



COUNSELING CHILDREN ABOUT
CONVERSION

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I. THE COUNSELOR'S QUALIFICATIONS

a. **Must be a born-again Christian who has been Scripturally baptized and is a member of the church**

b. **Must have a love and concern for the souls of children** (Matt. 18:1-7) - ... 4 *"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* 5 *"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.* 6 *" But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea....*

c. **Must believe in miracles** - salvation is a miracle!

d. **Must have a sound theology of the doctrine of salvation** - in other words, you must know what conversion really is.

II. INITIAL QUESTIONS FROM A CHILD

a. **Children will almost always begin asking questions about conversion before they are ready to make their surrender to Christ public or to be baptized.**

b. **These questions are most often prompted by life experiences** so it is important to know something of the child's background, family and circumstances of life.

Consider these principles:

1. **Each question deserves an answer.** When it comes to questions about one's salvation there are no unimportant questions. We want children to feel welcome in our church - whenever possible we should give them special attention.

2. **Questions should be answered immediately, whenever possible.** It is not necessary to tell a child "everything" you know on a given subject. Simple and straightforward answers are always best. Some things may need to be referred to the parents - but if you can give a quick and simple answer, do so.

3. **Find out *why* the child is asking the question.** Ask the child to explain him/herself to you. Don't assume the child is really under conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. If the questions are coming out of a genuine feeling of guilt for sin and a desire to make

a personal surrender to Christ you can help the child understand and deal with their feelings.

KEY: Many children come forward (or make a decision) because they see that others "get attention" when they go forward or request counseling. Remember, as a general rule children want to please adults. (This changes when they become teens!!!) This is especially critical to understand with a child who is coming from a broken home or some other difficult circumstances in their home life. If their parents (or guardians) give them little or no attention at home they will readily respond to such attention at church.

4. **Be open and available for children.** They need to feel an ability to come back and discuss their spiritual needs later, especially if they do not make a public surrender to Christ in the current situation. Make sure the child knows that you or someone at church will always be available to them.

III. COUNSELING CHILDREN AT THE TIME OF SURRENDER TO CHRIST AS LORD

a. **Remember, this is the most important event of their life!**

b. **Genuine conversion is accompanied by a feeling of guilt and sorrow.**

c. **The child must understand that sin keeps him/her from having a right relationship with God.** Their relationship with God is the important factor - we aren't asking them to be or become religious.

d. **They will need to understand the difference in sin and sins.** They will still commit sins after they are saved but their attitude about sin will change.

e. **They must understand what it means to submit or surrender to Jesus as Lord of their life.** Yielding to Him as Boss, Ruler, or Master is something they need to understand. This means living to please God rather than living selfishly and doing what one chooses without caring how it affects others.

KEY: You might explain this as a promise to always try to

please God and allow Him to be in charge of one's life.

f. This is a life-long commitment! It is really surrender of the entire personality to God. Your task is to help determine if the child is ready to make such a full surrender of their life. Don't make it too complicated but you be certain that as best they can the child realizes they are making a significant and long term yielding to Christ as Savior and Lord (Luke 9:23).

g. Obedience is needed and expected of the Christian. John 14:15 is an important verse. *If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

h. Get on the child's level (physically) if you can. Kneel or sit so that you can look the child in the face.

i. Use the simple Romans Road (or ABCs of becoming a Christian):

A. - ADMIT TO GOD THAT YOU ARE A SINNER, REPENT TURNING AWAY FROM YOUR SIN

Rom. 3:23 - all are sinners - *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Rom. 6:23a - the penalty for sin is separation from God - *For the wages of sin [is] death,*

Rom. 2:4 - Repent, turn from your sin to God, - *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?* (See also Acts 3:19-20 and 1 John 1:9)

B. BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS GOD'S SON AND THAT HE DIED FOR YOU

Rom. 5:8 - Jesus died for you so that your sin could be forgiven, - *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom. 10:9-10 - You must believe that Jesus died and then rose again from the dead, - *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto*

righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (See also, Eph. 2:8-9; John 1:11-13; 14:6; Acts 4:12)

C. - CONFESS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD

Rom. 10:9-10, 13 - *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

The most important part of the salvation experience is confessing Christ as LORD of one's life. While it is essential to repent of your sins and place your complete faith and trust in Jesus, and Him alone, the key is giving control of your life to Jesus Christ. This includes a willingness to obey Him for the rest of your life.

IV. FOLLOW UP WITH PARENTS - This is primarily a responsibility of the pastoral staff but you may be called on to visit in the homes of parents of children who make professions of faith. We should not baptize or receive for membership any child unless we have the permission of a parent. This is a great opportunity for us to develop prospects for the church and to reach lost moms and dads with the gospel. Your willingness to visit and share Christ with parents of children who make professions of faith will be a great benefit to the Kingdom work we are attempting to do.

V. KNOWING YOUR CHILDREN ARE SAVED LATER IN LIFE. One of the most frequently asked questions deals with how to know that your child's (or for that matter, your own) childhood conversion is genuine. There are two errors parents make in regard to their children confessing Christ. One is to push them forward too soon, the other is to hold them back too long. When is the right time? The parent is in the best position to know, especially if the parents are themselves committed Christians.

I used to insist that children articulate to me the plan of

salvation before I would baptize them. But I realized that a child can know the facts of salvation and yet remain lost. I also realized that a child can be intimidated by the pastor or a leader in the church, but be perfectly able to receive Christ and express that to their parents in the privacy of their home. Parents should insist that the child be able to express the ABC's of becoming a Christian to them without the aid of "yes" and "no" answer questions. Children are able to explain the simple truths of salvation and if they have received the Holy Spirit He will help them!

When a child is saved there is often little difference that can be seen in their actions, words, and attitude. You should notice some difference but it will not be significant. They will still do childish things. ***You must look for the fruit later in their life.*** If they begin to live selfishly and without regard to the things of God, having no interest in the church, then you should be concerned and question them as regards their relationship with the Lord. When they become teenagers do they have hunger and thirst for the things of God? Does sin, wrong actions and attitudes, generate a sense of godly sorrow? Can they behave rudely and ungodly and yet seem not to care? If that is so, do not count on the fact that they were truly converted as a child. One important fact to remember - children will generally have no more interest in the church and the things of God than their parents do!

There are several good books on the subject of the security of one's salvation.

Salvation, Real or Counterfeit - Bill Sturm

How to Be Sure I'm A Christian - Don Whitney

Saved Without a Doubt - John MacArthur

What in the World is a Christian - John Blanchard

May God's grace and guidance be real to you as you deal with the precious children God has entrusted to your care regarding their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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