

E-Tips: The Collection: **“The Baker’s Dozen!”**

By Barney Kinard

From over forty years of conducting evangelistic ministry with children, Rev. Barney shares these “E-Tips,” tips about evangelism of children taken right out of ministry experience with children. For more information about his children’s ministry go to www.Kidhelper.com

E-Tip #1, Always Present the Gospel Clearly to Kids

Any valid presentation of God’s plan of salvation to kids should include these historical gospel facts:

1. God loves us and He sent His only Son to die on the cross for all our sins.
2. Jesus was buried, proving He died.
3. God miraculously raised His Son from the dead, proving God had power over sin and death, so can we.
4. Jesus appeared alive to others as a witness for our faith, so we could live for Him and be a witness too.

When children personally receive Jesus and believe His finished work “was done” personally for them, He graciously forgives them and makes them a part of His forever family. Let us be sure our presentations of the gospel are clear for kids.

E-Tip #2, Use Words that Children Understand! (Child friendly words)

When sharing the Gospel with children, use words that are “child appropriate.” The “rule of thumb” is...only use large words that you explain! This keeps you from complicating the gospel message for kids by speaking over their heads. The older the messenger becomes the easier it is to use “adult” words. It is best to consider your words that you are not misunderstood by the children. Our message is that important and we need to measure our words to match our audience.

There are many adult words that rich with meaning for leader who will dig out the meaning for children. Often they contain word pictures that can be illustrated with good visual aids. Do not be afraid to use adult words, the caution is to explain them. If you can explain difficult words and concepts to children, the adults will get more out of what you are saying. Charles H. Spurgeon said, “Blessed is he who can so speak as to be understood by a child.” *Come Ye Children*, p.7

It is like “putting your cookies on the lowest shelf.” Our message must be available for even the children to easily take the patten we serve. We represent our Lord here. It is true that “faith comes by hearing!” (See Rom 10:10-14) But kids must understand what they hear, in order to believe.

E-Tip #3, Avoid Mixing Metaphors in Gospel Messages with Children

The Bible message contains numerous metaphors that can clearly communicate the message of God to children. A metaphor is a figure of speech that contains an implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used for one thing and is applied to another. (i.e., Jesus is the bread of life or we are the sheep of His pasture, or we must be born again!)

The danger in communicating with children is “mixing metaphors,” that is, using two or more different types of metaphors in the same message. We might be teaching children about Jesus being our Shepherd, and we want to t children to understand that they are his sheep. Then we “tack on” the invitation about “being born again,” which we had not included or explained in the body of the message. This can add much confusion, especially to younger children. Thus, a congruent Gospel presentation for children tends to present one metaphor throughout and the invitation uses the language of that metaphor.

E-Tip #4, Integrate All Your Procedures with Children

In children's evangelism, the gospel message, the way of giving the invitation, the counseling procedure and follow-up procedures need to have continuity. That is, each of these needed procedures requires careful thought and preparation. I have observed some whose approach leaves these four thrusts as mutually exclusive and not related well to each other. There is no coordination plan!

Primarily, this is because different persons are involved with these areas—the speaker, counselor, follow-up person and the host group leadership.

The solution to this lack of continuity is “required training,” which involves all the participants. We must all be on the “same page” in children's evangelistic work, no matter how experienced the participants are in ministering with children. Only in a required training meeting will this continuity take place. You might call it “teamwork!”

Our evangelistic approach should flow from one procedure into the next, as though it is “one-orchestrated process” for the child. It should not be four different unrelated procedures with different language and different required responses. In other words, our procedures “fit together, as one plan.” We are in this evangelistic event together!

After you write out your message, try writing out your invitation, your counseling procedure and your follow-up plan. It must fit together as “one-seamless” procedure that involves all the participants without contradiction, nor complexity. Then train your team in your “required” procedures.

E-Tip #5, Avoid “Tacked-On” Invitations with Children

The salvation invitation for children should never be “tacked on” without being preceded by an adequate presentation of the gospel message. If the Holy Spirit is at work, there is no need to plead, beg or coerce the children to respond. If the Holy Spirit has not preceded the invitation and prepared the hearts, then one should not proceed in their own strength trying to make something happen. “Tacking on” a gospel invitation without the proper message is more

about the messenger's lack of preparation than it is about the child's lack of response.

