There is no greater thrill for a teacher of God's Word to children than when a little boy or girl comes and intimates, in some way, that he or she wishes to be saved. What a joy it is to sit down with such a child and gently and carefully lead him or her to the Saviour.

In this book you will be taken systematically through the steps to be followed. Emphasis is placed upon the need for conscientious prayer and preparation before engaging in such a work. Care must be taken never to violate the child's will and we must never seek to force a 'decision'.

These guidelines will help you have confidence in leading children to trust Christ. They give the child the opportunity to share what he knows, thinks, and wants. May you have the joy of leading little ones to the Saviour.

This is also a book that teachers of teachers will find helpful in preparing others to lead children to Christ.

Child Evangelism Fellowship Inc.
Specialized Book Ministry
Assisting Children's Evangelists Worldwide
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U-Can Lead Children to Christ

Dr Sam Doherty



U can

Lead Children to Christ

A step by step guide for counsellors of children

Dr Sam Doherty

U-can Lead Children to Christ

A simple step-by-step guide for counsellors of children



Dr. SAM DOHERTY, BA,EdD.

A series of short 'U-can' training manuals for children's workers:

U-can Know God's Plan for Children
U-can Evangelize children
U-can Teach a Bible Lesson
U-can Lead Children to Christ
U-can Help Christian Children to Grow
U-can Counsel a Christian Child

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FOREWORD

Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones wrote "To a preacher there is nothing so wonderful as to feel the unction of the Holy Spirit while preaching, and to hear of souls being brought under conviction of sin, and then experiencing the new birth."

There is no greater thrill for a children's worker than when a little boy or girl comes and intimates in some way that he or she wishes to be saved. What a joy it is to sit down with such a child and gently lead him or her to the Saviour.

Of course this is not just a mechanical or intellectual exercise. We are not miraculous spiritual midwives who can usher children into the kingdom. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and great tact and wisdom are necessary for the soul winner. This book on "*U-can lead a Child to Christ*" gives good advice on how to tackle the task. Here are excellent guidelines; here is instruction of the greatest merit. This little book should be an essential part of the tools of all children's workers and Sunday school teachers. Indeed it will be a great help to anyone who deals with souls of whatever age.

The reader is taken systematically through the steps to be followed. Emphasis is placed upon the need for conscientious prayer and preparation. Yet in the final analysis it is clearly shown that "Salvation is of the Lord." The counsellor must never violate the child's will—and must never seek to force a "decision."

I wish such a book had been available to me in my early evangelistic endeavours.

I can think of no one more qualified to write a book on "You can lead a Child to Christ" than Sam Doherty. Sam had a definite call to children's evangelism shortly after he was saved 46 years ago. Since that time he has faithfully sought to bring the Gospel

to boys and girls and God has used him in the salvation of many young souls.

I have had the privilege of working with Sam for 45 years. I have watched him at work with children, and also as he has instructed others in this work. I have never met anyone more capable.

My prayer is, firstly, that God will use this little book to be a challenge to many to take up the task of evangelizing children and, secondly, that it will be a great help and blessing to those already engaged in this most important work.

David McQuilken
National Director,
Child Evangelism Fellowship
of Ireland 1965–1995
September 1995

INTRODUCTION

The children's meeting was over. In their usual noisy manner the children were leaving the room. The teacher breathed a sigh of relief. Another Good News Club was finished—and it had gone quite well. She was tired and was looking forward to a quick journey home, a nice meal and a well earned rest.

Almost all the children had left. She had gathered together her teaching materials and was ready to go. Then she saw Terry—an eight year old who came every week to Good News Club, and always seemed to listen well when she was teaching. She had noticed that he had been paying careful attention to all she had said that afternoon in Good News Club.

He was standing near the door, nervously moving his weight from one foot to the other, and watching her.

"Did you want something Terry?" she asked kindly. "Can I help you?"

Terry swallowed several times and then blurted out, "Yes, Miss. I would like to be saved. Could you please show me how I could?" He stopped and looked at her.

The teacher's mind and thoughts began to whirl, "What do I do now?" she thought. "How can I lead him to Christ? I have never done anything like this before."

This book is written for teachers like the one described above. It is short, simple and systematic; and its goal is to help you know how to be an effective counsellor of children and how to lead a child to Christ.

The second section outlines the ten principles which the counsellor of children needs to understand—to a lesser or a greater

extent—if his counselling ministry is going to be effective; and the ten steps which he needs to follow when he is counselling a child.

Perhaps you are like the teacher mentioned above, and you have never done this before. Or perhaps you have, but you realise your need for more help in how to be a better counsellor. We should all want our ministry to be as effective as possible; and we need to keep examining what we are doing to see if we can improve it.

If what is outlined in the pages which follow is a help to you, in any way, the purpose of the book will have been achieved.

The contents of this book are based firstly upon biblical principles. The Bible gives us much help in this vital matter of leading a child to Christ; and all we do and say must be based upon the Word of God.

Then, secondly, most of what is written in this book is based upon my own personal experience of having counselled many, many children during more than 55 years of working with Child Evangelism Fellowship. I have also taught the contents of the book to thousands of children's workers and students from many countries, and they have indicated that it has been a great help to them in their ministry.

I should point out, however, that this book outlines how to counsel children concerning salvation under favourable conditions. You will need to adapt these guidelines to whatever situation you find yourself in. For example, you might discover that the child you are counselling has very little Bible background, and that this makes it difficult for him to follow and understand all you might want to say. In this case you may need more than one counselling session with him.

But it is, I believe, a help to have an "ideal" plan for counselling and to be ready to use it. Then, if circumstances demand it, you can adapt it to your own particular situation.

For the sake of convenience I will use the personal pronoun "he" for the counsellor of children. I appreciate that many (if not most) of those who work with children, and who are involved in a counselling ministry to them, are women—and I praise God for every one of you. But I am sure you will not object to me using

the masculine pronoun. Apart from the convenience of just using one gender I trust it will also underline the need to see more men involved in a ministry to children!

I trust and pray that this book will be a help to you, my dear reader and worker among children.

Some of you may have the opportunity to teach this subject to a group of teachers—using this book as a guide and as a text book. If so, I would suggest that you would need at least four teaching sessions of one hour each, if you are to teach it thoroughly. You could deal with chapters 1 and 2 in one session. And then take three sessions for chapter 3.

In addition, you should have at least one public demonstration of counselling—with yourself as the counsellor and one of the students as the child. Also you could ask the students to counsel one another at some time outside of class. Practice makes perfect.

An evaluation form is included starting on page 56. This could be filled in by the student counselled to help the counsellor see the mistakes he has made.

If you are invited to speak to a group of teachers and have been given, say, one hour to do so, I would suggest that you present, and explain after a brief introduction, the ten steps to be taken when counselling a child as outlined in chapter 3 of section II.

Section I

Preparation for Counselling

- Four Truths about Children to Believe
- Two Kinds of Children to Teach
- Four Responsibilites to Children to Accept

Chapter 1:
Four Truths About Children to Believe

The very first step in a ministry to children – before we teach them, evangelise them or counsel them – is to understand what the Bible teaches us about them. This subject is dealt with in more detail in *"U-can Know God's Plan for Children"* – and especially the book entitled *"What the Bible Teaches About Children"*. But, as a preparation for your counselling ministry, I would like to remind you of four basic Bible truths about children.

1. Children Can Be Saved

It is possible for children, even young children, to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

- God tells us in His Word that a child can truly believe and be saved.
  - ✓ It is possible for a little one to trust, or believe in, Jesus Christ. *"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."* (Matthew ch.18,v6)
  - ✓ It is possible for a child to set his hope in God. *"That the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born. That they may arise and declare them to their children. That they may set their hope in God."* (Psalm 78, v 6-7a).
  - ✓ It is possible for a child to fear God. *"Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law."* (Deuteronomy 31, v 12).

✓ It is possible for a child, even a little child, to respond to the Word of God. *"Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel! Samuel! And Samuel answered, Speak for your servant hears."* (1st Samuel 3, v 10).

✓ Children are included in the "Whoever" of John 3 v16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* And they are also included in many other similar verses, provided they trust the Lord Jesus. There is no age limit and no other qualification is required.

➢ Experience shows us that children can trust Jesus Christ and be saved. Many Christians, including a large number of pastors, missionaries and well known Christians, date their conversion from childhood.

➢ Many Christian teachers have expressed their clear conviction that children can be saved – including men like Charles Spurgeon, D.L. Moody and Billy Graham.

2. Children Need To Be Saved

It is NECESSARY for children to be saved – if they are to possess eternal life and be sure of Heaven.

The Bible teaches several key truths about children and their spiritual needs.

➢ All children are spiritually dead until they trust Jesus Christ and receive spiritual life.

"*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."* (Ephesians 2, v1).

"*Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved.)"* (Ephesians 2, v5).

➢ All children are born with a sinful nature which, as they grow, demonstrates itself in sinful acts. *"Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."* (Psalm 51, v5). *"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone*

to his own way." (Isaiah 53, v6a). *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3, v23).

➢ All children are outside the Kingdom of God until they are born again – and they are lost as far as their position is concerned. In John 3, v3 Jesus answered Nicodemus, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountain to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray." (Matthew 18, v11-13).

➢ Children who are old enough to reject Jesus Christ are under God's condemnation until they trust Him and are saved. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* (John 3, v36).

➢ Children who have not reached the age of accountability and cannot understand what sin is, and what they need to do to be saved, are spiritually dead (see Point 1); are sinners (see Point 2); and are outside God's Kingdom (see Point 3).

➢ But they are not yet under God's condemnation because they have not consciously rejected God and His Salvation. *"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* (John 3, v18 -19).

But we do not know when that age of accountability is. So we need to evangelise all the children and leave the

results in God's Hands. *"And He said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* (Mark 16, v15).

3. Children Are Open To The Gospel

It is relatively SIMPLE for a child to trust Jesus Christ and be saved. The Bible makes it clear that children are more open to the Gospel than adults.

- The Bible teaches that adults must become like children before they can be saved. *"Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 18,v3). *"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter in."* (Mark 10, v15).

But a child is already a child. He already is simple, trustful and dependent (unlike adults), and God can use their childlike qualities to lead them to Jesus Christ.

- The Bible teaches that childhood is the best time to trust Jesus Christ, before hearts become really hard. *"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation. A generation that did not set their heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God".* (Psalm 78, v7-8). *"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them."* (Ecclesiastes 12, v1).
- The Bible teaches that what a child receives from God's Word can have a deep and lasting effect on his life. *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."* (Proverbs 22, v6). *"And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."* (2nd Timothy 3, v15).

- Statistics show us that most people are saved in childhood or in their teenage years. The older a person is the harder his heart becomes and the less likely he is to trust Jesus Christ.
"*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years.*" (Hebrews 3, v 7-8)

- Experience working with children proves that they are more open and responsive to our teaching than adults (and even more responsive than teenagers).

4. A Child Saved Is A Life Saved

It is good for children to trust Jesus Christ and be saved. They have their whole lives to live. A child saved is not just a soul saved – it is a life saved.

- The Bible teaches that it is good for a person to remember, trust and obey God when he is young. "*It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.*" (Lamentations 3, v27). "*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them. While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain.*" (Ecclesiastes 12, v1-2).

- The Bible includes testimonies of those who started to walk with God while they were young – and the blessing it brought to them and to others. "*For you are my hope, O Lord God, You are my trust from my youth.*" (Psalm 71, v5). "*O God you have taught me from my youth, and to this day I declare Your wondrous works.*" (Psalm 71, v17). "*And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.*" (1st Kings 18, v12).

➢ The Bible includes a number of pictures and examples of great men of God who first started to walk with God when they were children, e.g. Samuel and Josiah. *"Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel! Samuel! And Samuel answered, speak for your servant hears." "So Samuel grew and the Lord was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground."* (1st Samuel 3 v.10,19*). "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young" (speaking of Josiah) "he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images."* (2nd Chronicles 34, v3). And a number of others, like Daniel, Joseph, Isaac and Timothy, also started to walk with God when they were still young.

➢ Many spiritual giants throughout church history were saved as children or youths – and God blessed them and their ministry for many years. E.g. Jonathan Edwards, Stephen Olford, Matthew Henry, Jim Elliot, Corrie Ten Boom, Charles Spurgeon, and Isaac Watts.

SUMMARY

The Bible teaches us four main truths about children.
➢They CAN be saved
➢They NEED to be saved
➢They are OPEN to the Gospel
➢It is GOOD for them to be saved.

Chapter 2:
Two Kinds of Children to Teach

If we follow on logically from our teaching in chapter one, we will come to an important conclusion which will greatly affect our ministry to the children.

