A Personal Testimony from the Author

I trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour on November 30th, 1949 when I was 22 years old. Immediately my wife and I started to ask God what He wanted us to do. We knew that we had been saved to serve Him, but we did not know what kind of service in which we should get involved. I thought about the evangelism of athletes and football players like myself—but that was not God's plan. Several months after we had trusted Christ, God, in a number of ways, laid a burden on our hearts for children, and we knew that He wanted us to evangelize them.

This was the beginning of (until now) 46 happy and blessed years of child evangelism, and we had the privilege of seeing many boys and girls put their trust in Jesus Christ.

We began the work of Child Evangelism Fellowship in our native land of Ireland; and were the National Directors there for 14 years (1950-1964).

We became European Regional Directors of Child Evangelism Fellowship in 1964, and, with our regional Headquarters in Switzerland, served in that capacity for 29 years.

Since 1993 we have been primarily engaged in the writing and publishing of books such as this one—to help those who work with children—worldwide.

But the burden on our hearts has always been to see children trust Jesus Christ for salvation, and we are so thankful that God called us to EVANGELIZE CHILDREN. We feel that it is the most wonderful work in the whole world.

In 1964 when I was preparing for my ministry in Europe I wrote a poem. It is the only poem I have ever written—and it came right from my heart. I would like to reproduce it here.

His Hand and Mine (Psalm 24 v3, 4)

He holds my hand, I will not fear the shadows
We dwell in sweet communion day by day
He guides me, as I seek to walk beside Him
My cross to bear, some child to show the way.

He fills my hands that I may lack for nothing
He knows my need—He's gone this way before
He fails not nor forsakes the one who ventures
But longs and waits for hands to trust Him more.

He uses my hand, oh deep oh awesome wonder
That my Creator wants to work through me
That He may reach lost boys and girls in Europe
And use my hands to bring them to His knee.

Lord, take my hands and use them at Thy bidding
To pray, to give, to go to win the lost
Through me dear Lord, reach out to save the children
No matter what the sacrifice or cost.

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Why Evangelize Children?

Sam Doherty

WHY

Evangelize Children ?



Helps you to see and understand the primary goal of a ministry to children- the salvation of boys and girls

Dr Sam Doherty

WHY EVANGELIZE CHILDREN?

A manual to help children's workers see and understand the primary goal of their ministry - the salvation of boys and girls

SAM DOHERTY

Training manuals available to help children's workers written by Sam Doherty:

"*First Steps*"
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"*U-can Help Christian Children to Grow*"
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FOREWORD

In Europe today we are living in a post-Christian era. Christian ideas have been superseded by materialism and secularism. Most children no longer have the opportunity to hear the Gospel. There is no one to tell them that Jesus is their Saviour—not parents, nor teacher, nor pastor.

Many children today are suffering in our society which is hostile to them. Many are left to their own devices, but don't know how to take charge of their lives. Others are abused sexually or are victims of divorce. Each one needs the message of salvation, if they are to cope with the difficulties of their lives.

In this book Sam Doherty calls upon all who know the Lord to reach the children in their neighbourhood with the Gospel message. He shows that it is not a matter of what we feel like doing, it is a commission from the Lord Himself. Children are sinners under God's wrath, and there is no more wonderful message we can tell the children, than that Jesus is their Saviour. We are absolutely convinced that children are in a position to accept the salvation offered to them in Christ (Matthew 18 v14).

It is worth leading children to Christ, because when they are saved they can live their whole lives for Jesus.

When many children accept this salvation, it can lead to many parents, and indeed families, being saved through their changed lives. Later, when these children grow up, Jesus can use them, whether it be as preachers, elders or missionaries, to build His church. Their lives with Jesus will have a positive effect on many aspects of society and in politics. They influence the community with their biblical values and their way of doing things. Children who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour and have lived their lives with His help will finally be with Him in Heaven.

Yes, it is worth evangelizing children. Every believer and every church who strive to reach children with the Gospel message will experience a special blessing from God.

I am delighted with the material in this book, and hope that many

readers will be encouraged and spurred on to bring the Gospel to the children in their neighbourhood.

Doctor Armin Mauerhofer

For over 15 years Dr. Mauerhofer was pastor of the Free Evangelical Church in Langenthal, Switzerland where he always encouraged the development of ministries to reach children. Up to 17 Good News Clubs were taught by church members in homes in Langenthal and the surrounding villages. The full-time children's worker and the pastor were involved in the training of these teachers.

