



## *How Do I Properly Evangelize Children?*

By Kurt von Schleicher

You basically come to know Jesus well and then you make Jesus well known to your children... and to other kids when it is appropriate and wise to do so. If you know of Christ, but don't know Christ personally, then get to know Him personally and pray hard about reaching this important target group.

Without God's Spirit living on the inside, children cannot truly know God or become a real Christian. Water baptism will not save them. And they won't be able to grow in the Word of God. Being born again by God's Spirit will make them new, then they can enjoy and exercise all the marvelous privileges of citizenship in God's wonderful Kingdom [see Ephesians 1:1-2:10].

### **How can you lead a child into a relationship with Jesus Christ?**

- First pray that God will prepare the little person's heart. Pray regularly and believe that God wants to save the child at a young age. Spiritual rebirth is God's work, not ours (John 6-44). We merely cooperate with God in this fishing process.
- Lay a foundation daily. Live the life. Include Jesus in your casual conversations as if He were along with you every day wherever you go like a best friend. He should be leading you like this. He's an everyday Jesus (a 24/7/365 Christ not merely a Sunday Jesus). Don't force the child to pray, but let your children hear you lovingly talk to God about what is going on in your lives. Respect their legal guardian and parents. Don't try to be sneaky or take the child on unnecessary trips. Do everything properly in a wise and holy way. Pray with them using very simple vertically endearing terms so the child will know that God is to be respected like a father should be. Talk about how Jesus helps you each day and how He has answered some of your prayers with a yes. Constantly help them understand His love by being like Jesus. Make comments like, ***"Jesus understands. He sees and is sad when you are sad. Let's ask Jesus what He wants us to do."***
- Wait for God's timing. Merely getting a toddler to voice the same words as you in a so called prayer doesn't save them. Don't run ahead of God. They need to gain an understanding of their own wrong doings and what it means first. They don't have to grasp all the intricate details of the Gospel. Who does when they are saved? While you wait for the child to grow, become prepared, and for signs of openness, be ready for that opportune moment. Do try not to be premature. Perhaps this will come at a time of special need for comfort or strength. A child might show you with their earnest questions that they genuinely want to know, and follow God.

- You might use crayons and draw pictures for them to illustrate what you are saying. Explain basic evangelistic truths using the Bible and then define some of the words in ways they will understand. Their attention span isn't that long, so don't try and make them listen to lengthy sermon as their friends are out playing. But when they will less likely become distracted, ask if the child wants to turn away from all their "no nos" and be forgiven as together you pray with them to receive Jesus. The concept of an adult—Jesus coming to live on the inside by His Spirit could be kind of scary to a child, so be careful how you explain this. If the child says not yet, do not push. Tell them that they can pray to become a Christian anytime on their own with the same wonderful results. If your child wants to pray alone, suggest that they come and tell you afterwards. And then log their special 2<sup>nd</sup> birth date.

If you teach through example that God loves the child, that He wants the child to be part of His special family and live together forever with God in His invisible Kingdom, then this will impact the child. Adults are often too busy for kids. Show them how Jesus was not too busy. He said, ***"Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these"*** (Luke 18:16). You could say...

God is so holy that no 'badness' has every been with or in Him. He is so perfect (He doesn't make any mistakes or boo boos) and He can't allow any sin into His Kingdom because He won't let any of His kids get hurt at His home. All of us people have done wrong things and hurt God's feelings. We've done No Nos (sins) that separate us from God. (You could read the Ten Commandments one day, ask the child questions, and explain how you have not kept all of them yourself. On another day, maybe read Isaiah 59:2 in a simple translation like the nlt or the nkjv Bible to help them get it). ***"For all have sinned and come short of the perfect goodness of God"*** (see Romans 3:23). Think about the different kinds of sin like selfishness, envy, lying, wanting your own way. Do you ever argue or fight over a toy?

Jesus made a way for you to go to heaven and be away from all bad no nos. He said, ***"I am the way... No one comes to the Father except through Me"*** (John 14:6). He died on the cross, taking the punishment for your sins. ***"God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"*** (John 3:16).

But Jesus wants an invitation and He is patient with us. We must invite Jesus into our lives for He won't demand to be your friend and Savior. ***"To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God"*** (John 1:12). With His perfect life inside, you can live and walk with God forever.

The Bible says, ***"Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying, "You must be born again" John 3:5-7***

### ***Your heart to heart prayer to God with the child should include:***

- **Simple confession:** *admit you are a sinner or have sinned against Him.*
- **Repentance:** *willingness to turn from wrong doings and follow Jesus.*
- **Faith:** *trust that Jesus died and rose again to save you from sin so you could have a new life with Him.*
- **Gratitude:** *expression to Jesus how thankful you both are for this answer to prayer and that Christ is now living inside the child He cares about.*

The Word of God teaches us what it means to be saved spiritually. Paul said: ***"Those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him"*** [2 Corinthians 5:17-18].

