you will include them regularly.

#### ***Teach Missions***

You, as the teacher, need to have a worldwide vision of the needs of others. You should then communicate and impart that vision to your children.

#### **Your Aims:**

There are several goals or aims which you will want to achieve through your teaching of missions:

- You should share with the children what the Bible teaches about missions.

- You should give the children a vision of the spiritual need of the world's peoples (especially of the world's children) - that they are lost and need the Gospel.
- You should show the children what they can do to help meet these needs:
  - ✓ Through prayer.
  - ✓ Through giving (even if the children are poor and don't have much money).
  - ✓ Through their personal witness to others now, when they are young.
  - ✓ Through their possible ministry as missionaries in other lands in the future.
- You should present to the children a picture of missionary activity both at home and abroad.

### **Your Presentation:**

You can teach missions, and challenge the children concerning missions, in the following ways:

- Through the teaching of Bible lessons which show people who were used by God to tell others about Him e.g. Jonah, Naaman's maid, Philip and the Ethiopian.
- Through the teaching and memorization of Bible verses like Mark 16 v15; John 4 v35.

Both of these will help the children to see the biblical basis for missions.

- Through the telling of missionary stories, outlining the practical experiences of those involved in missionary work. Missionary biographies are especially helpful e.g. Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, William Carey. However don't just tell stories. Try to draw out important principles concerning Christian work and witness from those stories.
- Through the singing of missionary choruses. This is a valuable means of teaching children about missions.
- Through the presentation of information:
  - ✓ General information about the world's needs.
  - ✓ Specific information about one country or area, in which you



want the children to have a special interest and involvement. Use visual aids such as a map or photographs.

- Through the “adoption” of a missionary who works in this specific country, giving the children information about him and his work. This information should include where he is from, how he was saved, how God called him, what he did to prepare for his work, where he lives, what the country is like, what he does, the needs and difficulties of the country, and the results of his ministry. Try to present this information attractively – with maps, pictures, prayer card, photographs, and a scrapbook.
- Through letters from this missionary and, if possible, occasional visits. A 5 or 10-minute cassette tape from the missionary – with children singing, news, and prayer and praise items - can be a real help and encouragement. You can also send a Christmas card to your missionary, and a birthday card.

There are three factors which you always need to keep in mind when teaching missions to your children:

- You cannot do everything outlined above at one time. Just take one step each time and make it your goal, over an extended period of time, to cover as many of the aspects outlined above as possible.
- You will not usually have a missionary time every week. You may have one on alternate weeks (alternating with a short lesson on doctrine) or, better still, you could have a series of short missionary presentations each week for, say, four or five weeks. And then, for the following few weeks, you could have a brief series on a Bible doctrine.
- You should not withhold teaching on missions and the challenge to give from your children, because they are poor and can’t give, or because you feel that in some way they wouldn’t understand or want to be involved. It **will** help them, and it **will** help others.

## Their Participation

You want the children to become involved in missions. This involvement will be a help to them spiritually – as well as to those for whom they are praying, or to whom they are giving. There are several ways in which they

can become involved:

- By praying specifically for missionaries, and for the children in other countries, or even in another part of their own country. It is a help to read excerpts from missionary prayer letters.
- By giving money to help a missionary, or a missionary project. There are several guidelines you should follow:
  - ✓ Teach the children the biblical principle of giving to help others.
  - ✓ Let the children know what their money will be used for.
  - ✓ Let the parents know that **all** this money is being sent to help a missionary and his work in another land, and that the practice of giving will help their children. A letter to the parents, to this effect, might help.
  - ✓ Encourage the children to give from their own resources, and not to ask their parents, or others, for money.
  - ✓ Emphasize that the amount given is not what counts (Mark 12 v42-44). It is the spirit in which it is given which is important.
  - ✓ Do not give the impression that children must give, and do not say things like “Who can bring the most money?”
  - ✓ You could use an offering chart of some kind to show how the total giving is developing. The simplest type of chart is a graph which lists the weekly dates on the bottom line, and the financial figures on the side line. Then the amount given is plotted each week, and joined with a line which will show if the giving is going up or down. Or you could draw a vertical rectangle to represent the amount aimed at over a set period, and then colour in the rectangle little by little, according to the amounts given – until the target is reached.
- By encouraging the children to be missionaries now by witnessing to others. They can tell other children about Christ and the Gospel. Children are the best missionaries to children because they have more opportunities than adults, and they know better the language to use. But you need to show them how to do this, e.g. by using the Wordless Book, or by inviting other children to come to the children’s meeting, or by giving out children’s tracts.