Since 1993 Dr. Mauerhofer has been lecturing in the Free Theological Seminary in Basel, Switzerland. Among other subjects he specialises in children's and youth ministries. His desire is to prepare pastors to develop children's work in their future churches.

Dr. Mauerhofer is also Chairman of the Inland Mission of his denomination, the purpose of which is the establishment of new Free Evangelical churches all over Switzerland.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most frequent questions asked by children's workers, and especially by those who are commencing their ministry to children is: "What am I supposed to do during my time with the children?" This question is often followed by other questions:

- Should I read books to them?
- Should I tell stories?
- Should I concentrate on Bible stories?
- Should I just teach Bible truths?
- Should I give them hand work to do?
- Should I encourage physical activity or handwork of some kind?
- Should I play games?

Most of these questions could be answered in the affirmative—depending of course on the time available. But there is one key question missing, and **that** is the question we want to address, and answer, in this book.

Should I Evangelize the Children?

If the answer is "yes" this will lead naturally to other related questions:

- What does it mean to evangelize children?
- Why should I evangelize children?
- How should I evangelize them?
- When and where should I evangelize them?

All of these questions we hope to answer.

There are however two other basic questions to address when answering questions such as those outlined above; and our answers to these two questions are absolutely vital.

What Does the Bible Teach Us on the Subject Concerned?

What the Bible teaches will be the basis of this book. God has given

us His Word so that we **can** know the answers to these and many other related questions. Our answers must not be based upon reason, feelings, psychology, emotion or the words of people, no matter how expert they are; but upon the inspired, infallible Word of God.

What Are the Real Needs and Problems of the Children We Are Teaching?

We want our teaching to meet the needs and problems which children actually have. Consequently we must discover from the Bible and from experience what those needs and problems are. We must then ensure that our ministry to the children is one which will best solve those problems and meet those needs.

I trust that this book will be an encouragement to those of us who are already evangelizing children; and that it will give us a new vision and a fresh burden to do all we can to reach them for Jesus Christ.

I pray also that this book will be a help and challenge to those who until now have not really seen the need to evangelize children. I trust that it will lay upon the hearts of all children's workers, who read it, their clear responsibility to minister to the spiritual needs of their children by becoming more and more involved in a ministry of evangelism to them.

I also hope that pastors and other Christian workers will read the book and that they will see the importance of evangelizing children as a vital part of their ministry. I am glad therefore that Dr. Armin Mauerhofer has written the foreword to this book. He was a pastor of a large church in Langenthal, Switzerland, for a number of years. God blessed that church, and it experienced much growth. Dr. Mauerhofer attributes much of that growth to the church's evangelistic outreach to the children of Langenthal (see page 20).

At the end of each chapter I have included quotations from Charles Haddon Spurgeon which relate to the specific subject of that chapter. These quotes come primarily from two of his books:

Come Ye Children
Words of Counsel for Christian Workers

Both are published by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, Texas.

Charles Spurgeon was one of the greatest pastors and preachers of all time and was greatly used by God in England during the latter half of the nineteenth century. He was pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for many years and had congregations every Sunday morning and evening of between 5,000 and 6,000. He also founded a College to train pastors, and a large orphanage. In addition he had a very extensive writing ministry, and millions of his Sunday sermons were printed and distributed all over the world.

He was a great lover of children and an enthusiastic believer in the evangelism of children. In keeping with his interest in children he established forty nine branch Sunday schools in addition to the main one in the Tabernacle. The enrolment in all of these schools was 7,887. He also encouraged the 500 children from the orphanage to sit on the front seats in his church every Sunday morning to hear him preach.

I felt that it would be a special encouragement for pastors to read these relevant comments from him.

The Lord Jesus says to us, His disciples "Go ye into all the world, and **preach the Gospel** to **every** creature" (Mark 16 v15).

Paul wrote to the Romans "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And **how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?** And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10 v13, 14 and 15).

Paul reminded Timothy "Do the work of **an evangelist**" (2 Timothy 4 v5).

A Parable of Fishless Fishermen

Now it came to pass that there was a group of people who called themselves fishermen and lo there were many fish in the waters around. In fact the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish and the fish were hungry.