There Are Two Kinds Of Children

It is obvious from the teaching of the Word of God about children, which we have already examined, that there must be two kinds of children - no more or no less. Consequently, every child you teach falls into one of these two groups.

- We have seen firstly that there are children who have not trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and we learned several facts about them.
  - ✓ They are spiritually dead
  - ✓ They have a sinful nature which shows itself in sinfulacts
  - ✓ They are outside God's Kingdom
  - ✓ If they have reached the age of accountability they are under God's condemnation

These children need Jesus Christ as their Saviour and they need to be evangelized. "*And He*" (the Lord Jesus) "*said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16, v15-16).

- Then, secondly, there are children who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They are now different from the first group.

- ✓ They are spiritually alive (Ephesians 2, v1)
- ✓ They still have a sinful nature – but God has changed them(2nd Corinthians 5, v17)
- ✓ They are inside God's kingdom (Colossians 1, v13)
- ✓ They are saved (Acts 16, v31); all their sins are forgiven (Acts 13, v39); they have eternal life (John 3, v16).

These children do not need to be evangelized. They have spiritual life. What they need now is spiritual food so that they can grow spiritually.
"*As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.*" (1st Peter 2, v2). "*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (2nd Peter 3, v18).

You Have Two Responsibilites And Ministries

You, as a teacher of God's Word to children, have therefore two responsibilities and two goals:

➢ First of all, God wants you to evangelize the children who are unsaved (Mark 16, v15). You want to see each of them trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; and you will make this your goal, both in your prayers for them , and your teaching ministry to them.
In other words, you will be a fisherman! You will be "fishing" for children who are not saved. Your first and primary role is that of an evangelist and you want to apply your teaching of God's Word to the unsaved children to encourage and enable them to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. You will also want to counsel unsaved children who want to trust the Lord Jesus and do not know how to do so.
The Lord Jesus called Simon Peter to be such a fisherman. "*Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4, v19).

➢ Your second responsibility is to feed the children who are saved (Acts 20, v28). You want them to grow spiritually, so

you need to apply your teaching of God's Word to each of them, so that the result will be spiritual growth.

The Lord Jesus called Peter three years after his first call – to be a shepherd:
"Feed My lambs ... feed My sheep ... feed my sheep" (John 21, v15-17).

Every teacher and children's worker has therefore two ministries and two responsibilities:

- To fish (or evangelize)
- To feed (or edify)

Chapter 3:
Four Responsibilities to Children to Accept

In the light of the previous two chapters we can now see, in a little more detail, what must be involved in a ministry to children – and we can conclude that we have four responsibilities to accept and four steps which we need to take . We shall look at them one by one.

We Must Evangelize The Children

➢ Evangelism involves and includes two responsibilities
You need to TEACH children the truths of the Gospel. These include the following:-

- ✓ that God is holy and that He loves sinners
- ✓ that they are sinners separated from God
- ✓ that Jesus Christ died and took the punishment for their sins
- ✓ that He rose again from the dead and is Lord of Lords
- ✓ that they need to be willing to turn from their sin
- ✓ that they need to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour
- ✓ that, if they do, all their sins will be forgiven and they will be changed

➢ You need to CHALLENGE and invite the children to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour. You need to pray that the children will respond to this invitation and that it will challenge their hearts. This may take place during the meeting or perhaps afterwards. But there should be absolutely no pressure put on the children to respond.

We Must Make Ourselves Availale To Concerned Children

You need to make yourself available to unsaved children who have questions or who need personal help in knowing how to trust Christ. There may be children in your class who would like to be saved, but do not know how to be saved, or are confused, or have questions. These children need personal help and you should let them know that you are nearby and willing to help them on a one-to-one basis. Tell them what they need to do if they want help.

You would, for example, say to the children ... *"If there is a boy or girl here who has never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and would like to – but is not yet sure how to – I would be glad to speak with you and help you after the meeting. When the other boys and girls are leaving just remain in your seat and I will come and sit with you and show you how you can trust the Lord Jesus."*

This opens the door for children who need and want help – but it does not put any pressure on them.

We Must Counsel The Child Who Wants Help

This is the subject of this book - and I wanted you to see where this ministry of counselling fits into your overall ministry to children – and how it is an essential part of your evangelism to them.

We Must Help Saved Children To Grow

And this is the next, and logical, step for us to take. If children have trusted Jesus Christ "on their own" in, or after, the meeting, or if we have led them personally to Christ, their spiritual life has just begun. They are just "babes in Christ" and it is our responsibility to feed them and help them to grow.

Four Steps

- Evangelise the children
- Make yourself available to them
- Counsel them personally
- Help them to grow

And it is good to remember the 20-20-20-20 formula!

- Your Bible lesson and evangelistic message may last 20 MINUTES
- To make yourself available would only need 20 SECONDS
- To counsel a child thoroughly shold involve at least 20 MINUTES
- Your feeding and nurturing of saved children could last 20 YEARS!

Section II

Instructions in Counselling

- Five Questions to Ask
- Ten Principles to Understand
- Ten Steps to Take
- Three outlines to help

Chapter 1:
Five Questions to Ask

The teacher who is beginning his ministry to children, and hears about counselling for the first time, has many questions which he wants to ask. The more experienced teacher has often similar questions. Sometimes he can also find himself in the position of the teacher mentioned in the foreword. He has taught children for years but may have never actually sat down with one child and led him to Christ. So the concept of counselling is also quite new to him. Perhaps, like our teacher at the beginning, he would not really know what to do.

What Does it Mean to Counsel a Child?

The first and most basic question goes right to the heart of the matter and asks, "What are we talking about? What does it mean to counsel a child and to lead him to Christ?"

Counselling a child for salvation simply means that you sit down with one child (or perhaps several children) and talk with him personally, and *at his request*, to show him how he can trust Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. If he wishes to trust Christ you would then help him to do so. *That* is counselling. *That* is what it means to lead a child to Christ.

It is interesting to see that the dictionary defines "counselling" as "advising," "recommending," or "advising—to guide towards moral perfection."

Saved children also often need personal counselling. But that subject will be dealt with in a later book. In this book we will concentrate upon the counselling of an unsaved child and how to lead him to Jesus Christ.

Why Is Counselling an Important Part of Your Ministry?

God has given you a ministry to the group of children which you teach on a regular basis. As you meet with them each week you use your Bible Lesson (and indeed your whole programme) to evangelize them. This means that you teach them:

- that they *need to be saved* because of their sin, and because God is holy
- that they *can be saved* because of what Jesus Christ has done for them on the Cross
- that they *will be saved* if they turn from their sin and trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour

So you explain to your children the way of salvation, and you encourage them and challenge them to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

You are an evangelist and *evangelism* is your ministry. You pray that there are children in your class who will trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour; and you pray that the Holy Spirit will convict children of their sin and bring them to Jesus Christ. Indeed it could well be that a child in your meeting trusts Christ as his Saviour while you are speaking; or perhaps he does so afterwards at home.

But there may be other children in your meeting who need *personal* help—or who have specific questions and problems concerning salvation which need personal answers and solutions. They are not yet sure what they should do to be saved and they need someone to speak with them personally. It is because of *these* children that counselling needs to become an important part of your ministry. Many children come to Jesus Christ for salvation "on their own," and we are thankful for that. But there *are* also children who need your personal help to do so; and you must be available to give that help.

So you need to be ready for, available for—and actually looking for—opportunities to counsel such children. You do need to see this as a vital part of your ministry and, therefore, you should always allow time for it in your schedule.

Who Is Qualified to Counsel a Child?

It is really the responsibility of *all* teachers of children, and of *all* workers among children, to be available to counsel children personally and to lead them to Christ. Your counselling ministry is, in many ways, as important as your teaching of a Bible Lesson.

It is obvious that the teacher who leads a child to Christ must have, first of all, come to Christ himself for salvation. He also needs to be clear about basic Bible doctrines and about his own assurance of salvation. He should of course be convinced that God can and does save children. In addition the Bible teaches that God will only use him and bless him in this ministry if he is seeking to walk with Him.

But having said that, there are three other steps that you need to take to be qualified to lead children to Christ:

1. You need *to learn* as much as possible about how to lead a child to Christ. I trust this book will be a help.
2. You need *to be ready* to get involved in a counselling ministry as, and when, God the Holy Spirit opens the door. You will learn more through experience than in any other way. You will also learn from your mistakes (after prayer and examination) and you can then determine not to make the same mistakes in the future.
3. You need *to depend* upon the Holy Spirit to use you as you counsel. Pray that God will help you and guide you. He is more interested in, and concerned for, the child than you are.

When and Where Will There Be Opportunities for Counselling?

Most opportunities to counsel and to lead a child to Christ come after the conclusion of a children's meeting or Sunday School class. During that meeting or class you have given a clear presentation of the Gospel (usually in the Bible lesson). You have shown the children how to trust Christ, and have given them a clear challenge or invitation to do so. You have emphasized that they can trust Christ anywhere and at any time; but have

underlined the importance of doing it today, and not to keep putting it off. You have, of course, put no pressure upon the children to trust Christ. You know that this is the work of the Holy Spirit and that you must not try to do *His* work.

You have also realized that there could be a child in the meeting who wants to trust Christ, but is not yet sure how to do so. You realise that this child would need personal help and counsel from yourself. Sometimes such children are shy and would never come to speak with you unless you make yourself available to them. So somewhere in the meeting you have said to the children something like this:

> If there is a boy or girl here and you are not saved, and you would like to be—but you are still not sure how to be—I would be glad to speak with you after the meeting is over and help you. When the meeting is over just remain seated and, if I see you sitting there, I will know that you want to talk with me.

Or:

> Perhaps there is a boy or girl in the meeting who is not saved and would like to be saved. But you still don't know what you need to do to be saved. I would be glad to speak with you and help you. If you would like me to do this, please come and sit on one of the chairs in this front row *after* the meeting is over and the other children are gone. I will be glad to come to you and speak with you.

In this way you have made yourself available to children who need, and want, personal help and counsel. But you have done it in a way which involves no pressure. You have let the children know you are ready and willing to help them trust Jesus Christ, and you have made it clear what they need to do to avail themselves of this help. You have not asked the children who want help to raise their hands, stand up, or come to the front; but you have informed them that they can wait behind afterwards if they want your help in coming to Christ for salvation. This leaves the decision clearly in the hands of the child—without pressure of any kind.

Therefore the usual time and opportunity for counselling a child and leading him to Christ is *after* the children's meeting or Sunday school class is over.

In addition, and quite separately from what has already been outlined, there may be opportunities to counsel an unsaved child and lead him to Christ at some other time apart from a formal meeting. You may know a child who is obviously unsaved, and you may feel led by God to approach him personally and speak with him about his need of salvation. You may then look for a God-given opportunity to initiate a conversation or a series of conversations with the child in the hope that this will in turn lead, now or later, to the child expressing a desire for counselling. The conversation itself is not counselling; but it could result in it. This type of situation needs to be handled very wisely. It is so easy to put pressure upon a child—especially when you take the initiative in this way. You must always be careful not to rush him into a commitment he does not understand or is not ready for.

Opportunities can also come to a parent who lets his own children know that if they ever want to trust the Lord Jesus he will always be ready to speak with them and help them.

But in all of these personal situations the parent or teacher must be very wise, very sensitive, and very careful. He must never exert any kind of pressure upon the child; but must be, at all times, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

How Can You Counsel a Child?

That is the big question; and it will be answered during the remainder of this book.

I believe that it is possible for a person who really wants to know how to counsel a child, and how to lead him to Christ, to do so. He needs to understand certain basic principles first of all and these will be outlined in the pages which follow. Then he needs to know a series of simple and logical steps to follow and these will also be explained for him. With the principles in mind and a basic understanding of a plan to follow, he will be ready to go.

Chapter 2:
Ten Principles to Understand

When a child comes to you after a meeting and tells you that he wants to trust Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, it is your responsibility to sit down with him and to counsel him as simply and as thoroughly as possible.

This is a very important and crucial time for the child. It is not enough just to pray with him or even to have him pray. It is certainly not enough to get him to sign a decision card. Much harm can be done by poor or superficial counselling. You need to see something of the great responsibility entrusted to you by God and to give as much personal help to the child as you can. Your task is to bring the child into vital contact with Jesus Christ while, at the same time, keeping out of the way as much as possible.

There is probably no aspect of work among children for which you need so much of the Lord's guidance and wisdom. But the Bible says, *"If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him"* James 1 v5.

As you prepare yourself for this vital ministry it is necessary, first of all, to think about ten basic principles which you should know, understand, and keep in mind when counselling an unsaved child.