- By challenging the children to dedicate their lives to the Lord for Him to use, as He calls, in the future. Many missionaries received their first call to the mission field when they were still children.
- By presenting the various kinds of missionary work, and the steps to becoming a missionary. Pray for the children that the Lord will guide them in His perfect will for their lives, and that He will call some of them into full-time service.

### ***Teach Doctrinal Lessons***

It is generally recognized that one of the greatest needs of today's children is that they understand so little about the main truths and doctrines of the Bible. While the best way to remedy and solve this problem is by the teaching of doctrine through the Bible lesson each week, there could be, in addition, another way to teach Bible doctrines to children.

You could devote five to ten minutes of your teaching programme to the teaching of one Bible doctrine, or to one aspect of a Bible doctrine. You may not want to do this every week. You could alternate it, for example, in your programme with the missions presentation – doing one one week and the other the following week. Or, as already has been suggested, you may want to do a series on Bible doctrine over, say, five weeks, and then a series of five weeks on missions.

It would be a great help if you could visualize your brief doctrine presentation. There are several series of doctrinal flashcard lessons which could be a help to you:

- *“What Every Child Ought to Know”* (available from European Child Evangelism Fellowship). The address is – European CEF Headquarters, Kilchzimmer, 4338 Langenbruck, Switzerland.
- *“Questions Children Ask”*
- *“Who is God?”*                      ➤ *“What is God Like?”*
- *“The Bible”*                              ➤ *“The Lord Jesus Christ”*

These last five series have been produced by ourselves (Assisting Children's Evangelists Worldwide) and are available from us, in English, at the address given at the front of this book. More series will be produced in the future.

Each of these series consists of five doctrinal lessons, and each lesson

has eight flashcards with eight paragraphs in the accompanying text book which, together, teach the doctrine involved in a clear and logical way.

These lessons can be used in two ways:

- As a substitute for the Bible lesson in your children's ministry. In this case you would teach a complete lesson using all eight flashcards and paragraphs. You would teach for, say, fifteen or twenty minutes. You can see how these lessons can be used in this way in the outline of a five-year programme on pages 133-136.
- You could spread each lesson over a period of, say, four or five weeks and only teach one or two pages and paragraphs at a time, for approximately five to eight minutes. This would then be in addition to the Bible lesson, and you would teach these one or two pages and paragraphs in the doctrinal section of your teaching programme, and separate from the Bible lesson.

You could also prepare and produce your own short doctrinal presentations if you wish, especially if you don't have the lessons which are mentioned above. You could find help in the preparation of these lessons in my book *"How to Teach Bible Doctrines to Children"*, especially in chapters 5, 6, and 7:

Chapter 5 – *When and where should we teach children doctrine?*

Chapter 6 – *How can we use flashcards to teach doctrine?*

Chapter 7 - *What are the main doctrines we should teach?*

The other chapters in this book will also give you much help in how to teach Bible doctrines effectively to children.

If you don't have this book, and would like to receive a copy of it, write to the address given at the beginning of this book, giving an outline of your ministry to children, and how you feel it would help you in that ministry.

## Chapter 30:

### Help Them To See It

#### *How Can I Use Visual Aids?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Visual aids can help you in your ministry.)*

- **The purpose of visual aids**
- **The use of visual aids**
- **The production of visual aids**
- **The types of visual aids:**
  - ✓ Flannelgraph
  - ✓ Flashcards
  - ✓ Object lessons
  - ✓ Others
- **You are the best visual aid of all**
- **The preparation of visual aids**

**E**xperience tells us that a child learns more from what he hears and sees than from what he only hears. You should, therefore, seek in your teaching to use a child's ability to learn through his eyes as much as possible.

#### *The Purpose of Visual Aids*

Visual aids are not an end in themselves. You use them to help teach truth. They are a supplement to your teaching. They are aids to your teaching and nothing more.

Visual aids help the teacher who uses them in five ways:

- They secure attention  
Nothing gets the interest of a child better than something they can see. A visual aid focuses the eyes on one spot, and the mind

of the children on a single idea. The teacher, by using a visual aid, engages their eyes as well as their ears, and lessens the possibility of the mind wandering.