Week after week, month after month, year after year, those who called themselves fishermen met in meetings to talk about their call to fish, the abundance of fish and how they might go about fishing.

Year after year they carefully defined what fishing meant, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing was always the primary task of the fishermen.

Continually they searched for new and better methods of fishing and for new and better definitions of fishing. One thing they didn't do however. ***They didn't fish.***

Large, elaborate and expensive training centres were built, whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. All through the years, courses were offered on the need to fish, the nature of fish, where to find fish, classifying fish, and the psychological reactions of fish.

Those who taught had doctorates of fishiology but the teachers didn't fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, after tedious training, many were graduated and were given fishing licences.

After one meeting on the necessity for fishing, one young fellow left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported that he caught two outstanding fish. He was honoured for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the main meetings possible to tell how he had caught the two big fish. So he quit his fishing in order to have time to tell about his experiences to the other fishermen and also to make a movie on the big catch. He was also placed on the fishermen's general board because of his considerable experience.

Now it's true that many of "the fishermen" were truly sincere and really sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. After all, were they not following the master who said "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Imagine how hurt some of them were when one day a person stood up and suggested that those who didn't catch fish were really not fishermen no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct.

Is a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches fish? Is one following if one isn't fishing?

(Author unknown)

Chapter 1:
Biblical Evangelism

The Bible is, and should always be, our handbook on evangelism. This is one of the reasons why God has given it to us. Consequently we need to study it so as to understand and answer questions such as:

- What is evangelism?
- Where and whom should we evangelize?
- Why should we evangelize?
- Why should we evangelize children?
- Who should evangelize children?
- How should we evangelize children?
- When should we evangelize children?

What is Evangelism?

Evangelism is the proclamation of good news to lost sinners—that Jesus Christ died for their sins, that He rose again, and that He is willing and able to save all those who want to turn from their sin (repent) and put their trust in Him as Lord and Saviour (Mark 16 v15; Luke 24 v46–48; 1 Corinthians 15 v1–4).

This Gospel message is clearly outlined in the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible also makes it clear that there is only one Gospel (Galatians 1 v8, 9) and that **this** Gospel is to be preached to everyone (Mark 16 v15)—whether they be adults, young people or children.

It is, of course, absolutely essential to know what this Gospel message is if we are going to preach it.

Evangelism involves the teaching of as much as possible of four areas of Bible truth.

- **Teach about God—the source of salvation**

  We need to teach about His Character (who He is and what He is like) and His Work (what He has done). An understanding of sin and the need of salvation begins with a clear understanding of God.

We need to emphasize:

- ✓ God is the Creator (Acts 17: 23–29)
  Therefore man has a responsibility towards Him.
- ✓ God has spoken to man through the Bible (1 Corinthians 15 v3, 4)
  Therefore man should listen to God's Word.
- ✓ God is holy and just (Acts 17 v31)
  Therefore He must judge sin.
- ✓ God is good and gracious, loving and merciful (John 3 v16)
  Therefore He has provided the answer to man's need.

The holiness of God makes salvation necessary; the love of God makes salvation possible. We should always teach these truths in Biblical balance.

➢ **Teach about sin—man's need of salvation**

We need to teach about the sinfulness of the human heart.
We need to explain what sin is, and that all are sinners before a holy God.
We need to teach the consequences of sin.

We need to emphasize:

- ✓ Sin is against God (Psalm 51 v4). It is the transgression of His Law (1 John 3 v4).
- ✓ All are sinners by nature (Ephesians 2 v3) and by act (Romans 3 v23).
- ✓ Sin deserves punishment and everlasting separation from God (Romans 1 v18).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin. We need to pray that He will do this work in the hearts and lives of those children whom we teach.

➢ **Teach about Jesus Christ—the way of salvation**

We need to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ; He is the One who saves.
We need to teach about His Person (Who He is), and His Work (what He did).

We need to emphasize:

- ✓ He is God the Son, the Only Saviour (Acts 9 v20).

- ✓ His death: its meaning and importance, and its sufficiency to atone for sin (Acts 2 v23; 33; 38).
- ✓ His resurrection: He is a living Saviour (Acts 2 v24–32).
- ✓ His exaltation: He is Lord of all (Acts 2 v33–36).

Christ is the One Who must be believed in or trusted personally for salvation.

Teaching on His Person and His saving work should be closely linked when presenting the Gospel.

