

Teaching the Gospel to Preschoolers

Overall principles to Know:

- **Vocabulary:** Preschoolers do not know a lot of the words we use in the message of salvation. They will often assume the word you use means a similar word they already know. One preschool child thought I meant “rolls” when I said “rules.” With preschoolers and the Gospel, know that you will need to choose your words carefully and teach meaning of new words. Preschoolers use limited words to answer questions. They feel more comfortable when given choices or in “yes” and “no” questions (yet don’t do when counseling for salvation). Preschoolers understand much more than they can speak.
- **Repetition:** Preschoolers learn and remember through repetition. Using the same words repeatedly, use consistency in your language and presentation. Introduce change or new words and concepts slowly through redundancy. That is repeating a sentence using synonyms. Insure the child knows one concept well before moving to the next concept.
- **Senses:** Preschoolers learn through their 5 Senses: Hearing, Seeing, Touching, Smelling, and Tasting; you will enhance the remembering process when you incorporate all 5 senses into your presentation. (Finger plays, songs, repetition, visuals, snacks, touching smelling.)
- **Motor Skills:** Preschoolers need help with basic motor skills and may not respond to basic commands of standing, sitting... but love to use the new skills they learn. (If you ask preschoolers to raise their hand, the whole class will raise their hand).

Heaven

Avoid: Making comments like, Don’t you want to go to Heaven or You can go to Heaven!
Preschoolers do not want to leave Mommy and Daddy

Do: Say “One day, when your life is over here on earth, you can live with God in His forever home. Your mommy and daddy can live with God too!”

Avoid: The word holy, children will think God has holes in Him!

Do: Say God is perfect, there is nothing bad in God or His home, Heaven.

Do: Explain that Creator means He made you and all people.

Do: Use your Bible and let child point to the Bible verse and repeat words after you, i.e., For God so loved the world....” That means God loves (child’s name).

Song for Heaven: “Heaven is a happy place, happy place, happy place; Heaven is a happy place; God loves you and me! (Tune: Mary had a little lamb)

Sin

Know: Children often think you are saying “sand” or “send” when you say “sin.”

Say: Do you know what sin is? I am not saying sand (like the dirt on the ground) or send (like I will send you a letter), I am saying sin. Sin is wanting your own way that disobeys God’s way.

Do: Use pictures that illustrate a child doing something wrong.

Know: A preschooler is literal minded and if you say sin is breaking God’s rules, they think of something literally breaking.

Do: Use motions to define sin, “Sin (sign language for sin is signing to “x’s and in a circular motion with hands) is wanting your own way (hold hands to chest like you aren’t sharing a toy), that Disobeys (push hands away from you and turn head opposite direction like you are pushing someone away from you and not looking them in the eyes), God’s Way (point up).

Do: Teach that sin is separates (have fist together and pull apart, one upward, one downward until arms are completely straight) you from God (point up).

Do: Say mommy and daddy did not teach us how to sin, all people are born with a want-to to do wrong things.

Do: Show Romans 3:23 and have child repeat verse with you, “For all have sin.”

Know: Many preschoolers will not admit that they sin. In their mind they want to please you and they don’t want to do anything wrong. This is okay, don’t try to pressure a preschool child into admitting he’s done wrong. You can ask, “Have you ever disobeyed your parents like I did when I was little?” The Holy Spirit will convict when it’s time. Your job is to teach and lay a foundation to give the Holy Spirit a platform to work with in the child’s life.

Song for sin: “Oh be careful little eyes what you see...”

Jesus God’s Way

Avoid: Be careful when showing an actual picture of Jesus on the cross. Preschoolers are extremely sensitive and the picture may be very upsetting for some preschoolers.

Do: Consider showing a simple picture of an empty cross instead.

Know: Most preschoolers do not know what we mean when we say tomb or cave. Use a picture to explain a tomb.