### **This Is No Insignificant Ministry**

Kids matter to God! It is such a huge blessing and privilege to have opportunities to share of God's goodness, of His mercy and of His Gospel of grace with His kids. They are His property. How radically important it is for God's children to understand at an early age that the Bible is the Word of God and needs to be put into action in the right way. It's important for them to understand that when the Bible is ministered properly by a person who is filled and guided by God's Spirit (and not merely because that certain minister claims to be, but because the fruit is there to verify this), that God is speaking. That's the time for all of us to listen and take heed.

It is an awesome thing to think about this, and that the ultimate aim of child evangelism and leading Bible studies for kids inside the home and outside the home, is for the next generation to know God through Christ! I love that! How exciting to see kids know Christ and making Him known! How thrilling is it to dialogue with hungry kids about Jesus and His truth. It is so fun!

Everywhere we go, we long to encourage parents, godly educators and others who are fit to get involved in compassionately sharing the Word with God's children. If we pray and study how to do this properly, if we get with the kids and practice getting down on their level—putting the cookies on the bottom shelf where the kids can reach them, then we can get better at holding their attention and planting seeds in their hearts! Yes, seeds that will grow. It is our earnest desire to make an impact on the lives of children and send a message of passion to their generation. What legacy will be left to them, how will they turn out if we do not? May we not forget them, and that the Scriptures must first have an impact on our lives as we put Jesus first in all things!

After we seek the Lord, after the Lord has shown us wondrous things in His Law, He wants us to boldly share these things with his kids in an age-appropriate way so they can become doers of His Word and be blessed.

Man, do we find ourselves getting on-fire when we study the word and spend time with God alone? Do we find ourselves saying, *"How awesome! This is exactly what the kids need to hear for their lives—this is just what I needed to hear! God gave me this so we can all will grow up and do exploits for Him and so we can avoid becoming spiritual shipwrecks like the majority of these kid's peers will be if a Christian doesn't get to them fast enough."* We should say things like this!

Yes, it is so good to steal away each day and hear from the Lord first ...and then as God leads, to pass these things along to them. If that is not the approach we take in the home, in the class, in the park or wherever it is appropriate to share with these things with kids, then we could miss out on the many mammoth blessings that God intends for us (the kids and the Gospel sharers) to enjoy. The Bible teaches us that if we are faithful in the small things, God will give us greater things. That why we must start somewhere and child evangelism is a neglected area. Too many adults despise the idea of church

work with kids. They see it as mere babysitting that they won't even be paid for. But it doesn't have to be if you will receive a burden for them from God.

We need to ask several questions concerning our own spiritual lives, such as *"Lord, what do you want me to know, to do, to say to these children?"* And, *"I'm reading this, but how would this all work in my life, and in their lives and in their families to better their real-world situations? What do you want them to know, and what do you want them to do? How should I inspire and motivate them to obey You?"*

May we be about our Father's business daily so our Lord can be glorified! He wants to guide and direct us into some specific child-ministry areas that are cutting edge... with all the details we can receive from Him in prayer, and that we can incorporate into this effective outreach effort. If we get our "go" from Him, and go back to His Word for the details, it will turn out well for them. May we be about following close with Christ in this, so we can set a good and holy example for our own kids and for all the children He wants us to win! May we take this fishing seriously and not slack off!

Charles Spurgeon said, *"You are teaching children, so mind what you teach them. Take care what you are doing! ...It is a child's soul you are tampering with... It is a child's soul you are preparing for eternity... If it is an evil to mislead gray-headed age, it must be far more so to turn aside the feet of the young into the road of error, in which they may forever walk."*

Too many on TV and even in Christian churches are teaching error. They mix it in with the truth, but we can teach kids how to judge righteously like little humble Bereans who stick with the truth. We are in many ways to be like children in our faith and exuberance for Christ. The Bible teaches that kids and what they are taught really matter to God, ***"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them"***[Mark 10:13-16].

Child evangelism is one of the most important ministries and challenges that we face in the Church. It's so crucial to the success of any local fellowship, as well as to the future of the Church. The Church is always only one generation away from total extinction on earth if we were to fail in this area. We must not fail! We must depend upon the Spirit and wisely spread the Gospel to kids with all purity and holy passion. They are the Church of the future, if we can win them before the world does! Bible study evangelism, dynamic youth groups, puppet shows, multimedia presentations, Bible story video games and all other modern means—whatever works without any compromise, that Christians can use to win kids—these are of huge importance today! Why? Because all kids count in heaven and on earth! They were made in the image of God and have huge value! Abortions are a murderous-abomination and millions of these acts have happened in our land each year. They have taken away—robbed our kids of their classmates before they even reached the classroom, but our little ones have escaped this peril for a reason. And you are to guide them into understanding why. It's for worship and for rescuing—fishing. It's for fighting the good fight of faith and abolishing things like abortion!

Paul told Tim, ***"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 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 Tim 3:14-15].