We have observed a messenger presenting a good Christian-life message. However, in his concluding remarks, he offered an invitation, with no response. Instead of ending right there, he then expanded his invitation to ask for a response for salvation, with no response. There was no gospel message presented to support this invitation. It was just “tacked on” at the end. In our opinion, this is wrong for children's ministry. We should not emulate this “tacked-on” invitation procedure.

E-Tip #6, Give the Invitation First

Giving an invitation to a group of children is like a delicate operation. You need to be prepared and know what you are doing. From our own experience, we would urge messengers to begin giving the invitation at the beginning of the gospel message. By stating the words of the invitation early in the message prepares them to respond at the end of the message. The terminology will be familiar and you will have the body of the message to explain that message. Be sure that the gospel message that you want the children to respond to is succinct and clear. It is important for children that you explain words and concepts clearly in the body of the message.

An invitation to children is more like a message summary or review. You are repeating what you have already said. Therefore, new words or concepts should not be presented at the end of the message, i.e., during the closing gospel invitation. What you say “last” is the same thing that you have been saying from the “first.” Avoid isolating the invitation at the end—it does not “stand alone.” Share the invitation throughout the message, so when you get to the end, you have said this same message. The gospel invitation then, is an extension of this message. It will help the children know exactly what you are asking them to do.

E-Tip #7, Prepare for Satan's Attack in Children's Evangelism

The invitation is the enemy's "front line of attack." Here is where the enemy tries the hardest to bring confusion or disruption.

Satan knows if he can hinder the invitation, another child will not surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. Be aware, this is his last chance to prevent children from moving from darkness to light. Therefore, pray for a demonstration of God's power during an invitation.

Be purposeful and strategic by how this invitation procedure will work and build in safeguards to prevent disruption, i.e., like people moving a round in the room or opening the back doors during the invitation. The enemy looses when we anticipate and prepare for his tricks in the name of Jesus. Trained workers should be prayerful and vigilant at this time. A good defense is a prepared offense!

E-Tip #8, Determine Why the Child Came Forward

When giving an invitation to children in large groups, it is important for the counselor to determine why the child has come forward. Usually we ask, "What would you like to ask Jesus to do for you?" or "Where would you like to ask Jesus to come?" These questions assume a clear presentation of the gospel and a clear invitation. Therefore, these questions will not be too threatening (because the speaker used these same words earlier). This question will assist you in determining the child's readiness for salvation.

By not dealing with "why" the children came forward, you may be trying to solve the wrong problem. Once, I counseled a child to receive the Lord, before I found out that he had already done that. What he really wanted was someone to pray for his sick grandmother. I learned from that experience!

Do not always assume that the child is coming forward for counseling with only one reason.

If a child seems to falter with answering your leading question, just review what the invitation words were again (just as the speaker said) and then ask the question again. Sometimes, the review helps the child to focus what you want, especially younger children.

E-Tip #9, Avoid "Another Sermon" in the Counseling Time with Kids

Counselors dealing with children for a salvation decision should avoid the urge to teach "too much" new material—material not taught in the evangelistic sermon. Adopting the same gospel words of the evangelist and trying to integrate them in the counseling process is preferred. This avoids confusion and helps the children understand the gospel clearly.

This problem usually occurs when too many children respond to the invitation and we lack trained counselors. We could fail to recruit and train enough counselors. Even the speaker might fail to advise the leaders of his intention to give a gospel invitation. Thus, the response of "too many children," causes the leaders to draft "last minute" untrained counselors. They are tempted to add their "own sermon" material during this counseling time. The clue that this is happening is when the counselor takes "way too long" for the counseling time.

Too much new material or "another sermon" at the counseling time is usually an indication that the counselor was either unprepared, untrained or feels they knew better than the leaders who set the standards for this counseling, by having their own procedure instead.

One way to solve this problem is to have ample trained workers on "stand-by" alert to be called in as needed. Having more helpers than you need is never a problem for your ministry. Not having enough trained will always present some problems.