➢ **Teach about repentance and faith—the appropriation of salvation**

The invitation to come to Christ is an essential part of the Gospel (John 6 v37; Revelation 22 v17). We need to pray for an immediate, present trust in Christ.

We need to emphasize:

- ✓ Christ's invitation to come to Him (Matthew 11 v28).
- ✓ The need to have a desire to turn from sin to God (Acts 2 v38; Acts 26 v20).
- ✓ The need to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and to begin a life of obedience (Acts 16 v31; Romans 10 v9, 13).

True faith always includes repentance and both involve a three-fold response to Christ's invitation—a response of mind, heart and will (Romans 6 v17).

➢ **Teach about the results of salvation**

We need to let the children know what will happen if, and when, they trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour:

- ✓ All their sin will be forgiven. They will be justified (Acts 13 v38, 39)
- ✓ They will receive eternal life (John 3 v16)
- ✓ They will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2 v38)
- ✓ They will be regenerated and receive a new nature (John 3 v3–8), and God will expect to see a real change in their lives (Acts 26 v20).

It is, in addition, essential to understand, and practise, the methods of evangelism which we can see portrayed in the ministry of evangelists in the New Testament.

Their ministry involved:

- **Proclamation** of the great Gospel truths—especially the central truth of "Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1 v23). But the good news concerning the Cross can only be understood in the light of the bad news concerning our sin, and our sin can only be understood in the light of the character of God. So they included these truths as well.
- **Explanation** of the great Gospel truths. Today's children have little or no Biblical background. So statements of the Gospel are inadequate if they are not properly explained and taught (Matthew 28 v19, 20). Our children need a teaching evangelism—not just teaching, not just evangelism but a combination of both.
- **Invitation** to respond to these great Gospel truths. The Gospel demands a response—a heart response; and the apostles always challenged their unsaved hearers to respond to what they had heard (Acts 2 v38; Acts 13 v39; Acts 16 v31). This is not a physical response but a response of the heart to God the Holy Spirit as He convicts and points to Jesus Christ.
- **Clarification** of what is involved when a sinner trusts Jesus Christ and what becoming and being a Christian will mean for them (Acts 3 v26; Acts 14 v15; 2 Corinthians 5 v17; 1 Thessalonians 1 v9).

Where and Whom Should We Evangelize?

The Biblical pattern of evangelism is clearly presented in Mark 16 v15. The Lord Jesus commanded us "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Where should we evangelize? All the world! We also read in Acts 1 v8 "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." We need a worldwide vision as far as evangelism is concerned.

While we should have a heart and a burden for the whole world it is, of course, not possible for each of us to go everywhere. So we then need to ask God to show us in which part of the world we do have a specific and direct responsibility to live, and to carry on a ministry of

evangelism. It may be "across the street" or it may be "across the sea." He will make it clear to us when we sincerely ask Him.

Lord use me. Here am I. Use me
I want to be greatly used by Thee
Across the street—or across the sea
Lord, here am I, use me.

Whom should we evangelize? Every creature! Biblical evangelism is total evangelism. God wants us to evangelize everybody. There is no one group to which all evangelistic outreach should be exclusively directed—whether they be adults, teenagers or children.

Some people insist that we should only evangelize adults or parents and that they will then evangelize their own children. This sounds reasonable at first glance. But there are two problems involved.

- Firstly, it is not biblical because the biblical pattern of evangelism is to evangelize everybody, and not any one group. **Nobody** is excluded.
- Secondly, it would mean that one large section of the population would only hear the Gospel if another section responded favourably to it. This does not seem either ethical or fair.

We read in 2 Kings 12 v2 "Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him." He had come to the throne when he was only seven years old (2 Kings 11 v21). Think of what could have happened if he had only been influenced and instructed by his idolatrous father and depraved mother. But instead God raised up Jehoiada to give him the spiritual help and instruction which he could not have received from his parents.

It is interesting to see how Paul followed and obeyed the biblical pattern of evangelism as given by the Lord Jesus in Mark 16 v15. He describes his evangelistic ministry in Acts 26 v22 and 23:

"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing **both to small and great,** saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

The Greek word for "small" used by Paul is "mikros." The Greek

word for "great" used by Paul is "megas." Was he thinking of those who were physically small, and those who were physically big? Probably. Was he thinking of those who were not important and those who were important? Possibly. But the underlying and governing principle remains the same. He evangelized everyone he could and he never excluded anyone. The social conditions of the day may have caused him to come into contact more with adults than with children, but that did not affect or influence his guiding principle to evangelize **everybody**.