- They assist comprehension  
A visual aid helps the children to understand what you are saying.
- They encourage retention  
Something seen is longer remembered. The visual aid keeps the truth fresher and longer in the child's memory.
- They lessen contention  
Visual aids make a lesson more interesting and attractive, and lessen the danger of bad discipline.
- They ensure the prevention of wrong ideas.  
When something is just said it can be misunderstood, but when it is seen there is no problem.

We can see over and over again in the Bible how the Lord Jesus used visual aids to illustrate and explain what He was teaching. He realised, and demonstrated, how effective and how valuable visual aids can be in the teaching process.

### ***The Use of Visual Aids***

You can use visual aids to help you in several parts of your teaching programme:

- You could visualize the songs which the children sing.
- You could visualize the memory verses which you want the children to learn.
- You could use visual aids to provide contests for Bible quizzes and revision.
- You could use visual aids to inform children about missions (e.g. a map of the world, or of a specific country, or the currency of that country).
- You could use visual aids to teach doctrine.
- Above all, you could use visual aids to help you teach your Bible lesson.

### ***The Production of Visual Aids***

There are, basically, two kinds of visual aids which you can use:

- Those visual aids which you can purchase from, the local CEF office. These are the best and most attractive visual aids to use and require least work and preparation. But they can be expensive and may not be available in some countries or languages.
- Those visual aids which you prepare yourself. These will not be as “professional” as the first group and they will require more work. But they will be much less expensive and, at the same time, they can still be very helpful. Many, also, have the opportunity and ability to produce computerized visual aids. There are also many visual aids and objects which are available, free of charge, and which can also be effectively used just as they are.

Sometimes teachers hesitate to use visual aids because of the cost involved. But, with some thought and hard work, you can produce or find visual aids which are effective and cost little or nothing.

Think of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He was constantly using visual aids – a child, a coin, a bird, a tree, a fish or a flower, and He often used the common things of nature which are inexpensive or free. You could also use such visual aids, and there are many more such possibilities.

### ***The Types of Visual Aids***

There are many kinds of visual aids which are available to help you in your teaching.

#### **The flannelgraph**

Flannelgraph is probably the most widely used and the most effective of all visual aids.

The basic principle of the flannelgraph is this; if you stick a piece of flannel, lint, flannelette or some other cloth (with a nap or fluffy surface) onto a picture of some kind, it will stick to a board which is covered with the same type of cloth. So you will need to make a board of light wood or

heavy cardboard. It should be approximately 36" x 27" (90 cm x 70 cm). You should then cover it with this type of cloth – preferably a dark colour such as red or black. Then you will cut out the figures, or word strips you want to use, and either cover the back of them with this cloth, or put several small pieces of cloth on the back of each figure. They will be stronger and last longer if you cover the back completely. These figures will now adhere to the board and can be used as you teach.

You will now be able to visualize what you are teaching by putting the figures or word strips on the flannelboard, during your teaching.

Flannelgraph can be used in a number of ways:

- You can use figures of people, animals and objects while you teach a Bible lesson.
- You can make and use word strips (pieces of backed paper with words printed on them) to visualize Bible verses to be learned, or songs to be sung.
- Verses and songs can also be taught through the use of pictures, or figures which illustrate them (without words), on the flannelboard.
- You can use a picture or a map (backed with cloth, of course) to explain something you are teaching.

Here are some “tips” to help you in your use of flannelgraph:

- Tilt your board back at an approximate angle of 60 degrees, and the figures will adhere better.
- Keep your board above the children’s eye level, and ensure that all of them can see it.
- Be sure that your figures are ready to use in the order in which they will be used – and that they are placed on a nearby chair or table.
- Keep the picture on the board “moving”. Place the figures one by one on the board. Move your figures. Substitute new figures. The developing picture keeps the children’s attention. Try to put figures on at the right time. Your timing is important.
- The larger figures should be in the foreground (towards the bottom of the flannelboard), and the smaller ones in the background – to give the proper perspective. Make sure all the figures are upright.
- Do not stop the story to place the figures on the board. Keep talking as you do so.
- Do not turn your back on the class while placing figures on the



board. Work from one side of the board. In this way you can have good eye contact with the children and your voice is less muffled.

- Keep your figures neat and in good condition.

One of the advantages of flannelgraph, especially when teaching a Bible lesson, is that the overall picture which the children see on the flannelboard is continually changing, as you add or subtract figures, or as you move them about. This helps to keep the children's interest.

