

REACHING CHILDREN

By

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CHAPTER ONE

INVITING THE CHILD TO CHRIST

THE change in attitude toward the giving of the invitation to boys and girls to accept the Saviour as their own, is enough to gladden the heart of every born-again believer.

Mothers, who have prayed long years over their wayward sons, and fathers, who have grieved because of transgressing daughters, might have new hope if their yesterdays could be lived today. Yesterday, the bringing of a boy or girl to a decision to accept CHRIST was most frequently left to the visiting evangelist, or to the pastor who conducted a special decision service for the Sunday school - the parents doing their part by seeing that their children attended the meetings.

Today it is being seen that this work of bringing children to CHRIST is not for the evangelist or pastor alone, but that the mother or father, the Sunday school teacher, the adult who has never before done anything for his Lord, the new convert - in fact, any believer may have a part in bringing boys and girls to an actual decision to accept CHRIST.

It has been found that sometimes those who have never taught children make the best soul winners of boys and girls. New joy has come to them. Older women, ready almost for a permanent appointment with the rocking chair and knitting needles have been thrilled and their lives transformed when they found [11] that the Lord JESUS had a place for them in His vineyard - that they could win the children in their neighborhood to a real knowledge of CHRIST as Saviour.

Yes, even high school girls, glowing with love for their new-found Saviour, have discovered an avenue of service, a new purpose in their lives and a radiant joy in bringing little ones to the foot of the Cross.

Just as anyone may go seek a straying lamb, so any Christian may seek to bring a lost, little one to the safety of CHRIST's fold.

In fact, a whole new ministry has opened for the average Christian - one that brings joy and delight and thanksgiving to GOD for the privilege of being used by Him.

Perhaps it might help us to better understand this new ministry by contrasting the old and new methods of training children in spiritual things.

The old method of approach included teaching children Bible stories, facts about the Bible and desirable traits of Christian conduct during the time they were young and believing. When they became older the Sunday school or church put on a special decision service or evangelistic campaign in which the way of salvation was presented, and the children asked to respond by receiving the Lord as their personal Saviour. Thus the child possessed much Bible knowledge, and knowledge of what was right and wrong, before he ever knew the Gospel of the saving grace of GOD. Under the old method the invitation came at the climax of much Bible training and teaching.

The old method is still the policy in many places, but there has been an awakening on the part of alert Christian leaders all over the country to a new method of bringing children to a knowledge of the Lord. [12]

The new method consists in presenting first of all the most vital of all Bible truths, the way of salvation, and giving the child an opportunity to receive the Saviour then. Subsequent lessons seek to teach him to live for the Lord JESUS, and to establish him in the knowledge of the Word. Thus the invitation is placed at the beginning instead of at the climax of a series of lessons.

Many children, who only occasionally drop into the Bible class or Sunday school may not only be evangelized, but may truly be saved if this modern plan is followed. Under the old plan they might not happen to be present on the day when the way of salvation was presented, and perhaps, therefore, left to wander years in sin before they finally heard the simple way to be freed from sin.

However, this was not the case with black-eyed eight-year-old Glen who came with his cousin, Ella, to Sunday school on Thanksgiving Sunday for the first time. The teacher breathed a quick prayer that he might see the Saviour on that one day he was visiting. She adapted the lesson, and put more emphasis on the way of salvation than she had planned, for all the other children were saved. When she gave the invitation, Glen's hand shot up without a second's hesitation. He eagerly asked JESUS into his heart. The teacher then mentioned certain spiritual blessings that became ours the moment we received JESUS as Saviour, and as one was mentioned, she asked who would like to thank JESUS for it. Glen's black eyes shone as he realized the blessings that were his in CHRIST, and it was his hand that was always up before the rest.

He had visited one Sunday, heard, and accepted the way of salvation, and went on his [13] way rejoicing. If the old method had been followed, Glen would have heard one of a series of lessons which lead ultimately to presenting salvation, but his one visit with the Sunday school would not have brought to him a personal knowledge of the Saviour. This method of seizing every opportunity to show children the way to be saved, and inviting them to come to the Lord, results in the salvation of many more boys and girls.

Then, too, this repetition of the way of salvation has its effect upon the regular members of the class. They become more familiar with GOD's way of saving folks - they are not surprised when someone responds to the giving of the invitation. In fact, they come to expect the newcomers and visitors to be saved.

In the instance previously mentioned, when the invitation was given, the rest of the boys and girls listened reverently, but not one of them responded. They were saved, and they knew it. This was a procedure familiar to them. The frequency with which it occurred impressed firmly on their minds and hearts just what was necessary to believe in order to be saved, and it was manifested in their daily lives.

Corinne, whose black, curly hair, deep blue eyes and fair skin would have been the answer to many a mother's prayer, was also a keen cause for thanksgiving on the part of her teacher. Each Sunday she would report about some child to whom she had talked during the week. If he said he did not believe it when she told how to be saved, she would read him her memory verses out of her small black Bible. "What shall I tell him now?" she would ask earnestly, and the sincerity of this eight-year-old soul [14] winner was another sign that GOD approved of the emphasis laid on the Gospel and the invitation.

After all, the things we hear most frequently are the ones that we never forget, for they have become a very part of us.

If someone asked you the chief products or industries of Bolivia, or some other far-away country you once studied in school, you might not be able to remember. But if the same person asked you, "What is five times six?" you would give the answer without hesitation. Why the difference? The ones who planned the school curriculum knew that the latter fact was something you would need to know throughout life; therefore it was taught with such emphasis, and with so much repetition that you could not forget it.

And is not the Gospel of just as much importance as the multiplication table?

If we believe it, it will be a help to us all through life, and in the end carry us safely into a blissful eternity. Oh, let us as teachers, as Christian parents and friends of little children see that this vital truth is made so important and so impressive to the little ones that they shall never, never forget it.

