

# Counseling the Child for Salvation

Counseling for salvation is a series of questions in order to find out what the child understands. It covers a review of God, the need and the way of salvation, personal response to God, assurance of salvation and brief instruction in growth.

## I. Getting Started

- A. Pray.
- B. Put the child at ease (*Use child's name, express you are glad he came to talk with you*).
- C. Counsel according to the child's need.
- D. Keep your vocabulary simple.
- E. Use questions that cannot be answered *yes* or *no*.

## II. Using Questions

- A. Determine why the child responded to the invitation.
  - 1. Ask questions such as:
    - Why did you raise your hand?*
    - Why did you come to talk to me?*
  - 2. A child may respond to the invitation many times because of lack of assurance, unconfessed sin, or the desire for personal attention.
  - 3. Never discourage a child from coming to talk with you—remember: that is why you are there! Ask God the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and discernment to meet the need of each child.
  - 4. If the child has responded for salvation, continue to counsel him using the following steps.
    - Ask: Why do you need the Lord Jesus Christ?*
  - 5. Based on the response to the above question, say something like, "I'm glad you know why you need the Lord Jesus. I'd like to ask you a few questions about what you understand about the Lord Jesus. Let's start with some questions about the one true God."
- B. Check the child's understanding of God.
  - Ask questions such as:
    - Who is God?*
    - What does it mean that God is holy?*

*Does God love you?*

- C. Be sure the child understands his \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation.
1. Ask questions such as:  
*What is sin?*  
*Are you a sinner?*  
*What is God's punishment for sin?*
  2. Show a Bible verse which teaches about sin (Rom. 3:23). Make it personal to the child.
  3. If a child says he has never sinned:
    - a. Show him a verse about sin—Romans 3:23. Let him read the verse with you, and question him as to its meaning. Admit to him your own sin. Put your name in the verse, then have him read the verse with his name in it.
    - b. Talk about times of punishment at home. Explain inward desires to fight, lie, etc. are sin. Look at a Gospel tract with the child to review the way God has made for forgiveness of sin.
    - c. Let him know that when he realizes he is a sinner, he can choose to believe in Christ wherever he is. Pray aloud for him, that God would help him to see his need. Encourage him to come and talk to you again if he chooses. Give him a Gospel tract to read. Send him back to the group.
- D. Be sure the child understands the \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation.
1. Ask questions such as:  
*Who is Jesus?*  
*What did the Lord Jesus do for you?*  
*Why is Jesus the only one who could die for your sins?*  
*What happened to Jesus after He died?*
  2. Show a Bible verse about the death of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 9:22b; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4 or Romans 5:8). Make it personal to the child.
- E. Be sure the child understands what it means to \_\_\_\_\_ on Jesus.
1. Show and read from your Bible the condition-promise verse used for the invitation.
  2. Ask the child, "What does God say you must do?"
  3. Explain God's condition for salvation.
    - a. Explain to the child to believe in Jesus is to put his or her trust completely in Jesus. It is believing that Jesus is the only one who can save him/her from sin.

- b. Explain to the child believing in Jesus is the most important decision he/she will ever make.
  4. Ask the child, "What does God promise He will do?"
  5. Explain God's promise of salvation. Explain the following to the child:  
"When you (*insert terms of condition-promise verse*), God will forgive your sins. Jesus will come into your life right then. He will be with you always and help you live a life that pleases Him. One day you will live with God forever in Heaven."
- F. Ask the child: *Do you believe in the Lord Jesus as the only Savior from your sins?*
1. If the child says, "no," you may need to go back and check his understanding at this point. Ask, "*Is there something you don't understand or have a question about?*"
    - If you discern the child is not ready to believe in Jesus then pray for the child and give him a tract to read that explains the Gospel. Assure the child he may come talk to you again if he has questions. Also remind the child he can put his trust in the Lord Jesus whenever he is ready.
  2. If the child says, "yes," encourage him to respond by talking to God in prayer. You may share the following with the child before he talks to God in his own words (either out loud or silently):
    - Tell God you have sinned and you are sorry.
    - Tell God you believe in (trust) the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for your sin and rose again.
    - Tell God you want to live His way, with His help.

### **III. Teaching after the Child Responds**

- A. Assurance based on the \_\_\_\_\_ .
1. Ask: *If you truly believe in the Lord Jesus, what did He just do for you? How do you know?*
  2. Read the condition-promise verse again. Put the child's name in the verse.
- B. The indwelling Christ.
- The Bible says Jesus comes into your life when you believe in Him. Jesus will never leave you! *Now that Jesus lives in you, He has a special promise for you.* Teach Hebrews 13:5b to the child using his fingers. Ask the child, "Where is Jesus now?"
- C. Teach Hebrews 13:6a to the child using his fingers.