1. Depend on the Holy Spirit

Remember that God loves the child and that, according to Matthew 18 v14, He does not want even one child to perish. Remember also that the Holy Spirit is able to save the child even if you make mistakes in your counselling. Salvation is, after all, God's work!

So do your best; but do not be nervous or fearful. God wants

to use you, but you are not as essential as you might think you are!

Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the child's heart—to convict him of sin, to make Christ and His work real to him, and to regenerate him.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you and guide you as to what to say.

You need to pray like this before you come to the meeting, before the start of the meeting, and before you start to counsel the child. You should then continue in a prayerful attitude throughout the counselling session.

2. Be Wise

A wise approach to your counselling situation will include two simple but helpful measures:

Select a Suitable Place

You should choose a quiet place for counselling with as few distractions as possible. The child's back should be towards anything which might distract him.

The place chosen should be public and open. Ensure that you are visible if you are counselling a child after an open-air meeting. Do so in full view of anyone who might be watching.

Never take the child behind a wall or into a car, or even into a room, where you and he will be completely on your own. Apart from the suspicions which this might raise, it might also make the child rather nervous.

Counsel One Child If Possible

It is best to counsel on a "one-to-one" basis if circumstances allow you to do so. However, you can counsel several children together if absolutely necessary and provided they all have the same basic problem. (See Question 4 on page 47.)

Counsel those of your own sex if possible—especially if the child is older and you are in your teens or early twenties.

3. Be Prepared

While it is absolutely true that you must depend upon the Holy Spirit while you are counselling the children, you must, at the same time, endeavour to do all you can to be as efficient and as effective as possible. It is essential that you are as well prepared as you can be for your counselling session.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ Have you prayed? This means prayer before the teaching session that God will save children; and specific prayer, even though brief, before starting to counsel.
- ✓ Have you carefully and thoroughly studied a book such as this one which will help you to know what to do?
- ✓ Do you have your Bible ready to use—along with a simple skeleton outline which will help you to remember the steps to take? (See page 42).
- ✓ Have you decided, beforehand, which Bible verse you will explain and use?
- ✓ Have you practised counselling with a co-worker? This can be very helpful.

4. Be Sensitive

Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance with regard to what you should say to the child. Remember that each child is different. Some need more help and explanation on particular points than others. It is good to have a counselling plan to follow; but He might lead you in a direction you had not anticipated.

Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance with regard to how far you should lead the child. Watch for warning signals which show you that you have gone as far as he wants to go or is ready to go—fidgeting, not looking at you, or seeming far away. Also watch especially for evidence that he does not understand what you are saying.

Be sensitive to, and attempt to understand and gauge, the spiritual perception and understanding of the child you are counselling. Does he understand what you are saying? Is he

ready to go any farther?

You should just counsel and lead the child as far as he is ready and prepared to go. When it is obvious that the Holy Spirit is not at work in the child's heart, or that he does not seem to understand, or if you feel that he is not ready to go any further, do not hesitate to conclude the counselling session. You might just be the sower or the waterer—and not the reaper (1 Corinthians 3 v6). There are usually a number of links in the chain which brings a child to Christ. You might be the last one—or the first one.

Both in evangelism and in counselling you must always beware of pressurizing the child to take steps for which the Holy Spirit has not prepared him.

This kind of sensitivity needs self-discipline and restraint so that you will not push or manipulate the child in any way.

If he is not ready to proceed any further you should offer to speak with him later if he wishes; and you should pray that God will continue to work in his heart.

5. Be Thorough and Take Sufficient Time

You must be prepared to take time with the child who wants counselling. You need to find out what his problem is and then to show him simply and clearly, from the Bible, how that problem can be met in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. This is the most important moment in the child's life and requires thoroughness and time on your part. For the child's sake, avoid any kind of shallowness or short, quick techniques. It is not enough to ask a few questions which need either "yes" or "no" as an answer. It is not enough to get him to sign a decision card. It is not enough just to read a Bible verse or to pray briefly with the children or to get him to pray.

You need to be thorough in your counselling and this takes time. This is not something which can be done in 2 minutes or 5 minutes. It is usually necessary to counsel a concerned child for 20 to 30 minutes so as to understand thoroughly what his problem is and then to show him the answer to that problem. In some cases, where there are special problems, even more time

may be needed. It may not be possible to complete the counselling in one session. It may be necessary to ask the child to come back again at another time so that the counselling can be continued and completed.

At the same time it is necessary to realise that the length of time spent in counselling will depend upon the child, his background, what he already knows, and his state of readiness (or otherwise). Some children are so ready, and are already so well prepared, that a shorter time of counselling would be needed. But it is essential always to be thorough; and, if in doubt, to plan on a longer time of counselling rather than a shorter.

There may be circumstances which seem to make it difficult to spend so much time in counselling a child; and you need to find a solution to these difficulties, if at all possible.

- The parents may worry if the child does not arrive home at his usual time.
  - Telephone the parents or arrange for someone to visit them to let them know the child will be late and why.
- The child may need to get a bus or a train at a certain time.
  - Take him home by car when you are accompanied by another adult.
- There is no time for counselling at the end of the meeting.
  - Tell children who want to talk with you to come early the next day, or the following week, so as to enable the counselling to take place before the next meeting starts.
  - Another alternative would be to rearrange the schedule of your meeting so that the Bible lesson comes earlier in the programme rather than later. This would allow an opportunity to counsel concerned children before the meeting ends.
- If you are speaking in a day school there will usually be no time or opportunity for counselling.
  - Make sure that you have clearly presented the Gospel and the way of salvation in your lesson. Pray that God the Holy Spirit will lead children to Christ on the basis of what they have heard. But you can also tell the

children that if they would like you to talk further with them they should give you their name and address, and you could contact them later.

Many of these problems can be overcome. Make it your goal always to allow time for counselling when planning your programme.

More information on this principle can be found in the answer to Question 5 on page 64

6. Explain and Enlarge on What the Child Has Already Heard

During the counselling time you will not usually introduce much that is new to the child. He should already have heard the basic Gospel truths during the meeting. Counselling simply reviews these truths, explains them, expands them, and ensures that the child understands them. God has spoken to the child through the Gospel truths he has already heard in the meeting, and has given him a desire to be saved on the basis of these truths. You will want to build upon **them** and use **them** as the basis for your counselling.

The main difference is that in counselling you now have the opportunities for questions and feed-back; and you can now apply what you have taught to the personal needs of one child.

The counselling session is therefore really an extension of the Bible lesson and needs to be closely related to it and integrated with it. Counselling simply gives you the opportunity to deal with the same basic Gospel truths on a personal one-to-one basis and to apply **those** truths clearly and personally to the specific needs of one child.

7. Keep to the Main Issue

You need to be careful not to wander from the subject either because of lack of concentration or preparation on your part, or because of unimportant side issues introduced by the child. Time is limited and it is necessary to keep strictly to the matter in

hand.

8. Ask Questions

The main mistake made by inexperienced counsellors is that they talk too much and listen too little. This is a counselling session, not a mini preaching service with a congregation of one!

You need to **listen** to the child to discern his needs before you can help him with these needs. You need to discover what the child understands and what he does not understand.

To be able to counsel effectively it is therefore necessary to ask questions and to listen carefully to the answers. In this way you can understand better the problems of the child, and you can also better know how much he understands.

There are a number of rules to be followed when asking these questions:

- *Try to avoid questions requiring only a "yes" or "no" answer* (e.g., "Are you good enough to go to Heaven when you die?" or "Do you know that Jesus died on the Cross for your sins?"). Simple one word answers to questions like these do not help you too much. They could even give you a wrong impression concerning his problems or how much he understands.
- *Avoid too many questions with easy and obvious answers* which need little thought, give little information and which can be "parroted" (e.g., "Who died on the Cross for your sins?"). Some of these may be a help but should not be overdone.
- *Try to ask questions the answers to which will really help you* to understand the child's problem, and how much he understands on the subject (e.g., "What do you think God is like?" "What do you think sin is?" "What does God see when He looks into your heart and life?" "Why is the Lord Jesus the only one who can wash away your sin?").
- *Make sure your questions are simple,* and not too "theological." If the child has a problem with your question, try to reword it and simplify it.
- *Encourage the child to use his own words* and not just to

parrot yours. They might not be as correct or as theological as yours, but they will give you a better indication of his needs and his understanding.

- *It is sometimes good to ask questions which have an alternative answer.* This makes it easier for the child to answer without embarrassment or without fear of saying the wrong thing (e.g., "Are you saved or are you still thinking about it?" "Have you received Christ or are you not that far yet?").
- *If the child does not seem to know the answer to a question* (and this often happens) *open at a Bible verse* which gives the answer and ask him to read it. Or ask him other helpful questions which might lead him to the answer.
- *It is important that you ask your questions in a "relaxed" atmosphere.* Avoid tension of any kind. You do not want the counselling session to become "a mini inquisition" which leads to the child becoming nervous and fearful of giving a wrong answer. He will then clam up and say no more.

9. Use Your Bible

Have your Bible open, in your hand, to assure the child that what you are saying is based upon the Word of God. However, do not read or refer to too many verses as this might confuse him. You will definitely want to show him one Bible verse concerning salvation and Christ's invitation to come to Him, and it is better to concentrate on this **one** verse. Other verses may be quoted from memory, and preceded by the words "The Bible says" without necessarily showing them in the Bible.

It can be very helpful to use the wordless book at some time during your counselling session—and as early as possible—to help you know what the child knows and doesn't know. However, be sure to actually lead the child to Christ with your Bible in your hand and base what you are then saying on **that**—and not the wordless book.

The colours of the wordless book present the way of salvation very clearly and vividly to the child, and they will encourage his attention and understanding:

- *The gold page* speaks of *God and Heaven*
- *The dark page* speaks of *sin*
- *The red page* speaks of *Christ's death and sacrifice*
- *The white page* speaks of *Christ's resurrection and our justification by faith*
- *The green page* speaks of *growing in the Christian life*

The wordless book can really help you to explain the way of salvation to a child, and also, by means of questions, to see how much he understands about the Gospel. This will then enable you better to know what to spend time on.

You can, of course, accomplish the same goals without a wordless book.

10. Be Loving And Interested

Children always appreciate a person who is obviously interested in them personally; and through whom the love of God shines. A teacher or counsellor should never become mechanical or professional in his approach to children.

Once the ice has been broken and the beginning of a relationship established, talking to children, and counselling them, can become delightful and quite easy. Children are so natural and open. If they respect and trust you they will usually tell you what they know and what they don't understand.

But there are several key principles always to remember:

- **Accept the child as a worthy person** and respect him as an individual who has needs
- **Do not be critical of him**
- **Never give the impression that a problem is trivial** or even funny. God never does that with us.
- **Keep to yourself what the child confides in you**. If you share his confidence with others he will be bitterly disappointed and never come to you again. However be sensitive to issues that may concern child protection law.

Chapter 3:
Ten Steps to Take

It is helpful, when leading a child to Christ, to have a basic plan to follow and to use as a guideline. We will outline such a plan step by step in this section. In the next chapter you will find three summarized outlines of this counselling plan—with varying degrees of detail. You can cut out, or photocopy, one of these and either keep it inside your Bible or, better still, stick it on the inside cover. Then when you are counselling the child you can glance at the outline from time to time to remind you what to do next.

However, counselling is not merely a mechanical exercise. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and regenerate. You need, at all times, to be flexible and sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in response to the child's problems and needs. Circumstances, questions, and problems might arise which could result in you not following this plan exactly. But it is helpful to understand this plan as the ideal outline to follow and to use it as a basis for your counselling.

There are ten steps which one should aim to take when leading a child to Christ.

Step 1—Set the Child at Ease

The child might be nervous and wondering what is going to happen—especially if he is younger. Giggling can sometimes be a problem. See Question 7 and the answer on page 65 to help you deal with this.

➢**Smile and put him at ease**. Tell him how happy you are that he wants to speak with you.

➢**Ask him his name and age** (if you do not know these already); and then use his name as you continue to talk with him.

➢**Find out if someone is waiting for him** or if he is expected home at a certain time; and make whatever arrangements are necessary.

It is a help if you can find out at the beginning whether he is Roman Catholic, Jewish, etc. To do this you may ask him if he goes to Sunday school or church; and, if so, which one. In some situations it can help if you find out which school the child attends.

Also, you could ask him if he likes school and what his favourite subjects are. This type of conversation encourages the child to relax and to be ready to talk and open up to you.

Step 2—Identify the Child's Problem

Like a doctor you need to "diagnose" the child's spiritual problem before you can help him. A doctor should never give medicine or treatment without examining his patient and trying to find out what is wrong with him. The same applies to the counsellor of children.