Another advantage of presenting the Gospel with the invitation each time, is that absentees will not miss the opportunity to be saved as they otherwise might.

One of the writer's keenest disappointments came when following the old method in teaching a primary group in Daily Vacation Bible School.

It was my first experience with children of this age, and I prayed earnestly that I might lead them to CHRIST. The last Friday's lesson was on the crucifixion; therefore I planned on that day to give them the way of salvation, and to have a decision service in our class. Ordinarily there were nine or ten children [15] present out of an enrolment of twelve. The last day finally came. I had prayed that there would be a good attendance, but the Lord had something He wanted to teach me.

The night before, there was a regular downpour, and the rural roads were deep in mud. Lack of suitable clothing kept many of the children away, and it was with a sinking heart that I saw only six in my class that morning. True, all six responded when we read from GOD's Word how to be

saved, and they all sweetly asked to be saved when we had a time of prayer. The other six who were absent were just as willing as those who were present.

They passed out of my class where they had been for two weeks, knowing a few Bible stories, a few memory verses, but ignorant as to the most vital fact of all.

They did not know how to be saved. What a tragedy! I never saw those children again. I do not yet know whether or not they are saved, but I do know that I learned a lesson that I shall never forget. Since then I have taught many classes in Daily Vacation Bible Schools. But now I seek to win as many as possible on the first day, others on the second and third days, and to concentrate the remainder of the time on the newcomers and visitors.

It is very rare that any regular attendants slip through without coming to a definite decision for CHRIST. At least not one can say, "You never told me how to be saved."

There is another danger that may be avoided by giving the Gospel and the invitation frequently.

It lessens the likelihood of many children growing up in the Sunday school and church, and yet not being regenerated. The average man or woman outside the church looks upon the regular attendants as Christians. Of course, we know that this does not necessarily [16] follow.

True regeneration is a matter of the heart, and not of outward observances.

Nevertheless, these unsaved regular attendants whose lives have never known the transforming power of the Lord become a stumbling block to their friends and neighbors. Their attitude is, "Why should I become a Christian, or why should I go to church - I'm better than he is."

And the worst of it is, that this is very often true.

A missionary from Africa once told me that this very thing had caused one of their greatest problems.

Many children were brought up in the missionary schools which had been established to aid in the education of the country, but never received CHRIST as their Saviour.

The other natives looked upon them as Christians, but when these educated, unsaved natives went back to their villages, it was often to cheat, and to take advantage of the others.

You can easily see the problem this would create for the missionaries.

This missionary admitted that their emphasis had been on education rather than on evangelism.

Of course, it is not our responsibility to force others to accept CHRIST, but it is our duty to see that each child has the message presented to him in a way that he understands, and that he is given an opportunity to receive CHRIST.

The great advantage of following this course with children is that a great percentage of them will be touched with the message, and will be eager to accept the Lord.

Thus, we have seen that following the new method will bring more children to the Lord, including visitors and absentees, will build up and establish the regular members of the class, and will to a large [17] degree prevent the children from growing up to be a stumbling block to those outside the church.

THE CHILD'S WILLINGNESS

Long ago the Saviour said, "**Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in**" (Luke 14:23).

Did He mean that by the time they were grown there were so many outside interests in the lives of these people that they were no longer desirous of coming to Him, and that strong measures had to be used if they should come to Him at all? But what did He say of the children? "**Let the little children come to me; and forbid them not** [do not hinder them]" (Luke 18:16). It was almost as if He had said, "Cease being a hindrance to the children - get out of the way - and they will come to me. They are different from the hardened adults."

If JESUS CHRIST, GOD's Son, called the children, who are we to say that they should not be given the invitation to salvation?

The Son still desires their fellowship.

Of the Father He said, "**It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish**" (Matthew 18:14) .

Workers who follow the plan suggested - that of giving the Gospel to the children first, and then following it with an invitation to accept CHRIST - are amazed by the eagerness with which the children listen and respond to the Gospel.

A young married woman taught her first child evangelism class and reported to the teacher of the training class. "Yes, we had twelve dear little children. I had no helper but really we got along fine. I'm not quite sure I did everything right," she added questioningly. [18]

"Did you follow the general plan of the hour?"

Fifteen minutes for singing, fifteen minutes for memory work, with twenty minutes for the story and the balance of the time for the invitation and closing prayer?" asked the teacher.

"Oh, yes, I did. But when I gave the invitation, all twelve children wanted to be saved! That is what made me wonder if I had done it right."

"If the children wanted to be saved, you must have conducted the hour correctly. For that is the purpose of the class. Many of these children have never heard the Gospel before they come to the class. Their consciences are tender; they realize their sinfulness, and desire to be saved when they hear the way."

But we doubting adults say, "They are so small. Can they really understand?"

Who, may I ask, completely understands GOD's plan of salvation? Surely it is founded on love, and Paul, one of the most learned men of all time, calls it "**the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.**"

The mind of the greatest philosopher of all ages cannot fully comprehend what GOD does when He saves a soul, or to what depths CHRIST had to go in order to purchase our redemption. It is beyond human comprehension. No, the little child cannot understand these mysteries. What, then, is necessary? Only to believe, in the full sense of the word.

John 3:16: "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him . . .**" He does not say, "Whosoever understandeth," or "whosoever is able to explain it," but "**whosoever believeth.**"

Who is more believing than a little child? Let us give them the Gospel while they are young and believing. [19]

GIVING THE CHILD THE GOSPEL

Just what is the Gospel? It is the good news "**that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**" (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

This good news of the way of salvation divides itself into three parts:

1. Man's need - he is lost.
2. GOD's provision - He sent His Son, JESUS, to die for lost mankind.
3. Acceptance by faith for salvation - man must receive CHRIST's work by faith in order to be saved.

