

Helping Your Child Understand Salvation

As a parent, one of the most precious memories I have is the day that my daughter prayed to receive Jesus as Savior. I remember it was on a mission trip during her 5th-6th grade year of school. She and I had a conversation on the church bus talking about Jesus. I had been a youth minister for a number of years, and Andrea had been on many youth mission trips. But this trip was the one where she asked questions that led me to this conversation with her.

Have a conversation - not a lesson.

This first step is very important; have a conversation. Do not feel you have to teach or preach them into a relationship with Jesus. The conversation allows you to better understand where they are, what the Spirit is doing in their lives, and what is their next step. Many times parents feel that the end goal of the conversation is baptism, but the end goal of the conversation is a **relationship with Jesus!**

Many parents are worried about age being a factor of their child becoming a Christian. Age is a consideration, but not the end-all. Below I will share a basic age progression of children's understanding of Jesus.

Younger preschoolers learn that Jesus is a friend and He loves them. At this age children begin to hear the stories about Jesus, and they understand Him as a person. They sing and sign songs and share that Jesus loves them; however, at this level they are building their first foundation of love for Jesus. Encourage them to understand friendship...

Mid-preschoolers begin to hear Bible Stories that reveal Jesus as the Son of God. They understand about Jesus' role with God as Father. They understand this concept and begin to understand the role of child and parent in the everyday life, and they reflect that upon Jesus' role as well.

Older preschools begin to hear the stories of Jesus healing and performing miracles. The stories of Jesus become a bit easier at this age. The stories they hear become more understandable as they mature.

As children develop to their elementary years, they have a better grasp that Jesus came to earth, died on the Cross, and rose again. The story of Jesus is just that – until they come to a place where they see themselves in need of forgiveness. There is **no magic age** for children to come to Christ. But at this stage of life, most can understand that sin affects not only their relationships with other people but God as well.

This document can be used as a guide to help in your conversation with your children about their faith and understanding more about salvation.

I have seen parents who start getting questions about Jesus or baptism from their children, and they make an appointment with a pastor. I would encourage all parents to have the "JESUS" conversation with their children. Some kids have a great handle on Jesus and others may not. However, if we as parents have the conversation about their faith with them, it will develop into a new relationship with your children.

Begin to pray for your children daily before this conversation about salvation. As you pray, ask the Spirit to guide children in their understanding of Jesus. Pray also for your ability to be used by God to answer the questions that will come through the salvation process. I recommend that, before you have this conversation with your children, you revisit your process of salvation in your personal life. You may still have your baptism certificate or a Bible given to you at that time. Have your items at hand to remind you and to show your children. As they have questions, only answer these questions. Then ask this. Do you have another question? This takes the pressure off of you and places the work back to the Holy Spirit.

As you begin the process, do not be afraid of your children only needing one question answered. I know for some children, the process can take days, weeks, or years. Understand the Spirit must do HIS WORK in salvation. It is

too easy for a children to get baptized, only to please a parent or another adult and not understand the Spirit's work that is happening in them.

As far as I am concerned, I believe when children understand their need to be forgiven of sin, they are at the right place in life to decide to follow Jesus. Bear with me for a short story. One night, I and a pastor, who I served with, visited a 5-year-old boy to talk about being saved. When we got to the house, the boy's mother and grandmother were there. They both were in the room as we began our conversation with him. He was an expressive 5-year-old, but he was more interested in showing us his toys than talking about Jesus. As we talked, Pastor Greg asked him if he understood what sin was, the boy quickly answered, "Doing wrong things." Then, the follow up question was, "Have you ever sinned?" Quickly the boys said, "NO!" We talked for a few more minutes until the boy ran back to his room to get another toy. We shared that the boy was not ready until he understood sin and his need for a Savior. I will never forget the grandmother's response, "SO YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BAPTISM HIM!" She was not happy with us, but we stood by the direction we received from the Spirit.

The first thing children need to understand is that Jesus loves them, but they have to know that being a Christian means they have SIN that needs to be forgiven. As you pray and have conversations with your children, you will be directed and know when is the right time.

I always use the A.B.C. approach when speaking with children about salvation.

A-Admit we are a sinner. At this point in my conversation, I feel that children understand a little about their sin and their need to be forgiven. Our desire is for children to understand (at their individual cognitive level) their salvation. For this to happen, children have to admit they have sinned and they need to be forgiven.

B-Believe that Jesus is God's Son and His death on the Cross is the way that we are forgiven. To believe in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus may be difficult, because we never fully understand why God planned this, but we accept by faith that Jesus is our payment for sin.

C-Commit their lives to Jesus. When people **admit** they are sinners, and **believe** in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, they are brought to a place of committing their lives to Jesus. This part begins their **transformation** into children of God.

As a parent, you have the ability to help your child pray to receive Christ. One way for you to help would be to use the A.B.C. approach. To use this A.B.C. approach, begin your prayer, then ask your children to share with God what they **ADMIT** (ask your children to say to God they admit they are a sinner.) Next, ask the children to tell God what they **BELIEVE** (Jesus lived and died for their sins.) Finally, ask your children to share with God what they are **COMMITTING** (to live the rest of their lives as a child of God).

Our church has a history of helping boys and girls know Jesus as Savior. We have a baptism class for your children before they get baptized. This class can be scheduled by contacting Pastor Kathy Trulock.

Our great desire is to partner with you as parent and to help in your children's SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. Salvation is a one-time thing, but living for Jesus is a daily activity to develop into the relationship we all need to follow Christ.

If we can assist you in helping your children come to faith, please let us know.

Pastor Jeff Crabtree