➢*The Four Main Groups of Children*

Children who come for help and counselling after a meeting usually fall into one of four main categories or groups, and each group needs to be dealt with in a different way.

Group 1—*The child who is not sincere or not ready*

He may be curious. He may have come to speak with you because someone else did. He may be there only because his big brother wants to speak with you. He may have come because he has heard that those who do so receive a free book. He may have come just because he wants to please you. Or he may even have come "just for fun."

Group 2—*The child who does not understand his need of salvation*

He does not understand what sin is and has no conviction of it. Often such a child is very young.

Group 3—*The child who lacks assurance or has a problem as a believer*

He has already trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour; but he thinks that he needs to be saved again. Or he knows he is saved but has a problem or a question which is troubling him.

Group 4—*The child who is sincere, understands, and is unsaved—and really wants to be saved*

Many children who come for counselling are in this category, and this is the group we will be primarily dealing with during the remainder of this book.

➢*The Three Main Questions To Ask*

You need to ask the child who comes to you a series of three questions each linked to one of the first three groups outlined on the previous page. These will help you to discover which group or category he belongs to—and you need to listen carefully to his answers.

Question 1—*Why do you want to talk with me?*

This question can, of course, be worded in different ways: "Why did you stay behind?" or "Was there something in the story you wanted to talk about?" or "What would you like the Lord Jesus to do for you?"

The child's answer should show you if he is sincere or if he is in the first group listed on the previous page. If his answer indicates that he sincerely wants to trust Christ then go on to Questions 2 and 3.

If, however, it is obvious that he is not sincere, or is not ready to go any further, take time to emphasize to him that trusting Christ is the most important step for him to take. Tell him that he should think seriously about it, and that he can trust Christ at any time and in any place. Let him know, also, that you will always be ready to speak further with him any time he wishes. This talk with the child could be the first step in building a relationship with him which might lead to his conversion at a later date.

You cannot lead him any further than this at present.

If it is obvious that a child has only come "to make fun" you could include also a word of correction and reproof; but with it an encouragement to be serious and to consider trusting Jesus

Christ as his Saviour.

Question 2—*Have you ever sinned or done anything wrong?*

This question can also be worded in different ways: "What does God see when He looks into your heart and life?" "What do you think sin is?" or "What are some of the wrong things which you do?"

This type of question will allow both the child and yourself to speak about sin.

His answers to your questions will help you to know if the child understands his need of salvation. If he doesn't, he is in the second group listed on the previous page and is not ready to go any further.

However, it is not enough for the child just to know that he has sinned and to be able to answer "yes" to the above questions. There needs to be some conviction of sin, a desire to turn from it, and a desire to be different.

So you could ask further questions such as: "Do you want to be like this?" "How does God want you to feel concerning the wrong things you have done?" "Would you like to be different with God's help?" or "Why do you want to be different?"

If the child does not have any understanding of sin and/or seems to have no conviction of sin he is in the second group of children (see page 21). You cannot lead him to Christ just now. Tell him that he needs to see his own sinfulness before he can trust Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and that when he does so he should then ask the Lord Jesus to save him. Let him know also that he should always feel free to come to you if he wants help. Pray with him before he leaves and ask God to show him his sinfulness, and help him to trust Jesus Christ. Be careful, however, that he does not feel in any way that he is saved just because you have prayed with him.

If, on the other hand, he seems to understand and to have some conviction of sin—go on to Question 3.

Question 3—*Have you already asked the Lord Jesus into your heart and life—to forgive your sins?* **or** *Have you ever done anything like this before?*

The child's answer should, hopefully, show if he is already saved.

If the child answers "no" or if you have any real doubt after questioning him as to whether he is saved or not, then deal with him as a child who is unsaved, and who understands. In other words, he is in the fourth group (see page 21).

However, if the child answers "yes" you should ask him to tell you about it. Do not accept his "yes" answer immediately. He may have said "yes" because he feels you wanted him to; or he may have said "yes" because every night before he goes to bed he has said a little prayer of some kind. Listen carefully to his answer and question him further if necessary. If you are now reasonably sure that he is already saved, he is in the third group (see page 31) and you should deal with him as a born again child who has lost his assurance and needs help in his Christian life.

You should, in this case, try to find the reason for his lack of assurance, and give him the solution to it from God's Word. You can do this by asking him questions such as "Why do you think you no longer have the Lord Jesus in your heart and life?"

Possible reasons for his lack of assurance are:

- He has sinned and believes that because of this Jesus Christ has left him
- He has neglected fellowship with the Lord through prayer and Bible study
- He has never understood, or received, assurance of salvation because of lack of teaching

How can you help him?

- Explain that Jesus Christ has not left him, and indeed cannot do so, and that he does not need to be saved again (Hebrews 13 v5)
- Show him his need of confession (1 John 1 v9)
- Emphasize the importance of a quiet time each morning—or at some time during the day
- Outline briefly the Bible teaching on assurance of salvation. He can be sure he is saved because the Bible

says so (Acts 16 v31) and also because there has been a change (even if small) in his life (2 Corinthians 5 v17).

Then you should pray with him, give him a word of encouragement and let him go.

When you are asking the three questions, or series of questions, outlined above it is possible that you may not be completely sure if the child is sincere, if he understands, or if he has already trusted Christ. In other words, you may not be sure into which of the four groups he fits. In cases of such uncertainty it is better to keep counselling the child, and to deal with him as a child in the fourth group (see page 32), until, or unless, you become convinced otherwise.

Step 3—Make Sure the Child Understands the Gospel

This is a good opportunity to use your wordless book. But you should not do all the talking. Your purpose is not to preach but to find out how much the child understands about the Gospel. You should therefore ask the child questions to see how much he understands about God, about sin, about Jesus Christ, and about the way of salvation before going any further.

You may quote Bible verses here and there to explain and clarify what you are asking about. But you do not need to open your Bible at each verse.

- **God** (show the gold page of the wordless book)
  Who does this page remind you of?
  What is God like?
  - He is wealthy, the Creator and owner of all
  - He is the King of kings
  - He is pure
  - He lives in Heaven and loves you
- **Sin** (show the dark page of the wordless book)
  What is sin? Give me some examples
  What does God think about sin?
  Have you sinned?
  Do you want to turn from your sin and be different?
- **Jesus Christ** (show the red page of the wordless book)

Who is the only one who can take away your sin?
Why can He take away your sin?
Is He still dead?

- **Way of Salvation** (show the white page of the wordless book)
  What do you need to do to be saved?
  What will God do if you do that?

*Remember that you are speaking to **a child** and that he has limited understanding and limited ability to express himself. Do not expect a high degree of theological response. You are just looking for a basic understanding of the key truths. That's all!*

As you question the child you may discover that the child has very little or no understanding of the truths outlined, or you might find that he is not really interested or is becoming restless. In both cases it would be better just to outline the Gospel message simply to him and encourage him in his own time to trust Christ. You should, of course, suggest the possibility of another rendezvous to continue your conversation and see what his reaction is.

Step 4—Use a Bible Verse to Show the Way of Salvation

This is probably the most important step of all, and the one which needs the most time.

The child has come to you wanting to be saved. You have questioned him.

- He seems to be sincere
- He seems to understand his need of salvation
- He has not trusted Christ
- He seems to have a basic understanding of the Gospel.

On the basis of these four facts you can now show him what he needs to do to be saved.

There are several principles to follow here:

- *Use the Bible* to show him how to be saved
- *Choose just one verse.* Concentrate upon it and explain it thoroughly

- *Use a verse, if possible, which fits in with what you have already taught* in your Bible lesson and in your presentation of the Gospel. For example, if you have been teaching the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19 v1–10), who *came* to the Lord Jesus when called, you could use John 6 v37 "*the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out*."
- *Use a verse which is easy for the child to understand* and which uses words and concepts which need a relatively short explanation to clarify. For example, John 1 v12 with its concept of receiving Christ is easier to explain to a child with little or no Bible background than John 3 v16 with its concept of believing on Christ. Also it is better to use Romans 10 v13 than John 1 v12 when counselling a Roman Catholic child who may confuse "receiving Christ" with taking first communion.
- *You need to be very simple with younger children.* For example Revelation 3 v20 is easy for a younger child to understand.
- *Use a verse which shows the child two things:*
  - What God wants him to do
  - What God will do—if he does that

  Many verses show these two aspects of the way of salvation including the following John 1 v12; 3 v16; 6 v37; Acts 3 v19; 16 v31; Romans 10 v13; and Revelation 3 v20.
- *Have the child read the verse*, or if he cannot read, read it for him.
- *Explain the verse carefully and simply* to the child.

Remember: There are two main facts you need to explain carefully:

- ***What God wants the child to do***
- ***What God will do—if he does that***

If you use John 1 v12:

You should emphasize the need for the child to *receive* the Lord Jesus into his heart and life, and that if the child does so, he becomes a *child of God* and a member of God's family.

If you use John 3 v16:

You should emphasize the need for the child to *believe* in or *trust* Jesus Christ for salvation and that, if he does so, he will have *everlasting life*.

If you use John 6 v37:

You should emphasize that the child needs *to come* to Jesus Christ, and that, if he does so, he *will be received* and not turned away.

If you use Acts 16 v31:

You should emphasize that the child needs to *believe on* (*trust* or commit himself completely to) the Lord Jesus Christ, and that, if he does so, he will be *saved*.

If you use Acts 3 v19:

You should emphasize that the child needs to *turn from his sin to Christ*, and that if he does so—and *trusts* Jesus Christ as his Saviour—all his *sins* will be *blotted out*.

If you use Romans 10 v13:

You should emphasize that the child needs *to ask* Jesus Christ to save him, and that, if he does so, he will then be *saved*!

If you use Revelation 3 v20:

You should emphasize that the child needs *to open* the door of his heart and life to the Lord Jesus, and that, if he does so, the Lord Jesus will *come in* to live there. When He comes in, He will wash away his sin. (If you hesitate to use this verse when counselling read the answer to Question 19 on page 75).

Thoroughly explain the one Bible verse you have chosen, and go over it again and again until you are sure that the child understands. Be very simple in your explanation.

Let us look at several sample explanations.

If you use John 1 v12 explain it as follows:

> What does this verse say you must do in order to become God's child? You must receive Him into your life! Whom must you receive? The Lord Jesus! Notice how in the previous verse,

He came to some people and they would not receive Him. How sad! I am so happy that you want to receive Him.

Who can receive the Lord Jesus? This verse says "as *many* as received Him." His invitation is to everybody no matter how bad they might be. Isn't that wonderful?

How do you receive the Lord Jesus? This word means to welcome Him, to ask Him to come into your life to cleanse you from sin, to live there and to be in control. Do you really want to receive Him? He will make you a member of God's family. You will be a child of God. God will be your Father, and you will be His child. What must you do? What will He do?

If necessary, go over this explanation of the verse several times to be sure the child has understood.

If you are using the verse John 1 v12 and speaking about *receiving* the Lord Jesus Christ, stick as closely as possible to the concept of **becoming a child of God**—as a result of this—and do not go into detail with other concepts which are not included in the verse (e.g., "You will be saved," or "You will be forgiven," or "You will not be turned away").

This same principle applies to any Bible verse you will use. *Keep as closely as possible to what the verse says.*

If you choose John 3 v16:

God loved you so much He sent the Lord Jesus to die for you on the Cross. Now what does this verse say you need to do? You need to believe on Him—you need to trust the Lord Jesus. That is what the word means. But what does it mean to trust the Lord Jesus? Do you see that chair? It's a good chair, I know it is. I am sure it can carry me if I sit on it. But that's not enough. I must sit on it, I must trust myself to it.

Jesus Christ wants you to trust or to commit yourself to Him completely as your Lord and Saviour. That's what this verse means; and if you trust Him in that way what does the Bible say you will have? Everlasting life! That means God's life in you. This new life with God begins now and goes on for ever in heaven—if you trust the Lord Jesus as your Saviour.

If you choose John 6 v37:

In this verse, the Lord Jesus says that He wants you to do something. Can you see what it is? Yes, He wants you to come to Him. This is something He often says in the Bible to sinful people, and He still says it today. "Come unto Me and I will not turn you away."

We cannot see the Lord Jesus to come to Him or to touch Him, can we? He means that we are to come to Him in prayer and speak to Him in our hearts—but just as if He were standing right here in front of us.

What does the Lord Jesus say will happen if you come to Him and ask Him to save you? He says that He will not cast you out or turn you away. That means He will receive you, forgive you, and save you. So you need to come to Him now. He is waiting, ready to receive you, and to save you.