In other words, to be saved I must:

1. Believe that I am a sinner.
2. Believe that CHRIST died for my sins.
3. Believe that when I ask Him, He comes into my heart.

Or, to state it another way, I must:

1. Recognize the fact of my personal sin.
2. Realize in my heart that JESUS died for that sin.
3. Receive Him as my personal Saviour.

The Bible abounds in passages proving this and explaining it.

1. Sin - Romans 3:10; 3:23; Isaiah 53:6; 64:6; Jeremiah 17:9.
2. CHRIST's death for sin - I Corinthians 15:3, 4; I Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:6,

8.

3. He must be personally received - Revelation 3:20; John 1:12; 3:16; 3:18; 3:36; I John 5:12.

We ourselves need to have a clear conception of the Gospel in order to present it to the children.

Let the teacher study the foregoing outlines on the way of salvation, until they become a very part of her.

How many Scripture passages can you find on each one of them?

Do you notice how man's work is [20] omitted?

Our works are not acceptable in GOD's sight for salvation.

Ephesians 2:8, 9: "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.**"

Titus 3: 5: "**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.**"

All the plans of salvation propagated by all the religions in the world can be reduced to just two:

1. Salvation is by grace, the free gift of GOD, or
2. Salvation is by works which are acceptable to GOD.

The Lord, knowing how universal the plan of salvation by works would become, put in His Word, in the opening chapters of Genesis, an object lesson to show us which plan was acceptable to Him.

There were two boys - Cain and Abel.

Each brought an offering to GOD, which tells us that GOD must have made known His will regarding offerings.

Cain brought an offering of his good works - part of his crop.

But Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock. He brought a life, and the blood was shed - the blood of another.

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Genesis 4:4, 5).

Abel was received, because his bringing a lamb showed that his faith was placed in the offering of another for his sin. "**By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous**" (Hebrews 11:4).

Abel illustrates the group of those who rely for salvation on the death of another, while Cain stands for the class which presents good works to GOD for salvation. [21]

- Boys and girls, however, are taught from their earliest days that they should be good - which is right and proper.
- They are taught that GOD does not love bad boys, and that if they are not good they will not go to Heaven.
- Thus early in life children have the idea of salvation by works. All of which makes a very good club to hold over the child's head, but which happens not to be true.

GOD does love bad boys. If He didn't He would have no one to love, for we are all bad:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"For God so loved the world (including bad boys and girls), that he gave his only begotten Son . . . " (John 3:16).

Notice that it is a matter of believing - not of imploring GOD to save us.

We do not have to make GOD willing to save us from sin. He is willing already. So willing that He sent His Son **"to seek and to save that which was lost."**

The moment we turn to Him we are found. Salvation does not need to be an agonizing experience.

Like the prodigal's father, GOD is so willing that He has already come out to meet us.

Our part is to come to Him.

When this is explained to little children, they are eager to accept the Lord as their own Saviour.

We must be careful, however, to see that each part of the Gospel is made plain, so that our work will not be superficial.

If the following plan is followed, the chances for having decisions without real heart experiences will be greatly minimized. [22]

The Gospel in the Story

As you tell the story to the boys and girls see that it contains the three points of the way of salvation.

Ask yourself this question.

Where can I best bring out the matter of sin, that the boys and girls listening might know that they are sinners?

Many classes begin with the wordless book. The matter of sin is easily introduced in this lesson.

As soon as the black page is mentioned, we have the problem of sin. And so it should be in every story. Sin should be shown as that which separates us from GOD (Isaiah 59:2).

If it is not mentioned in the story, use an illustration, perhaps from your own childhood, which fits in and shows the fact of sin.

Get the children lost before you try to get them saved.

A great deal depends upon the teacher's attitude as to whether or not boys and girls will be willing to admit their lost condition. If she points her finger at them and says severely, "You children have sinned. You know you have. You have all done wrong. You need to be saved, or you will never go to Heaven. Now, haven't you sinned?"

Little heads will vigorously shake in the negative.

But if the teacher is willing to admit herself a sinner and take a sympathetic attitude toward the children, it becomes easier for them to admit their own guilt.

The story of some sin committed in the teacher's own childhood, with the spiritual application drawn from it will do much to show the children that their teacher is human. Many children have the idea that I had when a child that children are sinners, but adults are perfect. Therefore, they try to keep their guilt hid from the adult.

The teacher might say, "Yes, boys and girls, [23] just this one sin would have been enough to keep me out of Heaven. But JESUS loved me just as He loves all those who have done wrong, and He died for my sin so that I might be saved. If JESUS had not died I never could have gone to Heaven."

It also helps to tell the children that all have sinned, all have done wrong.

All the Sunday school teachers, the ministers, the mothers, the fathers, the big boys and girls, and little ones, too. This will come as a shock to some children. It helps them realize that others are in the same predicament as they.

In telling a Bible story which speaks of some character's sin, the teacher might insert this application with the story:

"Boys and girls, we all get dirty. There is not a person living who does not get dirty, and does not need a bath. It is not a shame to get dirty, but it would be a shame to stay dirty, to never wash or take a bath. That would be a disgrace. Just the same way, it is not a disgrace to be a sinner, for we all have sinned. But it is a disgrace to stay that way, and never let JESUS wash our sins away in His precious blood."

The above suggestions are given to be used during the story to make clear the first point.

What is the next point of the way of salvation?

"That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

In telling the story of the wordless book, this comes under the red page. But in telling other Bible stories, you may not so clearly see the connection to the Cross. Look for it closely for it will surely be there.