There are, of course, also disadvantages with the use of flannelgraph. It can be difficult to carry a flannelboard and easel (if you use one) from place to place, especially if you don't have any form of transport available. It is also difficult (and in some cases impossible) to use flannelgraph in the open air, because the wind would blow the figures away! In addition, sets of flannelgraph figures can be quite expensive to buy.

## **Flashcards**

A flashcard is a piece of paper or, preferably, a piece of light card which has on it a picture and a sentence to describe that picture. For example you can use one flashcard on its own – to teach a Bible verse or you can use a number of flashcards, one after the other, to teach a lesson. These flashcards could be bound together with a spiral binding, or they could be separate flashcards with illustrations on one or both sides of each flashcard.

You can use a series of flashcards to teach a lesson, or a missionary story, or a doctrinal truth, in a clear and logical way. You can also use flashcards to teach a song, or a Bible verse.

You hold the flashcards in your hand and refer to them as you teach. They can be a special help in open-air work (where, unlike the flannelgraph, they cannot be blown away). They are also more portable and easier to handle than flannelgraph.

It is possible to buy flashcard lessons already made up and prepared for use. But they are expensive. However, you can also make your own. You would need eight pieces of light cardboard. On each one you would print a sentence and add a picture which illustrates that sentence. These sentences teach the doctrine concerned in a logical and systematic way. Computers can be a great help in producing your own visualized doctrinal lessons – and are especially helpful for lettering.

More details of how to make these visualized doctrinal lessons, and how to use them, are included in my book “*How to Teach Bible Doctrines to Children*”(chapter 6).

I would like to point out again that we have produced several series of flashcards to teach doctrinal truths, and you can see the names of these series at the beginning of this book. These are available to those who can really use them in their ministry to children.

## Object Lessons

An object lesson is one which you teach using an object as an illustration. The actual object is visible to the children as you teach, referring to it, from time to time, and drawing lessons from it. As we have already said, this was a method of visualization often used by the Lord Jesus in His ministry.

This type of visual aid is the cheapest and most freely available of all. We just need to have the eyes to see such objects and the imagination to use them.

Here are several examples of object lessons which you could use:

- If you were speaking about the Bible, and why God gave us this wonderful book, you could use a mirror as an object lesson. The Bible, like a mirror, shows us how we look (James 1 v22-24).

*It shows us how dirty we are and how we need to be cleansed.*

- If you are teaching a lesson on how to live the Christian life you could use two gloves:

- ✓ Put your hand inside the first glove, and show how active and useful it can be.
- ✓ The other glove is helpless and dead, because there is no hand in it.

*We can only be Christians and live the Christian life when Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, lives in us.*

- You can use a piece of coal to give a picture of ourselves:
  - ✓ Coal is dark in colour. *Our hearts and lives are dark with sin.*
  - ✓ Coal is precious. *So are we to God.*
  - ✓ Coal is sought from above. *Jesus Christ came from above to seek and save us.*
  - ✓ Coal is washed before it is used. *We need to be cleansed*

*before God can use us.*

- ✓ Coal is useful – to give light, power and sweetness (in saccharin). *So when we trust Jesus Christ we will be used by Him:*
  - *To shine*
  - *To live*
  - *To be sweet*
- You could use a pencil to describe boys and girls who are Christians:
  - ✓ Pencils are made, not grown. *Did you ever see a pencil tree? God, and He only, can save us and make us.*
  - ✓ Pencils are given a new heart of graphite. *That is how God saves us. He gives us a new heart.*
  - ✓ Pencils are made for a purpose – to write. *God has a work for each of us to do.*
  - ✓ Pencils can do nothing on their own. *Neither can we.*
  - ✓ The outside colour does not matter. *It is the heart which counts.*
  - ✓ The pencil, to be useful, must be sharpened and prepared. *We need to be prepared through Bible study and prayer.*

It is of course important, when using object lessons and all other kinds of visual aids, to remember that they are aids and no more than that. They should not become central or dominate in your teaching. The children might become more interested in, and more fascinated with, the visual aids, and not get hold of what they are illustrating – and we need to avoid that.

### **Other visual aids**

There are other visual aids which can also be used to help you teach:

- A blackboard (or white board) can be a real help, especially when teaching Bible verses.
- In some countries, and in some situations, it may be possible to use videos, or film strips, or slides, or overhead transparencies.
- Posters and models can sometimes be a possibility.

### ***The Best Visual Aid of All***

Do you know what the best visual aid is? It is YOU – yourself.