1. Ask the child: *Now that you have Jesus living in you, who will help you say NO to sin? Jesus lives in you to give the power to do what is right.*

**Note:** *Teach this truth from the positive position of victory!*

2. Ask: *If you do choose to sin, what should you do? Let's see what God's Word says.*
  - a. Explain \_\_\_\_\_ phrase by phrase:
    - Confess—to agree that what you have done is sin, to tell on yourself to God.
    - He is faithful and just—God always does what is right and fair.
    - Forgive our sins and cleanse us—If you sin after you believe in Jesus as your Savior, He is still your Savior. But that sin affects your walk with Him. Sin makes you unable to fully enjoy God and live for Him. God the Holy Spirit will let you know when you have sinned because God wants you to walk close with Him. When you confess your sin to God and really mean it, He promises to forgive you.
    - All unrighteousness—the bad things you have done.
  - b. After you have confessed your sins, thank God for His forgiveness. Ask Him for strength to say *no* to that sin the next time. Ask Him if there is someone with whom you need to make things right.

D. First steps of \_\_\_\_\_.

Read 2 Peter 3:18.

1. G—\_\_\_\_\_ to church and Sunday school to worship God with others and learn more about the Lord Jesus and how He wants you to live.
2. R—\_\_\_\_\_ God's Word each day. As time allows, you may want to give the child some helps as to where and how much to read.

Example: Start in the book of Mark, which tells all about the Lord Jesus (show how to find Mark). Read as many verses as your age (8 years old read 8 verses, etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_ about what you're reading in the Bible. You can **pray** other times, too. Prayer is talking to God. Talk to God about what you think and feel, asking Him to help you live how He wants you to live.

3. O—\_\_\_\_\_ God! God, the Holy Spirit, lives in you to give you the power to help you do what is right. (Hebrews 13:5b, 6a)
4. W—\_\_\_\_\_ to others, telling them about what the Lord Jesus has done for them so their sin can be forgiven. Also tell others what Jesus has done for you! Encourage the child to tell another teacher or hostess of his decision.

## IV. Before the Child Leaves

- A. Give him a tract, adding his name and the date. Also give him a *Truth Chasers Club* starter lesson to encourage him to grow to know God better.
- B. Encourage the child to talk to God right now and:
  - 1. Thank God for loving you and saving you from sin.
  - 2. Thank God for helping you live for Him.
- C. Pray for the child by name.
- D. Get his name and address for follow-up if possible—use discretion.

“At every step in leading a child to Christ,  
pray for, look for and expect the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, to  
reveal the truth of the Gospel and to illumine the child’s mind so  
he can grasp the saving truth.” . . . J. Irvin Overholtzer

## Other Counseling Situations

### I. Counseling a Group of Children

- A. Use the same questions you would use with an individual, but direct the questions to different ones in the group. Think of ways to rephrase the same question so that different ones can answer in their own way.

**Examples of questions on sin:**

*Why do you need Jesus, Jimmy?*

*What keeps you from going to Heaven, Sue?*

*What is sin, Bill?*

*What things do boys and girls your age do that are sin, Cathy?*

- B. Try to involve as many of the children as possible in answering the questions by directing them to specific children so the same ones aren't answering all the questions.
- C. Give the children an opportunity to pray silently to express their belief in Christ. ("Have you believed in Jesus for salvation today for the first time?") Provide prompts for children who have believed to silently pray and express belief in Christ in their own words.
- Tell God you have sinned and you are sorry.
  - Tell God you believe in (trust) the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for your sin and rose again.
  - Tell God you want to live His way, with His help.

It is of vital importance that children understand it is not saying certain words that will save them but belief in Jesus as the only one who can save them. After going through assurance of salvation and growth, each child could pray a silent thank-you prayer afterward. Give each child a tract and pray for the group.

### II. Children May Have Other Needs

Sometimes a child may respond to the invitation for reasons other than the need for salvation. In those cases, try to discern the reason, address that reason and send him back to the group. A child may respond to the invitation many times because of:

A. Lack of assurance

1. Go back to the condition-promise verse and check the child's understanding of it. Help him to see that if he has met the condition, God has kept His promise.
2. Talk about God's presence with him, and how that presence is forever.

3. If he is really unsure that he has believed in Jesus as Savior, encourage him to respond to God's invitation now.  
You may ask, "Do you believe now? Would you like to tell God that you believe He is the only way for you to have salvation?"
4. Help the child understand what he can tell God.
5. Have him pray a thank-you prayer to God for saving him.
6. Pray for the child.