Calvary is the theme of the Bible; in every book it is either declared, or hidden in type. Claim the promise in John 16:14 spoken of the HOLY SPIRIT: "**He shall [24] glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.**"

Part of the office work of the HOLY SPIRIT is to reveal CHRIST unto us.

As we come with open hearts unto the Word of GOD we will see CHRIST anew in His sacrificial work upon the Cross of Calvary, even in passages we did not dream contained this message. It will then be our privilege to seek to make real to the children CHRIST's death for sin. Let us always be sure that our story contains somewhere the truth of JESUS dying on the cross, for there is no salvation without His Cross work.

Illustrations are the windows of the message - they let in the light.

A house is not all windows, and yet it would not be complete without a few. Just so with the Bible story for children. An apt illustration helps to emphasize the point, and to make it clear to the listener. Of course, the "point" in this case is the Gospel.

The stories which follow have been very effective in making clear the substitutionary work of CHRIST.

They are not given to be used by themselves - boys and girls need Bible stories - but they are to be incorporated into the story at the place where the teacher brings out the second point of the Gospel, "**Christ died for our sins,**" to show the boys and girls that He gave Himself to save us.

The Hen and Her Chickens

Once upon a time there were twelve tiny, yellow balls of fluff. "Peep, peep, peep."

They went in and out of their mother's legs, under her wings, up on top of her back, two or three feet away, and then back again. Guess what they were?

That's right, they were little baby chicks.

Their mother, Biddy, clucked [25] to them. She would hold little pieces of food in her beak, and try to feed them. If Billy would come near the barn where they lived, she would ruffle up her feathers, and if he would pick up one of her babies, she would cluck ferociously.

Biddy didn't want anything to happen to them, for she loved them.

But one day when Billy and his father and mother were gone, something terrible happened. The

barn caught on fire, and when they came home, it was smoking, and all black.

One side had fallen in. Billy and his father went into the barn. The door was all black, and it made Billy's hands black when he touched it. There was the place where the straw had been; it was just a little pile of ashes now. Over in the corner they saw a little, dark shape.

"Why, that looks just like a hen," said Billy.

"Listen," said Daddy. "I hear something."

"Peep, peep, peep."

Billy ran over to the dark shape. He touched it with his foot. It fell over. But out came some little chickens climbing all over each other.

"Why, that was a hen," said Billy.

"That was Biddy. But she is all burned. She is dead."

"Yes," said Daddy.

"But when the fire came, why didn't she fly out the window there? Even if the door was shut, she could have gone out the window."

"Yes, but her baby chicks couldn't fly. They would all have been burned to death. I'm sure Biddy knew that, and clucked to her babies when the fire came so that each one got underneath her wings. She loved them more than she loved herself. She wanted to save them. So the fire burned her, but the chicks were [26] saved.

That reminds me of what JESUS did," said Daddy.

"How is that?" and Billy looked puzzled.

"JESUS knew we could not save ourselves. We have all sinned, and so He said to GOD, 'I will be punished for their sins.' He did not need to die on the cross. He could have come down, but He wanted to save us. He had to die to do it, just like Biddy had to die to save her chicks."

"I guess I'm just like one of these baby chicks. JESUS knew I would have to die, so He died for me. Is that right?"

"Yes, it is. He loved you so much He died for you."

"Oh, I'm glad He did that. I know I have done wrong, and I do want to be saved."

"Let's tell JESUS right now," said Daddy.

Billy knelt down right on the black floor.

"Oh, JESUS, I didn't know you died for me. I'm so glad you loved me that much. Please save me right now."

After that, every time Billy saw a hen he remembered Bidy, and thanked JESUS again because He had given His life to save him.

Bobby and the Ruler

One story that never fails to interest and impress children has as its setting one familiar to all children - the schoolroom.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and all the boys and girls in the room had just finished their reading lesson. Miss Johnson stood up in front of them and said severely, "I want every boy and girl to sit up very straight. Get your reading books, and read tomorrow's lesson. I am going out of the room, and [27] I do not want anyone to whisper while I am gone." She shook her finger as she looked straight at the children.

Bobby sat in a front seat. He could hear the clock go "Tick, tock, tick, tock," the room was so quiet.

He wondered how long Miss Johnson would be gone. He started to read the lesson, but pretty soon he thought about what he was going to do after school, and he leaned across the aisle, and whispered to his pal, Jimmy. Jimmy listened to what he had to say, but did not say anything back. Just then Miss Johnson came back into the room.

"Did anyone whisper while I was gone?" and she looked over the whole room.

"Oh, dear," thought Bobby, "why did I whisper?"

His heart sank clear down into his shoes. But he wasn't a coward. Up went little Bobby's hand.

"Did you whisper while I was gone?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Bobby, swallowing hard.

"Then come with me to the principal's office, and get your punishment."

Just then a hand waved in the back of the room. "Yes, Tom, what is it?"

"Please, Miss Johnson," and big, twelve-year-old Tom stood up. "Bobby is such a little boy, and he doesn't feel very good. I know, because I live next door to him. Please, Miss Johnson, couldn't I take his punishment for him?"

"Did you whisper, Tom?"

"No ma'am, I didn't."

"And you want the principal to punish you instead of Bobby?"

"Yes ma'am." [28]

"Then both of you come with me to the principal's office."

Little seven-year-old Bobby, and big Tom walked down the empty hall around the corner to the school office.

Mr. Turner looked up when they came in.

"Mr. Turner," said Miss Johnson, "I am sorry, but it is necessary to have you punish Tom."

"Why, Tom, you surprise me, you have such a good record. I have never had to punish you before."

He opened his desk drawer, took out a long ruler, and walked toward Tom. Bobby sat down on a chair and watched.

"Hold out your hand."