**You** are a visual aid for the children. **You** are the most important

visual aid of all:

- In your appearance. You need to be careful how you dress and you need to ensure that you are neat.
- In your teaching. You should be active and involved, and avoid monotony.
- In your life. You should be a good witness for the children at all times.
- In your attitudes:
  - ✓ Always prompt and punctual.
  - ✓ Always enthusiastic.
  - ✓ Always approachable.
  - ✓ Always winsome, caring and attractive.

Remember that for many of the children YOU are the only Bible they see and read.

### ***The Preparation of Visual Aids***

The visual aids which you buy (or receive from us) need a minimum of preparation – and can soon be made ready for use. Flannelgraph figures need to be cut out. And some flashcards need to be coloured.

If you are making your own visual aids, and especially if you are printing word strips to visualize a Bible verse or a song, there are several guidelines to follow:

- The words should be large enough to be read by all the children in your group.
- Your printing does not need to be professional. But it should be neat.
- Don't use too many words and don't crowd them too closely together.
- Try to keep the visual aids you have made in good order, and don't allow them to become grubby or dog-eared.

But you certainly do need preparation and training in how to use and handle those visual aids which you buy or receive:

- You need to practise putting your flannelgraph figures on the board (see the suggestions on page 231 and 232).
- You need to practise how to use flashcards:
  - ✓ Hold them so the children can see them.

- ✓ Practise how to move from one to another with ease.
- ✓ Do not show one flashcard for too long a period.
- ✓ On the other hand do not go too quickly from one flashcard to another.

### **A Final Test**

Before using any visual aid you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Will it help the children to understand the truth better, or will it confuse them?
- Is it adapted to the age of the students?
- Is it neat and attractive (without necessarily being professional)?
- Are there any spelling mistakes?
- Is it clear and can it be easily seen?
- Is it simple and not too detailed?

## Chapter 31: Keep Control

### *How Can I Have Good Discipline in my Meeting?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(You need to have good discipline in your meeting.)*

- **The importance of good discipline**
- **The main reasons for bad discipline**
- **Guidelines for good discipline**
- **The main solution to discipline problems**
- **Some warnings**
- **How to regain control when there is a problem**
- **Dealing with the problem child**

One of the great problems faced by many children's workers is that of bad discipline. Indeed some would see it as their greatest problem, and the biggest hindrance to their ministry to children. Consequently, we need to look at this problem in considerable detail and endeavour to find a solution to it. How can you ensure good discipline during your class hour?

#### ***The Importance of Good Discipline***

Good discipline is very important in any teaching situation for a number of reasons:

- It helps the teacher to **teach** and it helps **all** the children to learn. One problem child can hinder 29 attentive children. Good discipline is necessary if you wish to get your lesson over to the children. If discipline is bad, even on the part of some of the children, your presentation will be marred. Children's meetings can be greatly damaged because of bad discipline.
- It trains the children and prepares them for the disciplines of life –

especially the Christian life.

- Children, in their hearts, like and appreciate good discipline.
- It shows our love and care for them.
- Bad behaviour is dishonouring to the Lord.

### ***The Main Reasons for Bad Discipline***

There are a number of reasons why some children are inattentive, restless and undisciplined:

- Teacher's problems are probably the main reason for bad discipline. These could include the following:
  - ✓ Poor preparation
  - ✓ Lack of prayer beforehand
  - ✓ Lack of enthusiasm and imagination when teaching
  - ✓ Teaching which is not attractive and not interesting
- Practical problems can play their part, and encourage bad discipline. These include poor preparation of the room, bad seating arrangements, not enough ventilation, or temperatures which are too high or too low.
- Pupils' problems are a major reason for bad discipline. You need to try to understand the children's needs, and realise that these might be the reason for their poor behaviour. These could include the following:
  - ✓ A poor home background and family tensions.
  - ✓ Personality or mental problems e.g. these children may be academically slow, or not able to read well, or they might be emotionally disturbed.
  - ✓ A physical problem e.g. tiredness, poor eyesight or overactivity.
  - ✓ Spiritual problems e.g. conviction of sin, or satanic influences.
  - ✓ The existence of too wide an age range between the youngest and oldest children. It is difficult to teach children if the age range is very wide. If you aim at one group you are likely to lose the attention of the other.

This problem of bad discipline is greater today than ever before. Many of today's children are not disciplined at home, in school, or in the community,

as were the children of a past generation.

### ***The Main Solution to Discipline Problems***

Good discipline depends, as we have seen, mainly on the teacher, upon how well he teaches, and how well he exercises his authority.

