

your children's ministry presents:

leading
your
KIDS
to Christ

Jason Underhill

Introduction

I'm really excited about this opportunity to share with you about leading your child to Christ. But before we get into that let me share a little bit about my family. I'm married to my beautiful wife, Sarah. We've been married for 16 years. We have five children: Katie Beth, Everett, Nolan, Lyla, and Sosie. I like to call them my mini basketball team. We love spending time with each other, and I get more joy out of life being with my family than anything else.

We enjoy sports, camping, movies, swimming, etc. One specific tradition we enjoy is what we call "Triple F", which stands for "Family Fun Friday", where we focus our time to simply have fun as a family. Our kids love Fridays and can't wait to find out what the plan is. We sometimes eat out, go see a movie, or stay home for a family Wii night. Whatever the activity, it's always the night we look forward to the most as a family.

As parents, we all are striving to make life meaningful and fun for our kids. For my wife and I, we want our children to think of their home as a place they love to be, where laughter and grace are present, and a love for the Lord only makes us that much stronger of a family. We desire, as many of you, to have positive day to day experiences in our family while nurturing their relationships with the Lord so that when the tough times come, their relationship with the Lord will be strong enough to sustain them through whatever comes their way. We all have a desire to raise our kids to follow God. We live our lives hoping and praying they will follow Him. Nothing gets me more excited than when one of my children shows an interest in wanting to accept Christ.

However, so often, the hardest question to answer in regards to our child's spiritual journey is simply how to help them get started and to be sure they understand what they are doing. As parents, we often have a deep down fear that what we do and how we do it may not be enough to lead our own kids to a genuine relationship with Christ. I have parents that come to me and ask; "I don't know how to lead my child to Christ." They also ask, "How do I know if my child is truly ready to accept Christ in their life?" and "What are the signs to look for to determine if my child is ready to take the next step with their salvation?" My prayer is that this simple book will be a tool to help answer these common questions and more as we partner together to reach our kids for Christ.

Is My Child Capable of Accepting Christ?

One of the most common questions parents have is wondering if their child is old enough to accept Christ. There's not a fixed number as to when a child is ready to make a commitment to the Lord. Kids usually begin to ask questions around the age of five trying to figure out what is right and wrong, what is real and what is not. Oftentimes, they can answer questions about and even explain the basic concepts of salvation in regards to their sin separating them from God, Jesus dying on the cross for their sins, and that they need a relationship with Christ in order to go to heaven. Understanding these basic concepts is typically the first step towards a relationship with Christ, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are ready to make a lifetime commitment. Any questions that your child asks are important and a signal that the Holy Spirit is moving.

And ultimately, we do have to trust the Holy Spirit to make the time of salvation apparent to our child with as little of our own interference as possible. Our role as parents is to guide them and not persuade them one way or another. I have seen children as young as five make strong statements about their commitments to Christ, and other kids wait until they are in their older elementary years or even later!

Another concern common to many parents is whether their child can truly accept Christ due to a learning disability or special need. The great news is that God desires a relationship with each of us.

About ten years ago I was serving as a Children's Pastor in Texas at a church with a large number of children attending each week, but there was one kid that stood out to me; his name was Bryce. Bryce was at church nearly every Sunday morning. He would always come with a smile on his face, eager to learn. Bryce couldn't speak or walk and had multiple special needs. However, he could hear, and he used a board with letters on it to communicate and answer questions about what he was learning. One day his parents approached me and said they believed Bryce was ready to accept Christ and be baptized. I was so thrilled to know that Bryce's parents were encouraging him to take the next steps, but they didn't know how to share the Gospel with him.

We set up a time to meet after church one Sunday, and I began to walk them through the plan of salvation in a very simple way that Bryce could understand and answer. Bryce used his letter board to answer the questions using his fingers to carefully spell out each word. The three of us were astounded by what he knew and comprehended. Bryce accepted Christ that day, and I had the honor of baptizing him with his dad as we carried him into the water. It was an incredible celebration. Words can't describe that day and how God used Bryce to show that every child can accept Christ if given the opportunity. It's a memory that I will never forget.

Don't I Need A Pastor To Lead My Child To Christ?

Sometimes it can be a struggle when we think about how to talk to our kids about salvation. It's easy to feel inadequate – this is the biggest decision of our child's life, and we don't want to leave something out or say something wrong! Yet God wants nothing more than for YOU to share in this process and to lead your child to Christ. Yes he wants YOU to lead them!

In Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Moses talks to the people and says...

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

“ (Deuteronomy 6:4–9 ESV)

Our job as a parent is first to love God with all of our heart, soul, and might. Our kids getting to see us love God and put Him first will speak more strongly than the most eloquent words we could ever contrive.