Tom stretched out his hand, the principal raised the ruler. He brought it down hard on the palm of Tom's hand. One stroke. Tom winced. The principal raised the ruler again. Down it came - two strokes! Three! Four! Five!

By this time there were tears in Tom's eyes. Bobby saw them, and he blinked too. But the principal kept right on. Six! Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

Bobby could stand it no longer. He grabbed Tom around the neck, and burst out crying.

"Oh, Tom, thank you, thank you! You weren't bad. I was the one. Thank you! 'N' you can have my roller skates, 'n' you can have my bicycle, 'n' my football, 'n' anything I have. 'N' we'll be pals forever 'n' ever!"

Tom being punished for Bobby was just like JESUS dying on the cross for us, boys and girls. We were the ones who were bad, but He loved us, and let GOD punish Him for our sins.

Won't you believe that He loved you that much, and won't you receive [29] Him as your own personal Saviour? Won't you tell Him that you are glad that He died for you? Won't you be friends with Him forever and ever?

The story of the hen and chicks, and of Bobby and the ruler give very apt illustrations of CHRIST's substitutionary death on the cross.

A little tract called "*The Colonel's Word Will Stand*" contains another good story for making plain this important point. Watch for tracts containing stories which can be used to illustrate spiritual truths, and you can make your stories more interesting, as well as more effective. However, never use an illustration, no matter how good it is, unless it lets in the light on the

point you want emphasized. To do so is to digress, to weaken your story, and to make the application less powerful.

The simple telling of the story of the crucifixion cannot be surpassed in making clear the Gospel, but the foregoing illustrations may be used when most of the class is familiar with the Gospel, with a few newcomers who need to have the truth presented to them.

In the same way, the third point of the way of salvation (that we must receive CHRIST to be saved) should be incorporated into the story, either growing out of the Bible text or introduced as an illustration. Thus we are sure that the whole Gospel has been presented during the actual telling of the story.

The Gospel in the Invitation

Then, at the climax of the story, without pause or evidence that there is a change, proceed right into the invitation. Do not stop to sing a song; this confuses little children, but put the proposition to them [30] fairly and squarely. Do not coax or plead with them, but give them a fair opportunity.

If the group is a new group which has never heard the Gospel before, it is less distracting not to have them bow their heads, but to deal with them in a straightforward manner. They are not familiar with Christian behavior, and until they have been taught about prayer, it is shrouded in mystery to them. While their heads are bowed they are tempted to peek, merely wondering what is to happen next, all of which tends to distract them from the invitation.

In other words, treat the invitation as a part of the story, in fact as the very climax of it.

The Gospel may be summarized in the invitation.

In doing this, the invitation becomes inseparably linked with the story. Summarize the way of salvation as you give it, repeating each point briefly. Can you recognize all three points?

The following are given as samples of the close of the story:

After almost any story.

"Perhaps some of you boys and girls know that you have done wrong, but you are so glad to learn that JESUS died for every one of your sins, and that now He is knocking at the door of your heart, waiting for you to receive Him. If you really and truly want to let Him in, raise your hand, and I will help you to ask Him into your heart."

It is easier for children to understand if you correlate the invitation with the story, using similar terminology.

After the story of the three crosses.

"Boys and girls, GOD's Word says that we are all like these two thieves - we all have sinned. You know [31] that you have sinned, but you don't want to keep your sinful heart. You want to

be like the thief that believed on JESUS and had his sins washed away. You believe that JESUS died for your sins, and right now you want to ask Him to save you. If you do, you may raise your hand, and I will help you to ask Him to save you.

After the story of the wordless book.

"How many of you realize that your heart is in darkness (turn to black page) because you have done wrong, but you believe that JESUS shed His blood on the cross for you (turn to red page), and you want Him to come into your heart to make it as white as snow (turn to white page) . If you really mean it, you may raise your hand, and I will help you to ask Him to come in."

After story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22):

"Abraham offered up his only son, Isaac. Another Father, GOD, offered up His only Son, JESUS, to pay for our sins. As Isaac carried the wood upon which he was to be sacrificed, so JESUS carried the wooden cross. Isaac was being obedient to his father. JESUS was being obedient to His Father, but more than that, He loved us and wanted to die for our sins. Abraham tied Isaac to the altar, but there were nails put in JESUS' hands. It was not the nails, but His love for us that held Him to the cross. Do you believe that JESUS died for your sins, and will you accept this wonderful love, by taking JESUS as your own personal Saviour?"

After story of the leper (Matthew 8:1-4) :

"This leper was covered with sores, and no matter what medicine he used they would not get well. Did [32] you know that our hearts were sick too? We have all done wrong things, which makes our hearts so sick that nothing we can do will make them well. We might cover them up with bandages of lies, so that others might not know, but down underneath, the naughtiness is still there. No one could do anything for the leper but JESUS. No one can do anything for our sick hearts but JESUS. He just had to speak, and the sick man was made well, but He had to die on the cross in order to make our sick hearts well. Will you bring your sick heart to JESUS, tell Him that you believe He died for you, and ask Him to cleanse you from sin?"

After the story of creation (Genesis 1):

"On the fourth day the Lord made the great lightholder which we call the sun. He gave it to us for a picture of His Son, JESUS, who is the Light of the world. If we had a house and had all the shades pulled, and all the doors closed so that the sunlight could not get in, it would be very dark and dreary. Our hearts are dark and dreary without JESUS, the Light of the world. But He died on the cross to take away our darkness. Now He stands outside the door of our heart, knocking. He wants to come in and make it light and cheerful. He is knocking at your door. Will you say, 'Yes, JESUS, I know my heart is dark with sin. I believe you died for me, and I now open the door to let you come in and make my heart light?'"

Do you see how the invitation may really be a part of the story? After you have tried for several times to fit the invitation to the story it will almost become second nature to you.