Everyone needs Christ. Therefore we need to evangelize everyone. That should be **our** guiding principle in evangelism.

It is, of course, obvious that we ourselves cannot evangelize **everyone** just as we cannot go **everywhere**—even though **that** is our vision and desire. So we ask God to show us which part of the "everyone" is our responsibility—and we concentrate on them. God shows to many of us that our responsibility is to evangelize the children.

Why Should We Evangelize?

Every Christian needs to see that they have a necessary role to play in God's great programme and plan of evangelism—whether they are full-time Christian workers or not. Evangelism must always be one of the church's top priorities. There are many reasons for this.

- The first and most obvious reason, as we have seen, is the **command** of the Lord Jesus in Mark 16 v15. He has told us to evangelize—and we must obey.
- Another vital reason is because we are **constrained** to do so by the love of Christ "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5 v14). We love Him and we show that love by telling others about Him.
- A third reason is because God the Holy Spirit **calls** the people of God to evangelize—and lays this burden upon their hearts (Matthew 9 v38; Acts 13 v2). He also bestows on many the gift of evangelism (Ephesians 4 v11).
- A fourth reason and perhaps the most important of all is because we are **concerned for the Glory of God** (1 Corinthians 10

> v31). We want to see God glorified in the lives of men, women, boys and girls. Millions take God's Name in vain, have no time for Him or His Word, are bowing down to false gods and robbing God of His glory. We want God to have His rightful place in their lives. We desire His glory. What is the greatest manifestation of His glory, of His grace, and of His power today? Is it not in the salvation of those who respond to the Gospel?

These are all vital reasons why **we must evangelize**.

Why Should We Evangelize Children?

But the question now needs to be answered—why should we evangelize **children?** This question will be answered in the book as a whole.

But one clear and definite answer to the question can be given at this time in the light of what we have already seen. **We should evangelize children because the Lord Jesus has commanded us to.** His final command to us was "Preach the Gospel to **every** creature" (Mark 16 v15). That includes children, of all ages. Paul in Romans 1 v16 declares that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." There is power in the Gospel; and the Holy Spirit uses the Gospel to convict boys and girls of their sin, to lead them to Jesus Christ and to regenerate them. The power is in this wonderful message and not in ourselves or our methods.

This is the main reason why we evangelize children. The Lord Jesus has commanded us to. There is no way we can avoid or get round this command. It is simple, clear and definite.

At the same time we must always keep in mind the fact that there is only **one** Gospel.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1 v8, 9).

Our Lord commanded us "Preach **the** Gospel to every creature." There are not two gospels—one for adults and young people and another one for children. No! We are to preach the one and the same Gospel to all age groups. There may be differences in the way we present it or in

the way we illustrate it but the message must always be the same.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer, the internationally known Christian writer and teacher, said at a conference for children's workers:

"There is only one Gospel for both adults and children. Children's evangelism is not a different Gospel but is a translation problem in which we must proclaim the great truths of the Christian faith in a very simple manner. The greatest reason for my belief that little children can really understand the vital truths of the Gospel is that I believe in the Holy Spirit's ministry to communicate the message of salvation and sanctification to them. There is no adult, however intelligent, who can understand the Gospel without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit."

Two additional facts will help to convince us of the importance of obeying our Lord's command to preach the Gospel to children:

- The world's population now stands at 5 billion. Over one third (35%) of the total population of the world consists of children. In a number of Third World countries this rises to one half. That means a total of 1,750,000,000 children under the age of 15! What a mission field! So when the Lord Jesus spoke about evangelizing "every creature" we need to remember that at least one third of those to whom He referred are children, and that they are therefore a very substantial segment of the world's population.
- Childhood is a stage in **everyone's** life and one that everybody must pass through. That means that the two thirds who are not, at present, children have been children at some time!

Today there are many churches and individual Christians who have obeyed this command of the Lord Jesus and are evangelizing the children; and we praise God for every one of them. But observation and experience show us that these might, unfortunately, be in a minority. There are a number of evangelical churches and quite a few Christians who do work with children, but who do not see the need to evangelize them. There are some churches and Christians who have very little ministry of any kind to the children. Our prayer is that God will open the eyes of all of us not only to see the great need to evangelize children, not only to realise the great opportunities which exist for this ministry, but especially to understand the fact that it is the command of

Jesus Christ to do so.