Many discipline problems can be prevented if the following conditions are understood and put into practice:

- You need to spend much time in **prayer**. These problems can, and should, drive us to our knees.
- You need to spend much time in **preparation**. This is absolutely vital. If you do not prepare properly and thoroughly your presentation will suffer, and the result will be restlessness and lack of attention.
- Your **presentation** in the club needs to be interesting and attractive to the children:
  - ✓ You should develop a lively and enthusiastic approach
  - ✓ You need to have an interesting and varied programme
  - ✓ You have to ensure careful planning to avoid dull patches
  - ✓ You must show personal interest in each individual child

Most children will listen, and be reasonably well behaved, if the presentation is interesting and relevant. When discipline is poor and children are restless and noisy, it is usually because there is nothing of sufficient interest to engage their attention. Hands move, feet move, eyes move and tongues move. But all these members are controlled by the head. Keep the head occupied and at peace and the rest will follow. The solution to most disciplinary problems, therefore, is to keep the children and their minds interested and occupied, so that they don't want to talk or misbehave.

Prevention is better than cure! The best time to face behaviour problems is before they come. It is better to make your meeting and lesson so interesting that discipline problems will not arise, rather than trying to solve them when they do.

If discipline in your class is not good, subject yourself to a long process of self-examination, or discuss the problem with a co-worker, until you see if any weaknesses or problems exist in your teaching. Ask God to reveal these to you, and then ask



Him to help you overcome them. Do not give up. Persist until everything is alright.

### ***Guidelines for Good Discipline***

There are several guidelines which will help you to avoid bad discipline and ensure good discipline in your children's meeting:

- Be sure that you are there early. If you are late everything will go wrong from the very beginning.
- Greet each child warmly as he comes in.
- Make sure the children are seated comfortably, and that the room is suitably heated.
- Start the meeting in the way you want it to continue, and give precise instructions at the start of each club as to what you expect the children to do:
  - ✓ Establish rules so that the children know what is expected of them. For example:
    - "No talking without permission"
    - "Each person stays on the same seat"
    - "Each one keeps his hands and feet to himself"

Good discipline is not a trick. Just state your rules and make them stick. Be well prepared, and you will find the children happy and ready to listen.
  - ✓ Be consistent and fair in your discipline. Always give adequate warning of what you will do if someone infringes the rules.
  - ✓ Use a firm voice, and be definite in your teaching and instructions.
- Do not become a cross, distant martinet constantly looking for trouble, and being angry with the children. On the other hand, do not become **too** personal or familiar, or the children may lose their respect for you. The proper level is between these two extremes – be firm yet kind and loving, strict yet friendly, sympathetic but not foolish.
- Expect the children to behave. They will sense your attitude towards them. They will test you to see how far you will "let them go". Don't let them go very far.

- Control them with your eyes, especially watching those who cause disturbances.
- Don't try to get silence by making noise. Children may try to compete with your noise. Create interest! Children will not remain quiet for long, unless you do something to interest or occupy them.
- Include points for “good behaviour” in your point system if you have one.
- Use the idea of a “Quiet Seat”. This is a seat unknown to the children until after the meeting, when the occupant of that seat receives a prize, (that is, if he/she has been quiet).
- Be careful with your threats. If you threaten to do something always do it. So watch what you threaten to do.
- Never, never, never, strike out at anyone with your hand, or tongue. You should never be sarcastic.
- Get to know each child and their individual needs. A knowledge of their family background will also be helpful.
- The larger the group, the greater the possibility of bad discipline. Be sure that your voice (and instructions) can be heard, and all your gestures seen. For example, when leading the singing, your gestures and actions need to be pronounced, and even exaggerated.
- Those adults who help in the meeting should share responsibility for discipline with the teacher. They could sit beside one badly behaved child or they could sit between, and separate, two or three children who are misbehaving.
- If there is a large group of very young children, have a short varied meeting with plenty of opportunity to join in, and many shorter items which allow for their limited attention span.
- If there are some of these younger children in your meeting who cannot concentrate for long, and who get restless quickly, it is better to arrange a separate meeting for them before your main meeting. Or, if there are enough workers, they could have a meeting for these younger children in another room during your main meeting. Otherwise, you could assign workers to look after the more restless ones, suitably equipped with paper, pencils etc.

### ***Some Warnings***

- Start your first meeting the way you want it to continue. It is always

simpler to “ease off” than to “tighten up”.