If you choose Acts 16 v31:

This verse tells you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This means you must hand your life over to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust completely in Him as your Lord and Saviour. It is like someone who steps into a boat to allow the pilot to take him across the deep water to safety. You entrust your life to Him. When you do that He saves you. That means He takes away the punishment of sin and gives you new life and makes you a new person.

If you choose Acts 3 v19:

This verse shows you that God wants you to repent—to turn from your sin and to follow Him. That's what converted really means. He does not want you to live the way you have been living: and I am sure you don't either. But being converted is not just turning from sin. At the same time you trust Christ and ask Him to save you. If you do that, all your sins, the verse says, will be blotted out in God's sight, forever. Look, do you see that pencil mark on this piece of paper? Now watch as I use this eraser. The pencil mark is gone. It is removed. It is

blotted out. And that is what God does with your sin when you turn from it, and trust Jesus Christ.

If you choose Romans 10 v13:

This verse tells you something that God wants you to do. He wants you to call on the Name of the Lord Jesus. He wants you to call to Him. What should you call to Him for and ask Him to do? You should ask Him to save you from your sins. Because only He can save you from them.

Think of a boy who has fallen into a deep well and there is no way out. He tries, but the sides are steep and slippery. It is impossible. Then he sees someone look over the top of the wall, someone he knows and trusts, someone who is strong, and he calls "Please save me!"; And this man who is so strong and loving, lowers himself into the well with a rope, gets hold of the boy and saves him.

If you know you need to be saved from your sin, call to Jesus Christ, ask Him to save you, and He will. That is what this verse promises—to anyone, everyone. If you will call to Him to save you what does the verse say? You will be saved!

If you choose Revelation 3 v20:

At which door is the Lord Jesus knocking? He is knocking at the door of your heart and life. It is not a door you can see nor can you really hear the knocking. The Lord is using "picture words" which you can understand easily to let you know that He is outside your life and He wants to come in.

Why is the Lord Jesus knocking at the door of your heart and life? He wants to come in so that He can take your sin away. The heart here is not the heart which pumps blood in your body. It is the real you, the part of you that thinks and feels.

What must you do? The Lord Jesus wants you to open the "door" of your heart and life to Him. He wants you to be willing to turn from your sin and to ask Him to come in to cleanse and forgive you.

What will the Lord Jesus do if you ask Him to come in? He

has promised that He will come in and, when He comes in, He will make you clean in God's sight. The verse also says that He wants to have close fellowship, or friendship, with you. Isn't that wonderful?

(For more information concerning the use of Revelation 3 v20 see page 75).

If you are satisfied that the child understands, and if it seems to you that God is really working in his heart, proceed to the next step.

One of the most common mistakes made at this stage in the counselling session is to "mix up" concepts from different verses instead of sticking as closely as you can to the concept outlined in the verse being used. For example, if using Acts 16 v31, you should not say, "If you ***come to*** *Jesus Christ you* ***will be saved****." If using John 1 v12, you should not say, "****Receive*** *the Lord Jesus Christ and* ***you will receive*** *the gift of everlasting life." If using Romans 10 v13, you should not say, "****Call*** *to the Lord Jesus Christ and you will* ***become a child of God****." In all three explanations (although they are true) there has been a confusion of concept.*

Another mistake is to use together and, at the same time, the concept of ***coming to Jesus Christ*** *and asking Jesus Christ to* ***come into your life****. These both really mean the same thing – but can be confusing to a child because they seem to be "opposites."*

It is helpful when using a Bible verse to lead a child to Christ to use some questions rather than doing all the talking yourself. For example, if you are using Romans 10 v13 you could use questions like these:

What does this verse tell you to do?
To whom should you call?
What will the Lord Jesus do if you call to Him?

Step 5 – Ask If He Wants to Trust Christ – or If He Would Rather Go Home and Think More about it

You are now in a position to ask the child if he really wants to go ahead and trust Jesus Christ (or come to Jesus Christ, or

receive Jesus Christ—depending on the concept expressed in the verse you have been using).

It is good to phrase your question so as to include an alternative to a simple "yes" answer. If you include an "or would you rather" the child will find it easier to give an honest answer without embarrassment. It is difficult for a child to say "no" to a concerned counsellor!

You should emphasize how important this decision is for him. As you explain the importance of this decision he is considering, there are three things you should outline to him:

- **The Lord Jesus will want to be in control of his life**
  The Lord Jesus does not come into his life just to save him and forgive his sin. He comes in to change him and to live in his life as Lord and Master. He will want to be "his Boss."
- **The Lord Jesus will expect to see a change in his life**
  Becoming a Christian means a willingness to turn from that which is wrong and to seek to do that which is pleasing to God. He needs to be both clear and sincere concerning this.
- **Being a Christian is not always easy**
  He needs to know that other boys and girls might laugh at him or make fun when they know what he has done. To let him know this serves as both a warning and a preparation.

It is good for children to know what is involved in becoming a Christian **before** trusting Christ. This should have been included already, of course, in your earlier presentation of the Gospel.

If the child does not seem willing to "count the cost" in this way do not push him. He has got to sort it out for himself; and you have already helped by identifying and clarifying the situation.

But it is essential that you keep a balance at all times. While you do not want to make it too easy for the child to trust Christ, you do not, at the same time, want to make it too hard. So you need to emphasize the fact that if he trusts Jesus Christ He will help him to be good and to live for God even when others say unkind things to him or about him. You could say:

> But please remember that if you trust the Lord Jesus, He will be in your life and He will help you be different and to live for Him, and He will give you the joy and the strength you will need.

So, after the child has seen what is involved in trusting Christ, you now need to ask him what he would really like to do.

> Would you like to trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour right now? You need to mean it with all of your heart. Or would you rather go away and think more about it. We will be quiet for a few moments; and when you have decided you can tell me what you want to do.

Allow him a few moments before he answers. If he says that he does not want to trust Christ now but wants to go home and think about it, let him go. Do not try to put pressure upon him to change his mind. However, you should tell him that he can trust Christ at home, or anywhere, if he really wants to. You can also suggest the possibility of him coming back, later, to speak with you again, if he wishes. Pray with him before he leaves.

If the child has said "yes" to this question and seems prepared by the Holy Spirit to trust Christ he is now ready for the next step.

While you do not want to bring pressure to bear on the child (in any way) you do not, at the same time, want to give him the impression that he can wait and trust the Lord Jesus any time he wants to. Hebrews 3 v7 reminds us that today is the day of salvation and the child needs to see the importance of responding to God's voice when He speaks to him and not to keep putting it off.

Step 6—Suggest That He Talk to the Lord Jesus and Ask Him to Save Him

You should now encourage the child to pray and ask Jesus Christ to save him on the basis of the Bible verse you have explained and using the concept outlined in that verse. If, for example, you have used John 1 v12 or Revelation 3 v20 to show

the child the way of salvation you should encourage him to ask the Lord Jesus to **come into his heart and life.**

There are four possible ways to proceed:

1. **You could encourage the child to pray audibly and by himself**

   In this case, you might like to suggest beforehand one or two sentences (related to the Bible verse) which he could include in his prayer.

   > If you really want the Lord Jesus to come into your life tell Him you are sorry for your sin and ask Him to come into your life.

   The child's prayer may be a very short and simple prayer, like the boy who prayed,

   > Dear Lord Jesus, I am bad. Come into my heart and make me good. Amen.

   Do not expect or demand perfect theology.

   This method is probably the best.

2. **You could lead the child in prayer**

   If the child is younger or shyer, or if there are several children who want to trust the Lord Jesus, you could suggest that he or they pray audibly after you, phrase by phrase. It could be a simple prayer like this:

   > Dear Lord Jesus/ I am a sinner/ and have done wrong things./ I am sorry./ I don't want to live like that./ Thank you for dying on the cross for me./ Just now I trust you/ as my Saviour and Lord;/ and I ask you/ to forgive all my sin/ and make me/ the kind of person/ you want me to be.

   However, if you are counselling several children it is better to have each one pray individually if possible.

3. **You could use "directed prayer"**

   This means that the child uses his own words but you guide

him step by step in the different phrases involved

> You can tell the Lord Jesus just now what you have been telling me as we talked together.
> You can begin by saying "Dear Lord Jesus" [pause for child to speak]
> Now tell Him about your sins and how you feel about them [pause]
> Now tell Him that you believe He died for you on the Cross [pause]
> Now tell Him what you want to do right now [remind him of the Bible verse you used and pause]
> Now tell Him what you want Him to do for you right now [pause]
> You can finish by saying "Amen."

4. **You could ask him to pray inwardly to the Lord Jesus** This would be after you have suggested to him what he should say. Then ask him to tell you afterwards what he had prayed. However, this way, while possible, is not highly recommended; as you do not *really* know what he has actually prayed.

I feel, again, that the first of the four possibilities outlined is the best method to use.

Step 7—Speak about Assurance of Salvation

The child needs to learn how he can **know** that he is saved. If he does not have this assurance, Satan and others can easily tempt him to doubt the reality of his salvation, and encourage him to believe that his experience of being born again was not genuine.

So you need, at this time, to **teach** the child how he can know he is saved. **You** cannot give the child assurance of salvation. So avoid telling the child that **you** are sure he is saved. You don't want him to have the impression that his assurance depends upon what you say. His assurance comes from God and is based upon His Word and not upon yours.

Assurance is the work of God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8 v16); but He uses two instruments or means to give this assurance to the believing child:

- **The Word of God** (1 John 5 v13)
- **The evidence of a changed life** (2 Corinthians 5 v17)

Consequently, you should now do two things:

Show him what God's Word says

Ask the child what he would say if his mother asks him the question, "How do you know you are saved or that Jesus Christ is in your heart?"

Tell him that it is not because he feels it, nor is it because you have said it. The important question is "What does God say in His Word?"

Go back to the Bible verse you used in Step 4 and read it again, together. Then ask him some questions.

- What did God tell you to do in this verse ?
- Did you do it?
- What did God say in this verse that He would do?
- Has He done it?
- How do you know He has?
  "Because He said He would"
  "Because it is written in the Bible"
  "Because He always keeps His promises"
- So if you really meant it when you called to the Lord Jesus to save you (Romans 10 v13) what has He done?
  "He has saved me"
- How do you know?
  "He promised He would—and He always keeps His promises."

Speak about a changed life

Tell the child that if he has trusted the Lord Jesus there will be a change in his life and this will also help him to know that he is saved. Tell him that the change may be very small, but it will be there. You could quote 2 Corinthians 5 v17 *"If any one is in Christ he is a new creation."* You could even ask him what kind

of change he might expect and who is most likely to recognise it.

This also means that, if at a later date you do not see any change at all in the life of a child who has professed salvation, you can go to him and say, "Do you remember what I said when you trusted the Lord Jesus?" You could then endeavour to find out what the problem is and counsel him accordingly.

Step 8—Suggest a Prayer of Thanks

You should now suggest to the child that since he has received the Lord Jesus and has received the wonderful gift of salvation he might want to say "Thank you" to Him for all that He has done.

> What do you do when your mother gives you something special—like a birthday present? You say "Thanks." Of course you do. Wouldn't it be really nice to say "Thank you" to the Lord Jesus for what He has done for you?

You should emphasize especially the truth contained in the Bible verse you used. Give him the opportunity to pray and thank the Lord Jesus now.

> Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming into my heart and for taking away my sin, and for making me a Christian boy. Amen.

Step 9—Start Follow-Up Teaching

During the counselling time, it is best to concentrate on the essentials—explaining the way of salvation and speaking about assurance. If time is limited, concentrate therefore on the first eight steps—especially if you will have the opportunity to see the child again or be able to meet with him regularly in the future. So it would be possible to finish the counselling session after Step 8 if absolutely necessary.

However, if you have time, or if there is a risk of not seeing the child again for some time, you should go through these next two steps reasonably briefly. Or if time is short, you could arrange

to meet with the child later that week, and keep the outline of these helps for the Christian life until then.

You could, at this time, bring out your wordless book again and show the green page. Explain that green stands for growth. The grass, the flowers, and the trees are all green and they all grow. Now that the child has trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour God wants him to grow. Explain that you are not speaking about physical growth. You are speaking about spiritual growth and about becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus. There are certain steps he should take which will help him to grow.

You can encourage him to remember these steps by showing one-by-one the fingers of your left hand and asking the child to point to, and hold, the equivalent finger on his left hand.

Read and obey the Bible each day

Point to your thumb—the strong finger. "If you **read** and **obey** the Bible you will be strong."

You should encourage him to begin with Mark's Gospel, reading a few verses each day. It is simpler and easier to read than, say, John's Gospel or the book of Genesis! Tell him that it is not enough just to read the Bible. God wants him to obey what the Bible says and He will give him the strength to do so.