Do: Use separate pictures of Jesus as a baby, the cross, the tomb, and risen again. A picture with the pictures all grouped together confuses a preschool child and requires a lot of explanation. A picture with just Jesus head is confusing to a preschool child. Simple pictures work best for preschool children.

Do: Show the Bible verse, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, allow the child to point to verse in Bible and read with you. Use motions: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: *Christ died for my sin (make a cross with fingers), according to the Bible (open palms of hands like Bible); and that He was buried (Push hands downward) and that He rose again (pull hands upward) on the third day (make an okay sign with fingers – representing the 3rd day and the empty tomb), according to the Bible (open palms of hand like a Bible).*

Do: Explain that Jesus willingly took the punishment that God required for the wrong things you and I've done.

Do: Do explain He is God's perfect Son and this is the only way God could save us from the punishment of sin. (Trust God's Holy Spirit to illumine the child's mind and give him understanding, some preschooler will understand right away, others take time, know that it's a process and use God's discernment in sharing with the child.

Song for Jesus: "What can take away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me clean from sin? Gospel Fuzzie: Jesus died for sinners 3x; and He rose again.

Clean Page: The Appropriation

Do : Have child point to John 1:12 and read first part of verse along with you.

Do: Use discernment if a child is ready to understand receiving Christ as Savior. For some preschoolers, just explain that they can tell God they are sorry for the wrong things they do. The clean or white color represents forgiveness for our sin.

Do: Use the concept of the family, a preschooler understands a family much better than the terminology of "saved" or "everlasting life." Say: You can belong to God's forever family, no longer separated (pull your arms apart) but a child of God (bring your hands together). Include the child's parents too!

Avoid: Saying, "Ask Jesus into your heart." This confuses a young child and they think there's a literal Jesus in their heart.

- Do:** Ask simple thought-provoking questions to discern if the child understands the principles. Can you tell me what the word sin means? Can you tell me who Jesus is?
- Do:** If the child is not ready to pray, you can say a prayer for the child. Even if a child is not yet ready to receive Christ, help the child know that they can talk to God and tell him they are sorry for their sin, God will forgive him.
- Know:** Many preschoolers come to salvation; James Dobson trusted Christ at 3; Corrie Ten Boom at 5, we know 2 adult believers who trusted Christ at 2 and 3.
- Do:** Teach assurance if the child is ready, using the Bible verse: Hebrews 13:5-6 with finger motions. (Jesus said, start by holding pinky and say, “I will never leave you.” With each word hold the next finger. For never, repeat 3x holding and bending middle finger). The Lord is my helper. (Start with pinky and go to next finger with each word of the verse. For helper, make the sign language for helper: make a thumbs-up with one hand on top of the palm of other hand. Lift palm upward like helping the thumbs move up.)
- Song for Clean:** Gospel Fuzzie Song: Clean means I’m forgiven (3x); when I trust in Him.

Green: Growing in God’s Forever Family

- Do:** Explain that growing doesn’t mean growing taller but growing to be more like the Lord Jesus in your actions. Is Jesus good or bad? Yes, He is good. We can grow in God’s good way.
- Do:** Use simple pictures to talk about the ways we grow in God’s family.
- Do:** Teach the 3 ways to pray: Help, Thank you, I’m sorry
- Do:** Open Bible to 1 John 1:9 and read first part with child. Explain to confess means “to tell on yourself to God.”

Song for Growing: “Read your Bible and Pray every day”

“Sometimes God Answer “Yes” when I pray; Sometimes God answer “Wait” when I pray; Sometimes God answers “No” just because He loves me so; but I know God always answers when I pray. (Tune: O be careful little eyes what you see.)

- Know:** Children may think that they will literally hear God’s answer. Explain that God doesn’t speak out loud but we have His Spirit, we can’t see or hear God’s Spirit but He is with us when we belong to God’s forever family. Ask, can you see the air we breathe? No, we can’t see it but it’s there and helps us breath. We can’t see God’s Spirit but He is here to help us and guide us.