#### B. Unconfessed sin

1. Go over 1 John 1:9 with him.
  - Encourage him to confess his sin to God right there while he is with you, then have him pray a thank-you prayer to God for forgiving him.
2. Encourage the child to pray and read the Bible, seeking God's help in times of temptation.
3. Also go over Hebrews 13:5b, 6a with the child to help him see Jesus is with him and the Holy Spirit is there to help him live to please God.
4. Explain to the child that he should pray regularly that God will help him not to sin in his daily life and he can ask God to help him live a life pleasing to God.

#### C. Personal attention

1. Try to give this attention before and during class.
2. Give special jobs for the child to do to help you.
3. Offer to pray with the child concerning his needs.

### **Other needs include:**

#### A. The shy child

1. The shy child may not respond to your questions so be gentle and reassuring.
2. Start with comments like: "I've noticed you have been really listening to the Bible lesson." OR "I'm glad you have come to talk with me today. I like the way you have (*name something you have observed about the child during club*)" – whatever will get him talking to you. Then ease into the subject.
3. Tell him about your salvation experience, then try some of the counseling questions. Tell him he can whisper the answers in your ear.
4. Give him a tract and encourage him to receive Christ when he is ready. Pray aloud for him, and encourage him to come and talk with you another time.

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### B. The child who laughs

He may be laughing because of feelings of guilt about his sin, because of nervousness about talking with you, or just to gain attention.

1. Begin with some non-threatening questions about him to put him at ease. Tell of your decision to trust Christ and its importance to you.
2. Talk about the seriousness of sin and the decision each must make. Ask direct questions of him by name.
3. If problems persist, ask him to wait with the rest of the class and you can counsel him separately.

### C. The child who is being playful and doesn't seem to really be interested in spiritual matters

If you are discerning that the Holy Spirit does not seem to be convicting of sin:

1. Talk about the seriousness of this decision.
2. Give the child the option to listen quietly or return to the group.
3. Give him a Gospel tract.

### D. The dominant child

1. The dominant child may monopolize the conversation.
2. Encourage him to help you counsel the others by letting them answer some of the questions. Direct the questions to specific children by name.
3. If he persists, you may have to counsel him separately.

### E. The child who says he has already believed on Jesus

1. Don't assume this means the child is saved. Ask questions such as, *When did you believe in Jesus? Where were you when you did that? Why did you need to believe in Jesus? What does it mean to you that you believe in Jesus? What did that decision mean to you?* Listen carefully to the child's answers to discern if he truly has received Christ. If you feel he has, find out what need brought him to respond to you today and counsel him for that need.
2. If you feel he has not truly received Christ as Savior or has misunderstood what you mean, proceed with the counseling questions.

### F. The very young child

1. Don't assume he is too young. Use the counseling questions as you would with any other child, shortening or simplifying them if necessary.
2. Use *The Wordless Book* or a preschool tract as a visual aid to help focus his attention.



3. If you discern he is not ready, pray with him that God would help him to continue to want to know God, and that when he is ready he will receive Christ. Invite him to talk with you again.

G. The child who responds to the invitation, but does not come for counseling

1. You will need to be careful in such situations not to pressure or manipulate children into making decisions, but do all you can to make it very easy for them to come to you for counseling and gently encourage them to do so.
2. Approach the child after class in a welcoming way, letting him know you would be glad to talk with him if he would like.

H. Occasionally, you may need to give opportunities for children to express their belief in Jesus for salvation in class time when counseling is not possible. While this is not the ideal approach, a model prayer can be given for the children to repeat. This could be worded as follows:

Dear God, I know I have sinned and I am sorry. I know I deserve to be punished for my sin. I believe Jesus died on the cross for me and came alive again. Thank you that He took my punishment so I can be saved from my sins forever. Help me live to please You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Following the prayer, the teacher might say something like:

If you believed in Jesus as your Savior for the first time today, please show me by (raised hand or other means) so I can pray for you.

**Please note:** *The emphasis in this statement is on the fact that the child believed in Jesus rather than that he said the prayer.*

I. The child who doesn't understand

If you discern the child is not ready, pray with him that God would help him to continue to want to know God and that when he is ready he will receive Christ.

### **Aids to Help You in Guiding Children to Christ**

1. Soul-winning aids (CEF Press®) [cefpress.com](http://cefpress.com)
  - “*The Wordless Book*”
  - “Gospel Flipper-Flapper™”
  - “Gospel Turn Around”
  - “Guiding a Child to the Savior”
2. Tracts (CEF Press)
  - “First Steps”
  - “Heaven . . . How to Get There”
  - “How to Have a Very Special Friend”
  - “God’s Good News”
3. Children’s Ministries Institute® [cefcmi.com](http://cefcmi.com)
  - Training opportunities

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