The second part says we are to teach our children to do the same. As parents, WE are responsible for the spiritual maturation of our kids. There is no one else in the Bible given the specific job of teach our children about how to love God.

You have a huge task, but the church, other family members, and friends are there to help in the process. It may seem daunting, but you are not alone. The exciting part of these verses is seeing clearly God's design for us as parents to lead our kids to Christ; what a special privilege He has given us!

The reason we made this simple ebook was to help you be able to lead your child toward a relationship with Christ. Pastors are a great blessing to our families but you as a parent can lead your child to Christ. You can't get it wrong when you slow down, think through the process, and have the courage to just have simple conversations. Never forget, salvation is a work of God not of man. Trust God and trust God through the journey!

How Do I Know When My Kids Are Truly Ready?

Questions: Kids are inquisitive, and they love to ask us questions. I'm sure many of you would identify with me in that there are sometimes so many questions that I wish I could hit the mute button for a few minutes! However, when it comes to salvation, the greatest thing you can do is to listen and respond to the questions they are asking. Examples of some of the first questions are: "How do I get to heaven?" or "I saw my friend Daniel get baptized. I want to do that. How can I be baptized?"

At this stage, we should answer the child's questions in a factual way without any gasps of emotions or assumptions about a decision. We don't want our children looking back years from now and realizing that a simple question turned into a commitment they didn't fully understand. Answers like "We get to heaven by having a relationship with Jesus. You'll be learning a lot about what that means as you get older. It's so exciting that the God of our universe wants a relationship with us!" or "Daniel felt like he was ready to let God make all of the decisions about his life. He got baptized to show that he was on God's team. Everyone is ready to be baptized at a different time, and God will let you know when it's time for you to make that decision."

Simply answer whatever question your child raises, and move on with whatever questions your child asks next – whether it is another biblical question or a question about princess shoes, Spiderman, or the moon. They may repeat the same questions over and over – even when they know the answers! This is normal, and it is simply a child’s way of processing the information to get it straight. By allowing them to initiate these conversations instead of letting our excitement rush the process, the child is able to process their own experience, and it becomes personal to them.

If you don’t know the answer to a question your child asks, just say, "I don’t know, but I’ll find out." It is never wrong to tell them you don’t know. They need to understand you are continually growing in your own understanding and relationship with Christ.

Insistency: The next stage to look for in your child is how often they are bringing up the subject of salvation. Children who are ready will tell you. Not only will they tell you, they will hound you. The increase in the frequency and intensity of their questions is a sign that the Holy Spirit is prompting them. Waiting on them to recognize their own need for salvation and a relationship with God is far more meaningful than us telling them of their need.

Willing to Commit All: My daughter started to ask questions when she was five, but she would ask the question, get her answer, and then go play. A year of her sporadic questioning went by, and then in the month of November, she was adamant about wanting to accept Christ. We walked her through some basic questions to see if she understood, and of course she could answer these easily. But then my wife explained to her that when she started a relationship with Christ, it wasn’t simply about “going to heaven”. A relationship with God meant that she would let God have control of every decision she would make in her entire life.

We explained that this was best because God is the only one that knows what will happen in the future, so letting Him direct our choices was the best thing for us, and the only way for us to have true joy on earth. Our adamant, strong-willed daughter was now not so sure. She stated that she wasn't quite ready for that yet, and she ended the conversation.

A few weeks passed with some more intense conversations, and finally she came to us again. This time she was positive that she was ready. We explained the seriousness of giving up control for the rest of our lives to Jesus, but this time she understood as much as a six year old could. She of course doesn't know what it's like to have to move because God calls her to live somewhere else or to end a friendship because it isn't God honoring. But she understood as much as she could at her age, and she was still willing. By this point, we knew we couldn't delay her decision.

Just as we knew she was finally ready, through prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit, you will know when your child is ready too. You are your child's most important partner in the world and you know your child better than any one. You know when your child is serious about something and when they are not. Go with your gut! The Holy Spirit will let you if and when your child is ready.

Discussion Guide

When talking to your kids about salvation, be sure to not pressure them. Many times kids are seeking God and need to ask questions to discover who God is for them self. When they begin to show interest walk them through this discussion:

1. Why do you want a relationship with Christ?
2. What is sin? (Sin is when we disobey God) **Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**
3. What are some examples of sin? (Disobeying parents, lying, cheating stealing, etc). Kids need to understand what sin is in order for them to truly understand why they need a Savior. If they are not able to understand its okay, remember it takes time and for some it takes more time than others.
4. What did Jesus do so that you could be forgiven of your sin? (Jesus lived a perfect life, He sacrificed himself by dying on the cross and three days later he rose again.)

Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God.”

5. Do you believe Jesus did these things for you so that your sins can be wiped away?

Romans 10:10 “For with your heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

6. Kids are always making choices. We as parents make choices too. Sometimes it’s hard to know the right choice to make. Sometimes we make poor choices but Jesus says that we can turn to Him and help us to make better choices in life.

We must stress to our children that just because we make a decision to follow God, we will continue to sin and disobey. It would be impossible to obey God in every single decision we make. Only Jesus never sinned. It's amazing that Jesus always told the truth, always obeyed his parents, always controlled his anger, never stole, and never did anything wrong!

This is a good time to point out and talk about specific areas of our own lives that we as parents struggle with. Share how you've learned to deal with anger or wanting what others have or having friends disappoint us. It should be our goal to show our children that a life of faith is one that is completely dependent on God's forgiveness each and every day. Christianity means we are working to look more and more like Christ as each year passes. Looking like Jesus is our goal because He is the one person that never sinned.

Take time to tell your child how significant this gift from Christ is to them. Jesus's perfect life – His being punished for everything He had never done – made his gift of death on the cross so much more precious to us. If Jesus had sinned when He lived on Earth, He would have been just like you and me. Instead, Jesus loves us and has a special plan for our lives. He was willing to die so that we could have that special life He planned for us.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Finally, lead your child in this simple prayer. Have them repeat it out loud so you can hear their heart.

Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I have disobeyed you and today I want to put my hope and trust in you to forgive me of my sins. I believe that you died on the cross for me. Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross and taking the punishment for all the things I've done wrong. Help me to continue to grow in my relationship with you. I can't wait to see you in heaven someday. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Let your child know that God loves them and their lives will be changed forever! Celebrate with your child and let them know how proud you are! Write the date down on a calendar, or enter it on your smart phone, and let your child know that you will be celebrating their spiritual birthday every year for the rest of their lives!

How Can I Partner With My Church?

Once your child begins the salvation process, include your child's small group leader and Children's Pastor. They want to help guide you and be a resource for you during this important time in your child's spiritual development. They will also be able to pray with you and encourage you as a parent. This also allows your child to see the importance of their small group leader and Pastor in their own spiritual development.

At our church, we inform our small group leaders when a child is scheduled for baptism or when they have accepted Christ so they can celebrate as well. Many times it's a great teaching opportunity in the small group time, not only for the leader, but especially for your child. We encourage kids at our church to personally tell their small group how they accepted Christ and why. The group then prays together. This process allows other kids to ask questions and even offers opportunities for other kids to begin the process of accepting Christ.

And even more exciting, many times a parent will accept Christ in the child's salvation process! I've had many moms and dads come up after we've met with their child and say, "I've been thinking and processing, and I'd like to accept Christ too." So I'll help lead the parent to Christ, and then they are baptized together which is a great family moment. Many dads have come to Christ in this way during my experiences.

What About Baptism?

Baptism is a symbol that shows others your decision to accept Christ. Share the story of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:13-17

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.""

Jesus was baptized to let others know he was God's Son. He didn't need to be baptized for forgiveness, but to let the world know he was the Savior of the world. When a child or anyone is baptized, it's a symbol to let their family, friends, and God know this is a big deal. This allows all of them to celebrate with your family.

I like to use a sports analogy. When we are baptized, it's a way to show everyone whose team we are on. It is as if we are putting on a team jersey with the #1 on the back that says God's team is first. Getting baptized shows that we are on God's team, and we want everyone to know it. God wants everyone to be a part of His team.

I would encourage you or someone in your family to videotape this moment or have the church videotape it. This way your child can have this and be able to share it with their kids and grandkids down the road. This is also a way for you as a parent to remember each year to remind your child how significant this decision is for your child.

We play the video on the day our child was baptized each year and have them recap this significant day. We then honor them by allowing them to pick their favorite place to eat to celebrate with them. Our kids love it and it begins the process of shaping their understanding of this significant decision. You may want to get them a gift as well that symbolizes this moment each year. They could begin a spiritual scrapbook, treasure box, or video montage they can keep to pass down from generation to generation just as Moses taught the people in Deuteronomy. These memories serve as symbols and reminders of how much God loves them and wants the best for their life. They could also receive a new journal, a bookmark, a new quiet time book, or a different translation of the Bible. Remind them each year why they made the decision to give God control of all their life, and reinforce that it's the most important decision they have ever made. Pray for your child as a family each year, and talk about their spiritual goals for the upcoming year.

Never forget that following Christ is a marathon and not a sprint. Don't rush this process. Don't live in fear that you will get this wrong. God has placed you in the life of your child and he will guide you as you lead them to Jesus.