Talk to God, your Heavenly Father

Point to index finger—the one which points upwards and reminds us to speak to Him.

He can **pray** to God anywhere, at any time, and about anything. But he should also try to have a special quiet time each day when he can talk to God.

Tell others what you have done

Point to the big finger—the one which stands straight and tall and shows us we should not be ashamed to take a stand for the Lord Jesus.

Encourage him to **witness**, even though some may laugh at him and make fun of him. Emphasize the importance of witnessing through what he does, as well as through what he says.

Don't feel it is necessary to tell him to inform his parents about what he has done as they might not allow him to return. You could mention the possibility of him doing so and pray that the Holy Spirit will lead him with regard to this matter.

If there is the possibility of his parents being opposed to his receiving Christ, tell him to show them by his changed life that he is a Christian before he tells them about it at a later date.

Ask God to forgive you when you sin

Point to the fourth finger—the one which does not stand so straight when the others are bent. Demonstrate this by trying to straighten this finger when the others are firmly bent.

Explain, "Sometimes we are like this, and we sin. If you do anything wrong, you do not need to be saved again. God does not want you to do bad things, but this does sometimes happen in the Christian life. When you sin, you should immediately **confess** to God whatever you have done. Tell Him that you are sorry and ask Him to give you the strength not to do it again." Explain 1 John 1 v9 to the child briefly.

Meet together with other Christians

Point to the little finger and then bring all the fingers of the hand together to symbolise unity. The little finger on its own is weak but, along with the others, it can do so much.

Tell him how good it is to go to church, Sunday school, and Good News Club to learn more about God, and to be **together** with others who love the Lord. This will help him in his Christian life.

Step 10—Give Him a Bible Promise

Now you should use the five fingers of your other hand to teach one final lesson, and to give him a verse which contains a promise from God to him.

Open your Bible and show him that the Lord says, "*I will never leave you*!" (Hebrews 13 v5). As you say the words, point to each finger of your right hand, and encourage the child to do the same. Keep repeating the promise emphasizing a different word and finger each time.

The child should remember the Lord's promise to be with him always—no matter what happens.

Possible Concluding Steps

These steps are not necessary. But if you have time and you feel any of them will help, you might plan to include them.

Pray a prayer of thanks with the child

Before the child leaves, you could pray with him thanking the Lord for what He has done, and asking Him to help him to grow. An alternative to this would be for you to pray and thank God, just after Step 8, and after the child says "Thank you."

Take the child's name and address

(If you don't know him personally.)

You will want to pray for him and, if possible, send him a Bible correspondence course.

Give the child a follow-up booklet

You can give him a small booklet such as *First Steps* or *The Wonder Devotional Book.* All are available from Child Evangelism Fellowship.

However, it is better to give this booklet or book during a visit with him in his home a few days later. That overcomes the problem of other children hearing about this and coming for counselling just to obtain a free booklet!

It is good anyway to make it your practice to speak with the child the following week about what he has done. You can either do this by visiting his home or after the next meeting.

If you are conducting a 5-Day Club you can give booklets to children, who have been counselled, on the last day of the club. Also, make sure that each one has a Bible or Scripture portion.

If he doesn't have one, you could give him one at a later date.

Ask him if he has any questions

There might be something he is still not clear about or something which is bothering him. It is good to offer to help him—now or at any time in the future.

Give him an opportunity to witness

You could give the child an opportunity to witness immediately by taking him to another Christian who would be sympathetic and helpful. He could tell the person concerned what he has done.

Make sure he will have someone to help and encourage him—if at all possible

If you yourself will not be available to be of regular help to him in the future, it is good if a saved child can have an adult friend or counsellor who would be available to help him at all times. He should develop a good personal relationship with the child so that each could approach the other at any time. It is best for this counsellor to be the person who leads the child to Christ. But if this is not possible, you should arrange for some other person who is able and willing to help the child.

Remember, Your Work is Not Now Finished; It Is Just Beginning

The counselling session as outlined above may last up to 20 or 30 minutes, but it takes years of prayer, tears, hard work, and loving care to nurture this child and lead him on to a life of service for God. **Do not forget the importance of continuing follow up work!**

Chapter 4:
Three Outlines to Help

I include in this chapter three outlines on counselling to help you in your ministry. The first is just a series of key words which are easy to remember. The second is a "skeleton" outline. The third has more details. You may want to cut one of these out, or photocopy it, and keep it inside your Bible (or attach it to the inside cover). You can then use it as a guide when counselling a child. Personally, I would recommend that you use the second outline, the skeleton outline. It is very clear and yet concise.

Key Words for Counselling

1. Smile
2. Problem
3. Gospel
4. Verse
5. Really/Or?
6. Prayer
7. Assurance
8. Thanks
9. Help
10. Promise

"Skeleton" Outline for Counselling

1. **Set the child at ease**.
2. **Find his problem**.
   Why do you want to talk with me?
   Have you ever *sinned*?
   Have you trusted Jesus Christ *before*?
3. **Make sure he understands the Gospel.**
   God
   Sin
   Jesus Christ
   Turn and trust
4. **Use a Bible verse.**
5. **Do you really want to trust Christ or think more about it***?*
   Christ will want to be in control.
   Are you willing to turn from sin and live a changed life?
   Being a Christian is not easy.
   But the Lord will help you.
6. **Child prays**.
7. **Assurance of salvation.**
8. **Thank you!**
9. **Follow up work.**
   Read and obey Bible.
   Talk to God.
   Tell others.
   Ask God to forgive—if you sin.
   Meet with others.
10. **I-will-never-leave-you.**

Detailed Outline for Counselling

1. **Set the child at ease.**
   Name? Anyone waiting for you? Background?
2. **Identify child's problem by asking questions:**
   Why do you want to talk to me?
   Have you ever sinned?
   Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour before?
3. **Make sure the child understands the Gospel.**
   God (Gold page wordless book)
   Ask what God is like
   Creator; King of kings; pure; love
   Sin (Dark page wordless book)
   Ask what he thinks sin is—with examples
   Ask what God thinks of sin
   Ask if he is a sinner
   Ask if he wants to be different
   Jesus Christ (red page wordless book)
   Who can take away your sins?
   Why can He take them away?
   The Lord Jesus rose again from the dead, and is King of kings.
   Turn from sin, trust Christ (white page wordless book) The Lord Jesus will save you, if you will turn from your sin and trust Him.
4. **Use a Bible verse.**
   (John 1 v12, 3 v16, 6 v37; Acts 16 v31; Romans 6 v23,10 v13, 10 v13; or Revelation 3 v20).
   Explain what God wants him to do, and what God will then do.
5. ***A*sk if he would like to trust Christ now or would he rather wait and think about it.**
   The Lord Jesus wants to be in control.
   He must be willing to turn from sin because the Lord Jesus wants to see a changed life.

Being a Christian is not easy.
But the Lord will help him.

6. **Suggest that he ask Jesus Christ to save him**.
   Encourage the child to pray audibly, if he seems ready to trust Christ.
7. **Speak about assurance of salvation.**
   Go back over Bible verse used; speak about the change in his life.
8. **Suggest a prayer of thanks**.
   Give him the chance to pray, and thank the Lord Jesus for having saved him.
9. **Start follow up teaching**
   Read and obey the Bible each day.
   Talk to God, your Heavenly Father.
   Tell others what you have done.
   Ask God to forgive you when you sin.
   Meet together with other Christians.
10. **Give him a Bible promise.**
    "I will never leave you" (Hebrews 13 v5).

Possible concluding steps:
Pray a prayer of thanks with the child.
Take the child's name and address.
Ask him if he has any questions.
Give an opportunity to witness.
Give the child a follow up booklet (now or later).

Counselling Session Evaluation Form

Person Counselled: _____

Counsellor: _____

	Yes	No
1. **Set the child at ease**		
Did he/she smile?	☐	☐
Did he/she set you at ease?	☐	☐
Did he/she ask your name?	☐	☐
2. **Find his problem**		
Did he/she ask why you had come?	☐	☐
Did he/she ask you about sin?	☐	☐
Did he/she ask you if you had trusted Jesus Christ before?	☐	☐
3. **Make sure he understands the Gospel**		
Did he/she use the wordless book?	☐	☐
Did he/she find out what you understood about God?	☐	☐
Did he/she find out what you understood about sin?	☐	☐
Did he/she find out what you understood about the death of Christ?	☐	☐
Did he/she find out what you understood about the way of salvation?	☐	☐
Did he/she remind you that Jesus Christ rose from the dead?	☐	☐
4. **Use a Bible verse**		
Did he/she use a Bible verse to explain the way of salvation?	☐	☐
Did he/she show you clearly what to do?	☐	☐
Did he/she show you clearly what God would do?	☐	☐
Was the verse well explained?	☐	☐

	Yes	**No**
5. **Do you really want to trust Christ or think more about it?**		
Did he/she ask you if you really wanted to trust the Lord Jesus?	☐	☐
Did he/she give an alternative (or would you rather)?	☐	☐
Did he/she mention that Jesus Christ will want to be your boss (Lord)?	☐	☐
Did he/she mention that He will expect to see a change?	☐	☐
Did he/she mention that others might laugh at you?	☐	☐
Did he/she mention that Jesus Christ will help you?	☐	☐
6. **Child prays**		
Did he/she give you any idea or help in how you should pray?	☐	☐
7. **Assurance of salvation**		
Did he/she show you how you could know you were saved?	☐	☐
Did he/she go back to the same Bible verse?	☐	☐
Did he/she mention that your life would be different?	☐	☐
8. **Thank you**		
Did he/she encourage you to say "thank you" to the Lord Jesus?	☐	☐
9. **Follow-up work**		
Did he/she give some help with follow-up and growth?	☐	☐
Did he/she encourage you to read the Bible?	☐	☐
Did he/she encourage you to obey the Bible?	☐	☐
Did he/she show you where to start reading?	☐	☐
Did he/she encourage you to pray?	☐	☐
Did he/she encourage you to tell others?	☐	☐
Did he/she tell you that you will do wrong things and that you should confess them to God?	☐	☐

	Yes	No
Did he/she tell you that you would not need to be saved again if you did something wrong?	☐	☐
Did he/she encourage you to meet with other Christians?	☐	☐
10. **Give a Bible promise**		
Did he/she give you a promise from the Bible?	☐	☐
Which one? _____		

Conclusion

Was he/she a pleasant and friendly counsellor?	☐	☐
Did everything "flow" neatly without too many hesitations?	☐	☐
If you were a child, would you like to be counselled by him/her?	☐	☐

Section III

Twenty Questions and Answers concerning counselling

Question 1 Why should I need 20 or 30 minutes to counsel a child and lead him to Christ? I know children's workers who take much less time.

Answer It is essential that we as children's workers are always thorough in our ministry – and to be thorough in your counselling ministry you need to take time. This is not something to be done quickly or superficially. We are dealing with the souls of children, and what we do will affect their spiritual lives and future, one way or another. Would we take time to counsel an adult who wanted to be saved? Of course we would. Should we not then do the same when counselling a child? Indeed the child generally needs more counselling than an adult. For example, you will often need at least 5 or 10 minutes to find out exactly what the child's problem is. We should not model our ministry upon others unless it is obvious that they are doing things well and correctly. We must do our best no matter what anyone else does.

I have often come across instances when children have been counselled too briefly and too superficially, and it is the children who suffer.
Two boys came to me after one of our meetings and told me they would like to be saved. I asked them if they had ever trusted Christ before and had been saved. One of them said "Yes, we waited behind in a meeting like this and told the man in charge we would like to be saved. He put one hand on my head and the other on my friend's head and prayed for both of us. He then told us we were saved!!" How sad!
I was glad to be able to counsel the two boys that day and lead them to the Lord.

Question 2 Why do you lay so much emphasis upon counselling? Is it necessary for a child to be counselled before he can be saved?

Answer I believe that counselling should be an important and vital part of your ministry to children. But the main part of your ministry is not your counselling - it is your evangelism, your presentation of the Gospel. However, counselling is a necessary supplement to your evangelism and gives you the opportunity

to speak personally with a child who has heard your presentation and wants to trust Christ – but for some reason doesn't know what he needs to do.

However, I need to emphasise that a child can be saved without counselling. Actually I believe that more children trust Christ without counselling than those who are counselled.

I remember that when I was a young child evangelist I believed children who came to my meetings could only be saved if they came to me afterwards and I counselled them. At the end of a series of children's meetings I asked those who had trusted Jesus Christ during the meetings to tell me. I was surprised to discover that most of them had trusted Christ "on their own" without any counselling.
As a result I learned the lesson that counselling is important, but it is not necessary.