- Avoid long pauses between the different parts of your programme.
- Do not give commands phrased as a question “Shall we pray?” They might answer “Yes” or, worse still, “No”!
- Ensure that individual children do not participate too much and you lose the interest of the others.
- Do not have a prayer time which is lengthy. Don’t close your eyes for too long!
- Be careful with your quiz time. There is usually great excitement when it is over, if one team wins. Move quickly on to the next part of your programme.

### ***How to Regain Control When There Is a Problem***

- Pray and seek the Lord’s wisdom – a quick S.O.S. prayer.
- Be calm yourself. Don’t get annoyed.
- Use a tone of voice to convey seriousness. Sometimes a lowering of your voice to a whisper can help.
- Keep an eye on the offender without calling the attention of other children to him. A “steely eye” can be very effective – often more effective than your tongue.
- Give warnings or instructions as necessary.
- Use the next part of your programme to divert attention, or introduce a quiet chorus to settle the children.
- Ask a co-worker to take out any trouble-makers, if necessary, for personal conversation.

### ***Dealing With a Problem Child***

I have often been asked the question – should I ever ask an unruly child to leave my meeting, and tell him not to return until he is better behaved?

Most children will listen reasonably well, and behave reasonably well, when the teacher is interesting and attractive in his/her presentation. But there are some children who seem to find it impossible to listen well, or to sit still, and who, as a consequence, continually create problems and really disturb and upset your meeting. These children are, I believe, relatively few in number. Their bad behaviour might be caused, as we have seen, by

problems in their family and in their background, or by psychological problems, or even by the desire to attract attention.

There are several steps which you should take first of all in a situation like this:

- Pray for him (or her) personally and frequently, and also, ask others to pray.
- Arrange for an adult to sit beside him/her during the meeting.
- Talk with him personally, and on his own, and explain how wrong it is for him to do what he does. The child may be more open to guidance and correction when he is on his own, and when he is not the centre of attention.
- Give him some responsibility as your helper! He could mark the names in your roll-book, hang up coats, or watch out for those who don't behave themselves!
- Speak with his parents and let them know what has been happening. They might be able to help.

As a very last resort (and only after every other possible solution has been tried) tell him, lovingly and firmly, that you do want him to come to the club, but that he cannot return if he is not prepared to behave himself. Explain to him that this is the only fair way and solution for the other children, because their time at the club is being affected and spoiled by his bad behaviour. However, make it clear to him (and to his parents if, and when, you speak with them) that he is always welcome in your meeting if he is willing to behave himself reasonably well – and that you want him to come back.

## Chapter 32:

### Bring Them In!

#### *How Can I Build Up Attendance in my Meeting?*

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#### *Summary of Chapter*

*(Your purpose is to increase the number of children in your meeting.)*

- **Encourage your present children to come.**
- **Encourage your present children to come regularly**
- **Involve new children in your meeting**
- **The importance of even one child**

**I**n this chapter we want firstly to examine how we can encourage the children who come to our meeting **to continue coming** and to do so **regularly**. But, secondly, we also want to see how we can build up attendance, so that **more children** will come on a regular basis to our meetings.

#### ***Encourage the Children to Come***

First of all, we need to examine the reasons why some children stop coming to our meeting, and try to find the solutions to these problems:

- Some stop coming because the meeting is boring, or because the teaching is not related to the child's daily life.  
The obvious answer is to make the meeting interesting and attractive, and always to ensure that the teaching is aimed at the life and problems of each child.
- Some stop coming because of the teacher's inadequacies and failings.
  - ✓ His obvious lack of preparation.
  - ✓ His lack of ability and good teaching materials.
  - ✓ His failure to control and discipline the class (which can lead

to chaos).

- ✓ His lack of warmth and enthusiasm and his failure to show love and appreciation to the class. One boy told me that he had stopped going to Sunday School because his teacher had no sense of humour!

*You, as the teacher, need to examine yourself and your teaching to see if **you** are the problem. **The first step to success is to recognize failure!** So when you see a weakness you need to work on it, and learn how to overcome it (and I hope this book will help you to do so).*

*The best way to encourage the children to keep coming to your meeting is to make it so interesting, so attractive, and so relevant, that they will not want to miss it. This does not mean that you descend into the realms of entertainment, and your meeting becomes like a circus! But it does mean the following:*

- ✓ *That you prepare well.*
  - ✓ *That you make the meeting really interesting.*
  - ✓ *That you use visual aids.*
  - ✓ *That you always seek to meet the needs of the children.*
  - ✓ *That you are warm, loving, and enthusiastic, and really attractive in your teaching.*
  - ✓ *That you keep control of the meeting – by being firm without being harsh.*
- Some stop coming because of pressure and prohibition from their parents. This could range from a direct command to the children (“You can’t go!”), to the fact that parents plan other activities for their children which coincide with your meeting, and remove them from it.