But don't think that [33] you are different from anyone else if you have shaking knees as you think about giving the invitation for the first time. This was the hard part for me in teaching my

first class. I did not know what to say, or what to do if anyone should be saved, but I studied hard and prayed harder. The Lord brought me through and gave me the soul of each little child who was present. How I praise Him for it. And He is still the same Lord.

The Gospel in the After-Meeting

Up to this time the three points of the way of salvation have been presented in the story, and summarized in the invitation, but now they should be applied individually in the after-meeting. Now the after-meeting need not be that at all. But for want of a better name we label thus the period when the children are dealt with as to receiving the Lord. At this time each part of the way of salvation is reviewed.

Perhaps you have a new class.

You give the invitation, and seven out of the nine children present raise their hands indicating that they desire to be saved. To have the children go into another room would be folly - practically the whole group would follow you there. The thing to do is to deal with them as they are.

The three points must be again presented to them, to see that each one individually believes each one. What are they?

First, I believe I am a sinner.

Second, I believe that CHRIST died for my sins.

Third, by faith I invite Him into my heart to be my Saviour.

In this little group speak confidentially to them, as one individual to another. "You boys and girls [34] have said that you want to be saved. There is just one way to be saved.

First of all, we must know that we have done wrong. Then we must believe that JESUS CHRIST, GOD's Son, died for our sins, and last of all we must invite Him into our hearts. It says in the Bible, right here, '**all have sinned.**'

"If some of the children are old enough, have one of them read the first four words of Romans 3:23 from your Bible which you hand to him, with the four words underlined.

"Now, GOD says that all have sinned, and He knows because He can see right down into our hearts. Do you boys and girls believe that you have sinned?"

If the group is small, ask each one individually, but if there are twenty-five or more, have them raise their hands. If one of the children does not admit his guilt do not deal with him then, but tell him you will talk with him afterwards, and proceed to deal with the willing ones.

After each willing one has admitted that he is a sinner, turn in your Bible to I Corinthians 15:3.

"Now, children, GOD sent JESUS to die for our sins. It says so in His Word. I will read it to you. '**Christ died for our sins.**' That means that because I was bad CHRIST died for my sins. That

means that because you were bad CHRIST died for your sins. He let them put the nails into His hands because He wanted to pay for your sins. GOD punished Him for each sin I have committed, and for each one I ever will commit. JESUS paid for them all because He loved us so. Do you boys and girls believe that? Jane, do you believe that JESUS died for all your sins? Henry, do you?"

Get each child to tell you that he believes that JESUS died for him, either by raising his hand in [35] the case of a very large group, or by continuing to ask each one individually.

"Now, boys and girls, after JESUS died GOD raised Him up, and now He lives in Heaven, but He wants a home down here on earth in our hearts. Do you know what He is doing now? He is knocking at the door of our hearts, pleading with us to let Him come in so that He can take away our sins. He says in His Word, '**Behold I stand at the door and knock.**' "

Knock on a chair or nearby wall. "He is knocking because He wants to come in, but the only way He will come in is for us to ask Him. Some people say, 'No, JESUS, I don't want you in my heart,' but others say, 'Oh, JESUS, I'm so glad you loved me enough to die on the cross for my sins. I'll open the door right now, and you may come into my heart.' Do you boys and girls want to receive Him into your heart? You do? All right, we will ask Him right now.

If I were at the door of your house knocking because I wanted to come in, would it be very hard for you to ask me to come in? Why, no. It wouldn't be hard at all, would it? JESUS is even more real than I am. He is knocking, and He wants you to let Him come in, so each one of us will ask Him. When we talk to JESUS, we bow our heads and shut our eyes.

We will start with Katherine (one of the more attentive, less timid children).

While we all have our heads bowed Katherine will ask JESUS to come into her heart, right out loud."

Even if her prayer isn't eloquent, if it is sincere it is sufficient for salvation.

Proceed around the circle, having each one pray in his own words. This has been used in a group when as many as thirty children desired to receive CHRIST and it is possible to have each one pray individually.

Instead [36] of calling on them or going in an orderly way around the group, you may ask who wants to ask JESUS next; thus you deal with the most willing ones first. However, this may be determined at the time you are dealing with the group. Use whichever method seems to be more suitable.

This may be more work and take extra time, but the children thus dealt with will be clear on each point of the way of salvation, and it will amaze you to watch their growth in grace.

If this seems entirely too difficult for you, you may have the children in a group repeat after you a simple prayer with the instructions to do so only if they are in earnest.

Repeat the prayer first so they will understand and then have them say it phrase by phrase. A prayer such as the following could be used:

"Dear JESUS, I believe that I have sinned. Thank you for dying for my sins. Come into my heart right now and save me. Amen."

Remember, if an unusually large number of children desire to be saved at one meeting, you can call at any time on the Lord for special wisdom, and He will give it. **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not"** (James 1: 5).

If it is possible to take more time, the suggestions that follow will bring immeasurable help to the child and will do a great deal to insure his having a healthy Christian life. If it is not possible, do not be discouraged. Remember that now the child is saved he is in GOD's family, and that GOD is able to care for His own children.

Immediately after the child has prayed, ask him,

- "Who is in your heart now?"
- "Who paid for your sins?"
- "Do you have to pay for them?"
- "What does [37] this verse say you are?" Read Acts 16:31.
- "Whose child are you now?" (John 1:12).

Try to correlate these questions with the line of approach used in the invitation.

For instance, in presenting JESUS as the light, ask, "Are you in darkness anymore?"

"Why not?"

"What is JESUS?" (The Light of the world)

"Where is He?" (In my heart.)

After the children have asked GOD to save them, seek to awaken in them a spirit of thankfulness.