Question 3 Where is the best place to counsel a child
- **after a meeting in a church?**
- **after a Good News Club in a house?**
- **in the open air?**

Answer Remember the three principles you should always follow.

- Choose a place where the child (children) and you are completely visible;
- Choose a place which is as quiet as possible;
- Be sure to seat the child with his/her back towards anything which would distract.

Keeping these three principles in mind let us answer the three questions.

- The best place is in the front row of a church (after the meeting). The children will sit on one of the seats facing the front of the church and you will sit on a chair facing them. It would probably be best that when you make yourself available to the children you tell them that if they want to speak with you, or seek your help, they should come and sit in the front row after the meeting.

You should then make it clear to anyone else who is still in the church that you want complete silence. It is usually not advisable to ask children who want help and counsel to go into a room at the back of the church. This could make them nervous and might cause some people in some cultures to be suspicious. However, if you do use a separate room for counselling keep the door open.

➢ The best place in a Good News Club in a house is for the child who wants to be counselled just to remain seated when the others have left. You can then draw up a chair facing him/her.

➢ The best place in the open air is just there in the same location as the meeting, which should be completely open and public – seated on the grass in full view of everyone. You can again, during the meeting either ask the child who wants help to remain seated, or come to you afterwards and let you know. You should never take him anywhere else, and certainly not into a car - or you will have a problem. Just counsel him where you are. It might be rather embarrassing – but that is the best way and the best place.

Question 4 How would you counsel several children who came together to speak with you about how to receive Christ?

Answer When a group of children wait for counselling, it is better to use several counsellors if at all possible; but they must be trained to know how to deal with the children. It is best to have one counsellor for each child, if at all possible. However, if you have no one who can help you with counselling, the following are some guidelines to give you some help in what is not an ideal situation.

First, group all the children together and make sure everyone is quiet and attentive.

Then divide the children into the four groups indicated on page 31 by asking the three introductory questions beginning on page 32. Then you can counsel each group separately.

➢ Ask the question to each child, **"Why have you come to speak with me?**" Listen carefully to the children's answers to gauge:

- If there is any child there who is insincere, curious, or who has come to you because someone else has.
  If you are sure they are not ready to receive Christ, counsel or have a co-worker talk with them as children from Group 1, and let them leave. Alternatively, they can listen in as you counsel the others. However, this is not ideal as it may cause distraction to the child being counseled; and the latter may feel restricted in what he says because of lack of privacy.
- If there is a Christian child with a problem.
  Then deal with him as a child from Group 3. Suggest he wait until later and then you will take time to deal with his problem. (You may also find through the third question that there are others who are already Christians but who are not sure or have problems.) Another alternative is to counsel him briefly and pray with him before proceeding any further, or to ask one of your co-workers to take this child aside and talk with him.

➢ Ask the second question, **"Have you ever sinned?**" to each child. Or if there are many children, ask the group as a whole, letting them indicate their answer by nodding their heads. Bring together those who say they have never sinned and counsel them unitedly as children who do not understand. Then pray with them and either have them leave or, if they have come with other children, have them sit at one side and wait quietly.

➢ Ask the others the third question, **"Have you already received the Lord Jesus?**" Have them indicate their answer to you. Bring together those who say "yes" and ask them to tell you about it. Then if you are satisfied that they have received the Lord Jesus either suggest they listen carefully while you talk to those who wish to receive Christ today or tell them they do not need to be saved again. Pray with them and let them go.

Counsel those who remain (and want to trust Christ) as outlined earlier in the book (see from page 35 onwards). This is

not difficult when all are in the same group and have the same need. Then allow each one to pray individually to trust Christ. If there are a substantial number of children, you may lead in prayer and have the children repeat it after you.

At this stage bring back into the conversation those who were lacking assurance (if they are still there), and talk to the whole group together about assurance and forgiveness of sin, etc., then dismiss both groups together.

Question 5 What would you do if you did not have enough time to counsel a concerned child as thoroughly as you would wish?

Answer

- *Be absolutely sure that you have explained the Gospel* so clearly in your teaching time so that it is possible for the child to trust Christ without being counselled.
- *Are you sure that you don't have enough time?* Is there nothing you could do to give yourself more time? Sometimes we make this an excuse for not counselling as thoroughly as we should.
- *It is not necessary to do all your counselling at this one time.* It is best, of course, to do so. But if there is not enough time, you could arrange to continue your counselling at another time which you would arrange with the child before he leaves.
- *Do your best.* You cannot do any more than that. Trust God to do His work in the child's heart despite your lack of time.

Question 6 What should I do if there is absolutely no opportunity for counselling children after I have finished my Gospel presentation to them?

Answer This is a situation which often occurs in the ministry of a children's worker. One other example is if you are engaged in a ministry in the public schools. You have freedom to speak to all the children in the class, and you can teach them the Gospel during the time you have, and you can challenge them to respond to your teaching. But that is usually all. You will not ordinarily

have the chance to "make yourself available" to them and you will certainly not be able to counsel any of them individually.

What should you do?

- Be sure to make the teaching of the Gospel in your presentation as simple and as clear as you can.

- Be sure to challenge the children to respond.
"You can trust the Lord Jesus as your Saviour at any time – as you sit there in your seat, or as you walk home, or beside your bed tonight. Just be sure to trust Him.

- You could make available to them a tract or booklet with more information about the Gospel, with your name, address and telephone number (or E-mail address) on it – invite them to take a copy of it and feel free to contact you by telephone or E-mail if they have any questions.

If you are a teacher in the school you could let the children know that if they have any question, or need any help, they can come and speak with you in your classroom after school. *I did this when I was a school teacher and had a number of opportunities to counsel students in my classroom after school.*

Question 7 What would you do if you were counselling two little girls who giggled continually?

Answer Understand that giggling often means nervousness. If you are satisfied that it is nervousness or shyness, try to make the children feel at ease and proceed with the counselling. If it is a sign of irreverence or lack of interest, then you cannot lead the children to Christ. Warn them, lovingly but firmly, first of all. If you are reasonably sure this is the reason they are giggling, ask them to speak with you some other time, after they have taken more time to think about it. But do be very careful. Usually with little girls, giggling is only a sign of shyness or nervousness.

Question 8 What should I do if a child waits behind for counselling and it is obvious that he is mentally inadequate?

Answer You should go ahead and counsel him. You should follow, basically, the plan outlined in this book – but keep it as simple and as basic as possible. You may not want to ask as many questions as you would ordinarily do, and when you do ask them do not expect a detailed or understandable answer. You are more likely to get "yes" or "no".

Take the child the whole way through your counselling plan, as an unsaved child, and give him the opportunity, if he wishes, to ask the Lord Jesus to save him. There will probably be no way that you can guage, or judge, whether he has understood you or not, and whether his response has been an intelligent one. So just leave the whole matter in God's Hands – you have done what you could. You will probably never know what the result will be, at least until you are in Heaven.

A boy came to me after a meeting and told me he wanted to be saved. Although he was around 13 or 14 years of age, he was mentally handicapped and had the understanding of a child of 4, 5 or 6. I did what I have outlined above. He prayed and asked the Lord Jesus to come into his life. Did he understand? I don't know. Was he saved? I don't know. I only know I fulfilled my responsibility and did what I could.

Question 9 What should I do if the child I am counselling does not say anything and does not answer any questions?

Answer This will certainly make it difficult for you to counsel him. You will have no way in understanding what his need is or what his problem is, and you wont be able to discover how much he understands or does not understand.

But your responsibility is to keep on counselling him and follow the basic plan in this book. You will not know how much he understands or is able to follow you. When you give him the opportunity to pray and ask the Lord Jesus to come into his life,

and he still doesn't say anything, you will not know if he has trusted the Lord Jesus or not. You can just fulfill your responsibility, counsel him as well and as simply as you can – as an unsaved child – and leave everything in God's Hands.

This actually happened to a friend and co-worker of mine. Two girls who were sisters, and I believe twins, waited behind for counselling after a meeting in a church where he had been speaking. The father of the girls was the Pastor of the church. And as my friend spoke with them and counselled them they said absolutely nothing. But he kept on counselling them for 20 minutes and also gave them the opportunity to pray and ask the Lord Jesus to save them – but he never heard them say anything at that time. He was puzzled and was not sure if they had understood properly or if they had trusted the Lord Jesus. The next day he was speaking to the Pastor who told him that his two girls had come home from the meeting the previous evening to tell him that they had both trusted the Lord Jesus and they were saved. He said that they just kept talking about it for a long time. My friend told the Pastor that he had had the opposite experience!

Question 10 What would you do if a child came to you for counselling and wanted to trust Christ, but hesitated because of fear of parents' or religious leaders' objections?

Answer The Bible makes it clear that children should obey their parents. "*Obey your parents in the Lord*." Ephesians 6 v1. This is not a blanket obedience. They should obey "in the Lord" - that is provided their obedience to their parents does not conflict with or prevent their obedience to the Lord. When those in authority over us go against the will of God, it is clearly expressed in the Bible: *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5 v29). Trusting Christ is a command from God and supercedes parental or religious authority which might be opposed to it. Encourage the child to trust Christ if he wants to, despite possible reaction.

Evelyn told me that she wanted to trust the Lord Jesus but she also told me that her parents had forbidden her to do so. I told her that she should always obey her parents unless what they told her to do was contrary to what God wanted her to do. So she wanted to go ahead and trust the Lord Jesus - and I had the privilege to counsel her and lead her to Christ. I told her afterwards not to tell her parents what she had done - but to show that she had trusted the Lord

Jesus by a changed life. Her parents saw the changes in her and asked her what had happened - and as a result both of them trusted Christ.

Question11 What would you say to a child who tells you that he asked the Lord Jesus into his heart every evening before going to bed?

Answer Tell him that he does not need to ask the Lord Jesus into his heart and life every evening. It is only necessary once. When the Lord Jesus comes in, He comes in to stay.

However, the fact that he has been praying like this indicates that he is probably just repeating something he has heard without any real conviction or understanding. You should, therefore, explain to him that it is not enough just to repeat a little prayer which he has learned, but that, first of all, he must really want the Lord Jesus to wash away his sin and be His Saviour. Explain what this means. Then tell him that if he is sincere and wants to be a Christian, he should ask the Lord Jesus to forgive his sins and come to live in his heart and life. Assure him that if he does this sincerely, he will never need to do so again.

Question 12 Could you give me more help as to what I should do if a teacher or parent brings a child to me for counselling – and it is obvious when I counsel him that he does not understand and is not ready to trust the Lord Jesus?

Answer First of all I personally would hesitate and even doubt when someone brings a child to me for counselling. I would rather see a child come by himself. And I might also wonder if the teacher has used any pressure to bring the child to me.

However you should start to counsel him in the usual way and take him as far as his understanding allows. But if you come to the point where you are sure that the child does not understand, then you should tell him honestly that he is not yet ready to go any further. But encourage him to come again to see you when he is more ready. Then pray with the child and let him go. This

might disappoint the teacher who brought him, but your responsibility is to the child, not the teacher.

This did happen to me on one occasion. A teacher brought a child to me so that I could lead him to Christ. I did what I have outlined above. The child was really young but he did not understand what I was saying. So I prayed with him and let him go. The teacher was not too pleased!!

Question 13 Is it possible (or advisable) to counsel children in a group which varies in age from 6 to 13?

Answer It is always better to counsel children separately. But it is possible to do so if you follow the outline on page 53. It is certainly not ideal or advisable to counsel a group of children with such a variety of ages. But it is possible if you are on your own with no-one else to help. If you have a co-worker one of you could talk to the older children and the other to the younger children. The problem is not as serious as it seems. The important thing is to divide the children according to the group they are in (see page 31) and you can counsel each group with the same need, even though they vary in age.

It's not advisable or ideal – but it can be done.

Question 14 What should I do if a child keeps coming every week for counselling – after he has received the Lord Jesus?

Answer There could be a number of reasons for this – and you need to find out what the problem is and try to solve it!

- It may be lack of teaching on your part. You may not have taught as thoroughly as you should – that when a child asks the Lord Jesus into his life He promises never to leave him.
- It may be confusion on the child's part concerning some of the words and concepts you used. For example, he may have thought that the words "saved from sin" meant that he would never sin again – and when he did sin he felt he needed to be saved again.

- It may be that someone has told him (and kept telling him) that he is not saved and he doesn't know who to believe.
- It may be that he just wants attention or to repeat a happy experience. If so you need to just pray with him.
- It may be that he is not saved (and if he isn't you should seek to lead him to Jesus Christ – once and for all.
- It may be that he has an emotional or psychological problem with which you cannot deal.