*The obvious answer to this problem is to make, and keep, a good contact with the parents. Visit them regularly. Let them know what you are teaching, and how much you want to help their children in these difficult days when children face so many problems with drugs, violence and so on. Encourage them to allow the children to come, and to plan their activities so that the children will be able to attend the meetings.*

*You also need to make sure that the day and time of your meeting is the most suitable for the children (and for the parents).*

*It is always most important to keep in good and regular contact*

*with the parents; and it can be a help to you, and to the children, if you invite the parents to visit the club and see how it operates. You could also have a special meeting at Christmas/or Easter, to which all the parents could be specifically invited.*

It is most important that, when a child stops coming to your meeting, you visit the child (and his parents) in his home, and find out what is wrong.

### ***Encourage the Children to Come Regularly***

You do not only want children to come to your meeting. You want them to come **every** week – on a regular basis.

Faithful attendance will be a help to the children for three reasons:

- Because it provides weekly fellowship with children who are interested in spiritual things.
- Because it offers systematic teaching which will help the child to come to Christ, or to grow spiritually. Regular systematic teaching is much more effective than spasmodic teaching.
- Because it forms good habits in the child's life.

You can encourage the children to come regularly in three ways:

- By making your meeting so interesting and relevant that they won't want to miss it.
- By showing them the three benefits of regular attendance as outlined above.
- By having some kind of incentive system. For example the child could receive a star on his attendance card or on a display poster, and he would then receive a prize when he has received a certain number of stars.

### ***Involve New Children***

You should always be seeking to build up the number in your meeting and you can do so in a number of ways:

- By visiting homes in the neighbourhood to speak with the parents, and to encourage them to send their children, or allow them to come.
- By inviting more children to come. This can be done in several ways:

- ✓ By printing and distributing invitations cards to children two or three days before your next meeting. A good place for this distribution is outside the nearby school as the children leave. It is most likely that you will need to ask for permission to do this.
- ✓ By placing posters about your meeting on the door of the building in which it is held, or (with permission) in local schools, or shops frequented by the children.
- By encouraging the children who already come to invite and bring others. You can help them to do this in three ways.
  - ✓ By showing them that this is a way they can serve the Lord Jesus, and be missionaries.
  - ✓ By giving incentives such as an extra star for every new child they bring.
  - ✓ By ensuring that your meeting is so interesting, attractive and helpful, that the children who come will want to invite their friends.

### **One Last Thought**

Do not get too tied up with, or worried about, the question of numbers or statistics. You should do your best to encourage the children to attend, and do so regularly, and you should do all you can to invite others to come.

But if the children don't come, go ahead and minister to those who do come. Don't be discouraged by small numbers. God could be allowing this to happen to test your faithfulness! And very often God works more in the hearts of the few than in the hearts of the many! Keep going and don't give up.

Remember that when the Lord Jesus was speaking about children, He emphasized over and over again the value and importance of ONE child:

- He called **one** child to Him, and used that **one** child as an object lesson in His ministry to His disciples:  
*"Then Jesus called **a little child** to Him, set him in the midst of them" (Matthew 18 v2).*
- He used **one** child to teach the disciples their need of humility:  
*"Therefore whoever humbles himself as **this little child** is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18 v4)*



- He told them that if they received **one** child in His name they would receive Him:  
*"Whoever receives **one little child** like this in My name receives Me"* (Matthew 18 v5).
- He warned them not to cause even **one** believing child to stumble:  
*"But whoever causes **one of these little ones** who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea"* (Matthew 18 v6).
- He showed them not to despise **one** child:  
*"Take heed that you do not despise **one of these little ones**, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 18 v10).
- He showed His desire to find and save **one** child:  
*"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and **one of them** goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek **the one** that is straying? And if he should find **it**, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over **that sheep** than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray"* (Matthew 18 v11-13).
- He made it clear that His Father did not want even **one** child to perish:  
*"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that **one of these little ones** should perish"* (Matthew 18 v14).

**God has called you and me to minister to the children. May we be faithful to that calling, and may we reach, teach and help the children – whether they be many, or whether they be few.**