Timothy heard the Word early on, he saw a good example before his eyes, he was nurtured and taught and that was what made the difference for him! As an adult Christian you and I must be very careful how we minister the Word to children, especially if they have not been saved or have visited our churches yet. You and I must do this ministry right for the legal risks are great. Even though you are trying to win their souls for eternity; you must remember to never undermine parental authority.

Determine to work with the parents. Religious leaders who are perverts and false teachers simply abound today and for concerned parents, that puts a question mark over the door of every ministry. All parents must do their homework and know those who labor among their children. Trust must be earned and then vigilantly maintained! We are to avoid all appearance of evil! Why be sued for soul-winning if you don't have to be? A church can lose its freedom to function as a church if you blow it or if you allow others there to mess up in this critical area.

We must never forget that all Spirit-led evangelism is Jesus evangelism—it will happen biblically and right or it shouldn't happen at all. I feel that if it is worth doing, it is worth doing right. But not all types of evangelism from yesteryear need to happen in the same exact way today. Extra precautions must be taken. The darkness seems to be getting darker and evil abounds, so we must shine brighter and have greater integrity. Parents themselves must be seeking God and involved in leading their kids to God. They shouldn't pawn this work off on the church, thinking that's what I pay the pastors for. Children must see it lived at home. They must hear the truth taught at home and they will know if it is all a show or if it is the joy and rejoicing of their parents. Methods change, the truth of the Gospel never does, so we must adjust with changing times without any spiritual compromise.

One of the chief challenges today for church volunteers is keeping up with technology. *"Savvy youngsters, some of whom know how to program a dvd players and play games on their Xbox by the time they start school, enjoy seeing these types of tools used for God. Children are bombarded with bright-colored, fast-moving images on scores of TV channels,* said Robert T. Schlipp of Bibleman Live, a 51-minute stage presentation with songs, stunts, stage illusions, and choreographed battles. *"Just putting together coloring book pages or flannelgraphs is not creative enough for today's kids,"* maintains Schlipp. Many believe the key to reaching boys and girls is to go beyond the church walls with high-tech products. More than 40 million of America's 280 million residents are between 4 and 14 years old. *"Even if we get the church to pay proper attention to children, there are still 80 percent who don't walk into a church every week,"* CEF president Reese Kauffman said. *"We need to be concerned about the children outside the church, too."*

I think we need a lot more quality video games that exalt Jesus and I challenge geeks to make them faster and better! But I say we must first have people who are born again, who can pass background checks, heart checks, doctrinal checks—mature people who are committed to Christ above all and then to fishing for souls. Whenever there's been a spiritual problem in the past where God wanted to reach His wayward kids, He always chose a person who would live the life and take them the right Message of truth. Kids of our day need a messenger and God's message.

Child evangelism can not be done on a soapbox. It requires a right heart, tact and faith as well as love. The point is not to tear the children away from their parents or their communities. The point is to bring them into the church of God working with their parents and communities. It calls for relationship building on all levels. Sometimes we need to win the adults first, in order to evangelize their kids.

For generations, ministry leaders have been proclaiming the importance of evangelizing children. Now many are moving beyond flashcards and cookies to teach children challenging spiritual truths from the scriptures.

In April, 94 children's ministry leaders from 54 organizations gathered for a two-day conference to focus on new ways to effectively reach children between the ages of 4 and 14. Awana Clubs International, which has trained leaders who head clubs in 10,000 U.S. churches, hosted the meeting at its Streamwood, Illinois, headquarters. Christianity Today International and six other groups co-sponsored this gathering. It was wonderful and amazing!

*"Never before had there been a single-minded gathering like this for those passionate about children,"* said John Crupper, strategic partnerships director for Awana. Findings included the need to develop

more challenging curricula plus integrating the growing effectiveness that children, rather than adults, have in teaching and reaching other children.

Researcher George Barna, author of *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Regal Books, 2003), stresses the importance of children's ministry by contending that lifelong moral views are largely in place by the time the child reaches their adolescence.

What does that mean to you and me? *"What you believe at age 13 is pretty much what you're going to die believing,"* Barna said. Research compiled by the Barna Group shows that children between the ages of 5 and 13 have a 32 percent probability of accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. That likelihood drops to 4 percent for teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18, and ticks back up to 6 percent for adults older than 18.

Indeed, children's ministry is an optimal time to shape the church's rising leadership. In a 2003 Barna Group nationwide survey of pastors, church staff, and lay leaders, four out of five leaders said they participated in church children's programs for a number of years before they turned 13.

Children who get saved can be trained and can be leading prayers, giving simple altar calls, playing in the worship music band, operating the soundboard, and running PowerPoint.

Child to Jesus worship must be our primary goal. Child-to-child evangelism must be our secondary goal as well as more adult to child evangelism! Young people—young students can understand all these spiritual things as long as our Bible teaching that we feed them with incorporates simple but concrete terms they can understand. More and more churches are recognizing the importance of equipping their parents to reach their own kids at home. They are seeing the importance of having their little kids become fishers of other kids and able to give a Christian response to their Muslim classmate at school, to their atheist friend on their neighborhood block and to their Hindu buddy at the day care.