When you see by their faces that they do appreciate what JESUS has done for them, ask, "Who would like to thank JESUS because He died on the cross and saved you?"

What joy it will give you as one by one they eagerly give thanks to their newfound Saviour.

Let the words be their own even if they are ever so simple.

One little boy just bowed his head and said softly, "Thank you, JESUS."

I am sure that was sweeter music in the ears of our Lord than many a more eloquent prayer. The prayer of praise does a great deal in giving the child the assurance that is so vital for Christian

growth.

Tell the child also that JESUS has saved him from sin, and that He will keep him from sinning if he asks Him.

If, however, he should forget and do something wrong, he should tell JESUS about it at once, saying that he is sorry, and that he would trust JESUS to help him not to do it the next time. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (I John 1:9).

If given to the child when he is first saved, these three things that JESUS wants us to do will greatly [38] aid him in his Christian life. If there is time in the after-meeting the teacher might say:

"We have found out today how much JESUS has done for us. Did you know that there were three things that He wants us to do for Him?

The first one is to read His Word. (Hold up your Bible.) This is His letter to us. When we read it, it is like JESUS talking right to us. If we want to know what He wants us to do, we can find out in the Bible. He wants us to read it every day. If it is hard for you to read, ask your mother or your big brother or sister to help you, but remember not to go to bed at night until you have heard what JESUS has to say."

If they do not have a Bible, give them penny portions of Psalms or one of the Gospels from the American Bible Society. This might be supplemented later on with a ten cent booklet, "*Daily Bread*," by J. Irvin Overholtzer. Allow the child to earn this booklet as it is a bad policy to give out too much material. "*The Children's Guide Book*" contains no marks which would designate it as belonging to any one church. It is good to give to children who have only heard the Gospel once or twice, because it reviews it in simple language and gives instructions for the Christian life. "*Six Wonderful Things*" tells of six things that happen the moment a child accepts CHRIST. It is effective where children have been under the sound of the Gospel for some time before accepting CHRIST.

"The next thing He wants us to do is to talk to Him. What would you think if I asked you to come into my house and never said a word to you? Would you think I loved you very much? Now, JESUS lives in you, and He wants you to talk to Him, and tell [39] Him all your troubles, for He will help you. If you have a hard lesson at school ask JESUS to help you and He will, every time. Then tell Him about the good times you have too, and talk to Him just because you love Him. **'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it'** (John 14:14).

"The last thing is the hardest of all, but JESUS will help us do it. That is to tell someone else that we believe in JESUS.

"Today we have read the Bible, we have prayed, or talked to JESUS, but we haven't told anyone that we believe in JESUS. I wonder who will be brave enough to stand up and tell us that you believe in JESUS? Reading the Bible is like eating, it helps us to grow bigger, and praying is like breathing, and telling someone else about JESUS is like taking exercise, it gives us good

muscles."

Some of the most glorious moments of my life have been those spent in listening to little boys and girls speak out their faith in CHRIST immediately after they accepted Him.

How their faces light up with the joy of Heaven.

Great care must be exercised in certain strict Jewish or Catholic communities in the giving out of Gospel literature.

To give earmarked literature to the child may mean he will never return because of his parents. Big classes have dwindled to nothing overnight because young leaders unwisely gave tracts to the children. In such cases it is perhaps better to establish the child in the class, and to call on the home before giving out literature. Let the HOLY SPIRIT be your guide in these antagonistic communities. If at all possible, the child should have a portion of GOD's Word. [40]

Some have objected to telling the child that it is hard to tell others of JESUS. But it is hard!

Should we shield them from the truth? If you have ninety to ninety-five percent new converts stand up immediately and testify, then don't tell them it is hard. But if you don't have that large a percentage, tell them it is hard. Ask them to trust in CHRIST for strength, and see what the results are. Try both ways, and do what is best for you.

If the child follows these instructions: reading the Bible, praying and testifying, he will grow in grace rapidly, even if it should happen that you never see him again.

It will never be so easy for the child to testify as when he is first saved. Testimony is like letter writing - the longer we put it off the harder it becomes. If the child gives his testimony in the meeting it will not be met with a dash of cold water as it otherwise might be. If there is just one child who accepts CHRIST, ask him to tell some Christian who is nearby. Proceed with him to the individual and say, "Johnny has something he wants to tell you." That way the first step of testimony is taken in favorable circumstances.

Perhaps it will be impossible to conduct as lengthy an after-meeting as this would involve. Do the best you can with the help of the Lord in the time you have, and at later meetings try to give the rest of the instructions. Let us restate the order of procedure to be followed when a child has indicated his desire to be saved.

1. Teacher reviews three points of the way of salvation, making sure each child believes each one.
2. Child prays asking the Lord to come in to save him .
3. Teacher questions child to give assurance. [41]
4. Child thanks the Lord.
5. Teacher instructs on confession of sin.
6. Teacher instructs on "*Three Things JESUS Wants You to Do.*"
 - a. Read Bible
 - b. Pray
 - c. Testify

7. Child gives testimony.
8. Teacher gives child Scripture portion.

In many meetings for children the workers have been distressed because some children come forward again and again.

In most cases if the preceding instructions have been heeded this will not occur, as the reasons for this have been dealt with before they arise.

Why does a child do this?

He may desire to repeat a pleasant experience.

Little Patty is an example.

On the first Friday meeting she had eagerly accepted the Lord as her Saviour, and when she came back the next week, she said to the teacher, "Do you remember what we did last week?"

Her eyes lit up and her face beamed as she thought of it. "Let's do it all over again."

The experience had been such a joyous one,. she desired to repeat it.

A few words of explanation from the teacher showed her that when we are saved we have happy times by talking with the Lord JESUS, instead of asking Him into our hearts again.

This can be effectively illustrated by making the following supposition.