E-Tip #10, Encourage the Child to "Pray Out Loud"

It is preferred, when a child prays to invite "Christ into their life," that they pray out loud with their counselor. Praying out loud has three basic advantages.

1. It insures that the child is actually praying a prayer to accept Christ.
2. It provides a model for how to pray, since many children do not know how.
3. It helps the counselor to pace his "follow-along prayer" to the ability of the child to repeat it.

The following is a suggested model prayer that we require our crusade counselors to use. You are welcome to adapt this one for your own evangelistic work with the children. You might say something like this...

“Let us ask Jesus to come in right now! You can pray out-loud right after me. OK? You just pray what I pray. You make my prayer, your prayer. I will lead you.”

“Dear Jesus, I know that I have done many things wrong. I am sorry for the things that I have done. I learned today that you died on the cross for all my sins. You have been knocking on the door of my life and I want to let you come in. Come into my life, right now! I thank you, Jesus, for coming into my life, right now. Thank you for forgiving me. Help me to learn more about you. Help me to live for you. Help me to go the Sunday school and Church. Thank you for helping me to *know* that you now live in my life. I want to live with you forever in Heaven someday. Thanks for answering my prayer today, in Jesus name, amen!”

E-Tip #11, Help the Children with Assurance

To help children who have just prayed to receive Christ into their lives, we recommend that you introduce them to how they can “know for certain” that Jesus is in their lives. We use our hand as a mnemonic device to help children remember what they just asked Jesus to do for them.

Hold your hand out with five fingers extended up and say, “I will never leave you.” (Point to each finger that represents each of the five words.) Then repeat this, “I will never leave you” again and add, Jesus said, “I will never leave you.” Use a few examples of what might happen to them (like getting sick, going to the principal) and then ask, “Would Jesus leave you, if that happened? They would say, “No!” Then you add, because He said, “I will never leave you.” Each time you say this, emphasize a different word.

“He will never leave you.” (It is a promise!)
“He will never leave you.” (It’s impossible!)
“He will never leave you.” (Now that is forever!) “He will always stay with you,” even though you do something terrible. What can

your hand help you remember? “I will never leave you!”

E-Tip #12, Assist the Child to Share their First Testimony

Encourage the child to tell someone else what he or she just asked Jesus to do for him or her. Avoid telling the child’s testimony when they need to do it themselves. The Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!” What are they to say? Say, “They are redeemed!” If you say it for them, they may learn that they do not have to give a witness to what just happened to them. Getting the children to give their first testimony can be awkward, but with some preparation, we can make it very easy for them.

It is best that we introduce our new friend to the lead counselor or leader, even the speaker by saying—“This is Jimmy and he has something he wants to tell you.” This friend is primed to ask, “Did you just pray with Mrs. Jones? “Did you just ask Jesus to come someplace?” Where did you just ask Jesus to come? The child will reply, “Into my life” or “into my heart,” depending on how the gospel presentation was made and explained. “Wonderful,” you continue, so where is Jesus now?” “Inside me,” they should say! “That’s really great!”

You visually get excited for them, showing them your happiest face. Then take them to the speaker who repeats the same procedure, which reinforces the decision of the child.

The child has given three testimonies before he ever leaves the venue. This is a very memorable procedure for the child. They do not soon forget what happened to them.

E-Tip #13, Provide Take-Home Materials for Follow Up

We recommend the Born Again Birthday Book. This handy little booklet is just perfect for helping the new child convert get started right in their new faith. It not only reviews their decision; it provides them with help with the first steps in discipleship and follow-up. The ideal follow up tool for children who have just prayed with you to receive Christ. The Born Again Birthday Book has helped thousands of

children grow in the Lord, share their new life with their friends, and build a daily walk with God. In 24 brightly illustrated pages it reviews the meaning of salvation. It explains the six “happy” birthday gifts God gives all who are born again. It encourages witnessing and church attendance. It gives a special message to mom and dad. It also includes 6 cutout memory verses in the back.

Having a resource that is complimentary to your gospel presentation is recommended. It provides structure and uniformity for the counselors working with the children. The benefits are many.

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