In the first four cases it is essential that you take him back to the Bible verse you used previously when you counselled him.

- In this verse what does God say you should do?
- Did you do this?
- What does God promise to do in this verse?
- Do you believe God?

Question 15 If I am asked to speak to children in a church which I know is not sympathetic to the evangelizing or counselling of children, what should I do?

Answer You must always adapt yourself to the circumstances in which you find yourself. This situation is far from ideal - but at the same time you should be glad to have another opportunity.

As you speak you should give a clear and simple presentation of the Gospel – explaining what the Lord Jesus did on the cross to save children from sin, and also showing the children what they need to do to be saved. You cannot make yourself available to them, for when the service is over you have to leave the child. But you have been faithful in your presentation of the truths and the challenge of the Gospel.

But there is one more thing you can do. After you have spoken you could close with prayer, and before you pray you could say to the children that if any of them want to ask the Lord Jesus into their heart they can do so as you pray. And you could word your prayer, or part of it, in a way that the children would

have the opportunity, if they wish, to ask the Lord Jesus to save them.

"Dear Lord Jesus	*(a moment's silence)*
I have sinned	*(a moment's silence)*
Come into my heart	*(a moment's silence)*
And save me	*(a moment's silence)*

I did exactly this at the conclusion of my Gospel presentation one Sunday morning in a church which was not evangelical. I closed with the above prayer and a child's voice could be heard clearly all over the church repeating these words. What a joy! Needless to say, I was never invited to speak to these children again!

Question 16 Is it advisable to counsel a child on a one-to-one basis, especially in the open air? Could this arouse suspicion in the light of recent news stories about children being harassed or abused by adults?

Answer In some cultures or areas it might be a problem - especially in the open air – but even in these situations you can avoid such problems in several ways.

- By building up your relationships with the people – especially the parents, in the area where you are speaking to the children. If the parents know you and even appreciate what you are doing, they will have no problem with you counselling their children.
- You must be sure to stay in public view at all times when you are counselling a child – in the place where you hold the meetings.
- You could ask another children's worker to be with you when you counsel.
  - This would minimise suspicion
  - It would make the child less nervous
  - If the children's worker was younger and inexperienced he would learn how to counsel by watching you

- This is one situation when it is better to be counselling several children instead of just one. When there are more than one there is less change of anyone being suspicious.

However, it should be pointed out that in many places counselling a child publicly in the open air would not create any problem or raise any suspicion.

Question 17 What advise would you give me with regard to counselling if invited to speak in a church for a week long evangelistic campaign for children?

Answer I presume that the children, or most of them, are connected with the church in some way. So it would be good for members of the church, and especially Sunday school teachers in the church to be able to keep in contact with the children after the week's meetings conclude.

Therefore, while you will be responsible to lead the meetings, to teach the Bible lessons and evangelise the children, it would be better for church members to counsel any children who wait behind. This will then give those church members a personal interest in the children they have counselled, and will give them a sense of responsibility to follow them up.

I would therefore suggest the following steps.

- You should let the pastor know if any children wait behind when you make yourself available, that you would like church members, or, better still, Sunday school teachers to counsel them. You should then ask the pastor if you could speak to the church, or the Sunday school teachers, several weeks before your campaign starts.
- At this special meeting you should share your plan for the campaign and ask for volunteers who would be ready, willing and able to counsel children when they wait behind.

- You should arrange to have at least one, and preferably two training classes, to show them how to counsel a class. Many Sunday school teachers, even experienced ones, do not really know how to do this. This should include a demonstration from yourself.
- Then, if children wait behind during the campaign, after you have let them know that you or someone else is ready to talk with them, you should assign each one to one of the consellors you have trained.
- While they are counselling you should walk around and listen to the counsellor, to be sure that they are "doing a good job."

Question 18 Is it important to visit and get to know the parents of a child you have counselled? If so, how?

Answer

It is absolutely vital for you to visit.

The parents are the ones to whom the child is responsible, and the ones before whom he will live his Christian life. It is necessary for you to visit them if at all possible. You need to take into consideration, of course, the child's background (e.g., if he is a Muslim or Roman Catholic or other religion).

It will also help the child's future stand as a Christian if your visit is a helpful one. So such visits to the parents of counselled children can be very rewarding.

Remember your purpose is ***not***:

- to preach at the parents, or to change them
- to suggest to them how to rear their children
- to pose as a children's expert (they probably know more about children than you do)

But your purpose ***is***:

- to show and express the interest you have in their child and his welfare
- to give the child a booklet or Bible to help him in his Christian life

Parents will often be happy when someone is showing a practical interest in their child like this. But even if the response is not good, do not be disappointed. Be patient and go back again. They might like what you are doing but feel threatened because their life-style is so different from yours.

A conversation may go like this:

> "I want to thank you for letting your child come so regularly to my Good News Club."
>
> "Oh, he enjoys it."
>
> "I am glad to hear that. I really enjoy his being there. He is a real credit to his parents and to his home."
>
> "You do a good job with the children."
>
> "It's a pleasure. The children coming each week really encourages me and makes it worthwhile."
>
> "Our boy is very interested."
>
> "Yes, he is and I have also had opportunities to speak and pray with him personally. We have had several good chats together. We want to encourage him to put what he has learned into practice—here at home, at play, and at school."
>
> "I hope he does too."
>
> "I also encouraged him to read his Bible every day. If there is any way you can encourage and help him to do this also, it would be a real help."

It is also good to build a good relationship with the parents of a child even before you counsel him—if at all possible. Certainly, when you minister regularly to the same children, you should endeavour to keep in good contact with the parents.

Question 19 Is it right to use Revelation 3 v20 when you are counselling children?

Answer I believe that this verse is part of the New Testament teaching concerning salvation and the reception of the Lord Jesus into a sinner's life (John 1 v12; Colossians 2 v6), His promise to live in us (2 Corinthians 1 v22; Galatians 4 v6; Colossians 1 v27), and His desire to reign in our lives (Galatians 2 v20; Ephesians 3 v17).

It is necessary to see Revelation 3 v20 in its context and understand and teach what it really means. Be careful not to give the picture of an impotent "beggar" pleading vainly at the door of the sinner's heart and life. Christ is a mighty Saviour!

The one who is knocking at the door is the Alpha and Omega of chapter 1 v11, the One before whom John fell as dead (1 v17) and the One who holds the keys of hell and death (1 v18). He is the One who knows everything about us (3 v15), who judges hypocrisy (3 v16), who rebukes, chastens and demands repentance (3 v19) and who is sovereign on the throne (3 v21): He does not just want to come in to save, but to control.

It is also necessary to see Revelation 3 v20 in the context of the overall teaching of Scriptures. The Bible teaches clearly that it is always God who takes the first step in a sinner's conversion (John 6 v44, 65). The child is only able to open his heart and life to the Lord Jesus because He has already worked in, and opened, the child's heart and understanding.

The meaning of the verse is clear—even for a child. It would seem from the preceding verses, Revelation 3 v15-18, that among the professing members of the church at Laodicea there were, at least, some who were unsaved. The Lord speaks to each one individually (the pronouns are in the singular). The picture is of a house. The Lord Himself comes to seek the sinner. He speaks through His Word (His voice)—read or heard. The Lord does not break down the door—although He could if He wished. The individual must listen to the Word and "open the door." He must ask the Lord to come in and to save him (Romans 10 v13). The moment the door is opened, the Lord comes to indwell by His Spirit. When He comes in, He makes all things new, as He did for

Zacchaeus. He brings us into close fellowship, a foretaste of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

For an example of the use of Revelation 3 v20 in an evangelistic context, read *Christ Knocking at the Door of Sinners' Hearts* by the English Puritan preacher, John Flavel.

I have often used this verse when leading a child to Christ and have found that the picture it portrays and the teaching it gives is easy for the children - especially younger children - to understand.

However if you do use this verse be sure to explain that it was not a real door and a real knocking you can hear. These are just picture words.

I used this verse once when counselling a child and I did not explain it properly. The child listened carefully and then he said "I have often wondered what that thump thump was in my heart. Now I know". I then had to retrace my steps and explain the verse better.

Question 20 Is it correct to speak about "the heart" to children when counselling them?

Answer The word "heart" is used over 900 times in the Bible. It is used as follows:

- Generally it is used to describe "the seat (source or basis) of the intellect, emotions and will." Sometimes the emphasis is on the intellect (Mark 2 v6; Genesis 6 v5), sometimes the emotions (Judges 18 v20; Luke 24 v32), and sometimes the will (Mark 3 v5; Psalm 119 v2).
- A few times it is used to signify "the innermost being" (Genesis 6 v6).
- Sometimes it is used to imply affection (Psalm 62 v10).
- Sometimes it is used to describe the whole moral nature of men (Jeremiah 17 v9).

One writer suggests that the word "heart" comes the nearest of the New Testament terms to mean "person." It describes the governing centre of the whole man; and this is exactly what God wants to have. "My son, give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23 v26).

The heart is the "real you." It is therefore perfectly biblical to use

the word "heart" when teaching children, provided we explain what we mean by "heart," and that we are not speaking of the heart in our bodies that pumps blood. To avoid completely any confusion, you might want to use the words "heart and life" together.

Conclusion: And Now?

What is your reaction to what you have read in this book concerning the counselling of children?

- Perhaps you already knew and were putting the contents of the book into practice. That's good! I trust you will pass the book onto someone else.
- Perhaps you have learned something you had not known before. That's good! I trust this will be a help to you.
- Perhaps you have seen a mistake you have been making. That's good! I trust that the book has helped you to correct it.

But there may be some reader who has never led a child to Christ and, as you have read the book, you have had two reactions:

- You really want to lead a child to Christ in this way.
- You feel that you couldn't do it. You are nervous and are overwhelmed with the responsibility involved.

This is not unusual. Children's workers who have never counselled an unsaved child are, understandably, very hesitant about doing so.

They might think: "I just couldn't" "I might say something wrong" "I might leave something out" or "I would be afraid of being a hindrance or a stumbling block to the child and even preventing him from being truly saved."

If you react in any of these ways, let me share some advice with you.

- **Be sure you want to do God's work according to His will and in obedience to His command.** When you have this assurance in your heart, you can trust Him despite all your weakness.
- **Remember that this is God's work**. He can work in the

child's heart despite your mistakes and hesitations. Don't feel that everything depends upon you. It doesn't. Trust Him to do His work. He will not allow His Word to return unto Him void. He will always overrule. Often He uses us when we feel most inadequate.

- **Be well prepared**. The fact that it is God's work is not an excuse for shabby, slip-shod work on our part. We are co-workers with Him!
  - Read through the different steps over and over again.
  - Practise with a tape recorder.
  - Counsel another children's worker in a practice session.
  - Then let him counsel you. (You could both use the evaluation form starting on page 56 for this purpose).
  - Let each other know what mistakes were made.
- **Cut out or photocopy one of the counselling outlines** at the end of chapter 4 in Section II and keep it inside your Bible. You can refer to it as you are counselling a child.
- **Learn to counsel by doing it**. The more you counsel, the better you will be able to do so. "*Practice makes permanent*." (Hendricks). Keep at it. You will learn as you do it. It is, of course, important to know how to lead a child to Christ in theory (and I hope this book is a help in this way). But you need to put what you have learned into practice. And as you do that you will gain both experience and ability.
- **Look upon counselling as a privilege**. It is an opportunity God has given you to share in the life of a child and to help him to be what God wants him to be. It may be a burden upon your heart; but it should not become a source of worry. See it as a joy and honour to be engaged in such a work as this.

I encourage you to pray that God *will* give you the possibility to counsel a child; and also at the same time I encourage you to look for opportunities to do so. When you evangelise your children, make yourself available to them for counselling; and I believe God will bring children to you who need and want spiritual help. If you do not let them know that you are ready and available to speak to them personally about salvation, very few—

if any—will come to you for counselling.

Do not be afraid or nervous because you have never done it before. You are but a channel for God to use. His grace is sufficient for you. His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12 v9).

May God give you the joy, and privilege of leading many precious children to a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Prayer

Lead me to some child* today,
Oh teach me, Lord, just what to say.
Children too are lost in sin,
And cannot find their way.
Few there are who seem to care,
And few there are who pray,
Melt my heart and fill my life,
To win some child* today.

W H Houghton

* or soul

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  "*The Problems of a Children's Worker - and God's Solution*"
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  "*God's Word for God's Workers Vol 1*"
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- **A series of training manuals for children's workers:**
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  "*100 Questions and Answers Concerning a Ministry to Children*"
  "*How to Evangelize Children*"
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