"Patty, suppose that one day I should go to see you. I knock on the front door. You look out the window and see who it is. Then you open the door and say, 'Come in, Mrs. Morningstar, I'm so glad to see you.' I sit down expecting to have a nice visit with you, but instead of that, I see you going to the [42] door again. You open the door, and call, 'Come in, Mrs. Morningstar, come in!' What would I think?"

Generally, the children laugh, see the point, and never again respond to the invitation. They see that it is a matter now of fellowshiping with the Lord JESUS, rather than of inviting Him in over and over again.

He may not be saved. He may respond to the invitation the second time because he was not really saved the first time.

This does occur frequently when no after-meeting is held. The child perhaps was willing the first time. The message may not have been quite clear to him.

Talk to him sympathetically and if you find this is the case, follow the steps given for dealing with an unsaved child.

He may not have the assurance of his salvation.

This child should not be overlooked or dismissed because he has responded to the invitation before; he should be helped.

You might proceed to help him in the following manner.

"Jack, did you ever ask JESUS to come into your heart? Is JESUS really in your heart?" He probably will say he doesn't know.

"Sonny, did you really mean it when you asked Him to come in?"

"Yes, I did, but I don't know if He really came or not."

"Well, let's see what He said. The reason we know He wants to come in is because He tells us so when He knocks at our door."

Turn in your Bible to Revelation 3:20.

Sit beside the child so that he may see also. "Now this is what JESUS said. It was so important that He put it right in the Bible. **'If any man hear my voice, and open the door'** . . . Now you knew that JESUS wanted to come in, didn't you? And [43] when you asked Him to come in that was just the same as opening the door. So did you do what JESUS says here? Yes, you did; didn't you? All right, now we'll read what JESUS said He would do if you opened the door."

"I will come in." Let the child read it for himself.

"This is actually what JESUS CHRIST said. Do you suppose that He would tell you a lie? I should say not! He is GOD; He cannot lie. So if He said that He would come in if you opened the door, and you opened the door, what did He do?"

Get the child to say, "He came in."

"That is right, now where is He?"

"He's in my heart."

"Yes, aren't you glad? JESUS is perfect, and yet He will come and live in our hearts. Now, we want to find out how long He is going to stay. He tells us right in the Bible. Here it is. Hebrews 13: 5: **"I will never leave you"** There is one word for each finger. Now, when will JESUS leave you?"

Let him read the verse, and find it for himself.

"Never."

"Isn't that wonderful? Now, when our mother or our father does something nice for us, we thank them. Wouldn't you like to thank JESUS because He has come to live in your heart?"

Have the child bow his head and in his own words thank the Son of GOD for taking up His abode with him.

In this way the child is dealt with on the basis of GOD's Word. He is basing his salvation on something that will not pass away. Too often someone is inclined to believe he is saved because he "feels good." Feelings are not permanent. The only time in the Bible a decision was based on feelings was the time [44] Isaac felt Jacob to determine whether or not he was Esau. His conclusion was wrong. Let us get the children to see that they are saved because GOD has said so in His Word. **"Thy word, O Lord, is settled in Heaven."**

He may be out of fellowship because of sin.

The child sensing that something is wrong because he has sinned may respond to the invitation thinking he needs to be saved over again. The teacher should first of all make sure that he is saved and has the assurance.

She may then turn to I John 1:9: **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

She should explain this simply, perhaps using also Isaiah 59:2: **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you."**

"When we accept JESUS as our Saviour, GOD becomes our Father. Just as we are happy with our father when we do what he tells us, so we are happy with GOD when we obey Him. But when we sin it is like disobeying our father. We do not want him to come home, and when we do see him, we are unhappy and do not want to talk with him. Our sin has spoiled everything. What should we do? We should go to our daddy, tell him what we did, and ask him to forgive us. Then we will be happy again. That is exactly what we should do when we sin. We should go to our Heavenly Father, tell Him exactly what we have done, and ask Him to forgive us. He promised in this verse He would forgive us."

Have the child read the verse.

Ask him then, if he is a small child (nine or under), what he has done. Ask him to tell GOD about it. Let him pray aloud.

In the [45] older child it may be better to let him pray silently, although if possible get him to ask for forgiveness orally.

A few additional words will help to strengthen him for the future. Turn to John 10:28. Always use your Bible instead of quoting the verses. Let the child read the verses himself when you are dealing with him. If he cannot read, turn to the verse, point to it, and tell him that is what GOD says. This is much more effective than when the child only hears the verse quoted.

With the child looking at John 10:28, **"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand,"** ask him where he is now. Help him with the verse until he says, "In JESUS' hand." Hold out one hand, cupped.

"Yes, JESUS holds you in His hand."

Now read the next verse. "Whose hand does it say you are in? Who is the Father? It is as if the Father took His hand (take other hand, place it over cupped hand), "and put it over JESUS' hand, and said, 'You are safe, no one can get you now.' "

Show him from this that he does not need to be saved again, but rather to confess his sins.

"You may be unhappy in their hands, but you do not need to be saved again. The way to be happy is to do as they tell us in the Bible, but if you forget and sin, then tell GOD about it right away and He will forgive you. One way to stay happy is to tell others that you are saved." Read Psalm 107:2: "**Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.**" [46]

"Whose hand were you in before? Who is the enemy?"

This little study about the hands may be used with even a very small child to illustrate this truth.

Again we state the reasons why a child responds to the invitation more than once:

1. He may desire to repeat a happy experience.
2. He may not be saved.
3. He may not have the assurance of his salvation.
4. He may be out of fellowship because of sin.

There is a reason why the child comes forward or raises his hand repeatedly. Do not dismiss him without help. Find out the reason and deal with him accordingly. [47]

~ end of chapter 1 ~