The catechisms of Calvin, Knox and Luther all laid emphasis upon children, and our responsibility to them. Luther, for example, said, "If the Kingdom of God is to come with power we must begin with the children and we must teach them from the very cradle."

Martin Luther also said "I am deeply moved when I see that young boys and girls can pray, believe and speak more of God and Christ that they ever could before." In 1530 he preached a sermon in which he said "We must have ordinary pastors who will teach the Gospel and Catechism to the young and to the ignorant."

The renowned Metropolitan Tabernacle of Charles Haddon Spurgeon in London had a very extensive ministry of evangelism to children in Sunday schools and elsewhere. From time to time they also held evangelistic meetings for children with as many as 8,000 present and many of them professed faith in Christ. Seventeen years later Mr Spurgeon could point out many "pillars of the church" who had been converted, as children, in these meetings.

It is recorded of Robert Murray McCheyne, the well known Scottish pastor and preacher who was greatly used of God in the first half of the nineteenth century, that "the floor of his vestry had been covered with children seeking the Saviour." And it is said that Dr. Andrew Bonar of Glasgow, Scotland, the equally well known preacher and pastor and the biographer of Mr McCheyne had "meetings more especially for children and youth in his church when members at times were deeply affected even to tears." He himself stated that most of his elders "had children among the number of those who are rejoicing in Jesus."

Who Should Evangelize Children?

There are several answers to this question and they are all correct depending on God's guidance and on the circumstances.

Firstly, I believe that it is the responsibility of **all** Christians to evangelize children as, and when, they have the opportunity to do so. Evangelism is a command to every Christian, and is not restricted to a gifted few. All Christians have contact with children in some way—in the home, in the church, and in the neighbourhood.

We are **all** concerned about the physical and social needs of children and we try to do what we can all to help children who are in

some kind of physical or social need. Should this not be true also in the spiritual realm? Each of us can, at the very least, **pray** for the salvation of children. In addition, each of us can give a child a Gospel tract or invite him to a children's meeting. Each of us can be a witness to a child we know. We do not need any special gifts or abilities to do **something** to evangelize children!

There are, secondly, those in positions of responsibility who have a special opportunity to evangelize children. These include pastors who have the oversight of the **whole** church community; Sunday school teachers and children's workers who voluntarily work with children inside or outside the church; and parents who have a very special responsibility towards their own children (Ephesians 6 v1–4; Colossians 3 v20, 21). All of these groups should watch for opportunities to evangelize the children who are committed to their care. John Bunyan, the writer of Pilgrims Progress and himself a pastor wrote, "I would be catching boys and girls." I wonder if each of us could say that.

Then there are, thirdly, those whom God the Holy Spirit has called into a full-time ministry to the children. He has also imparted to them the gift of teaching for this purpose (Romans 12 v7; 1 Corinthians 12 v28; Ephesians 4 v11, 12) and, in many cases, the gift of evangelism (Ephesians 4 v11). These people have a special responsibility to evangelize the children, and they should be encouraged and helped by all Christians in their vital ministry.

How (and When) Should We Evangelize Children?

We will leave the answer to this question until later in the book. But it should be emphasized again that our evangelism of the children needs to be based absolutely and completely on the Bible. **It** is our guidebook. **It** is God's inspired manual on evangelism; and in **it** we can see clearly the MESSAGE we should teach in evangelism, and the METHODS we should use.

CONCLUSION NO. 1
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THE LORD JESUS HAS COMMANDED US TO EVANGELIZE THEM (MARK 16 V15).

Charles Spurgeon writes:

Children need the gospel, the whole gospel, the unadulterated gospel; they ought to have it, and if they are taught of the Spirit of God they are as capable of receiving it as persons of ripe years.

Teach the little ones that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

Be encouraged; the God who has saved so many of your children is going to save very many more of them, and we shall have great joy as we see hundreds brought to Christ.

(Quotes from page 74 of *Come Ye Children*)

You are doubly sure that you are obeying His will because you have certain special precepts which relate to the little ones, such as "Feed my lambs," and "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."

The love which has redeemed you also constrains you. You feel the touch of the sacred hand upon your shoulder, the hand which once was pierced, and you hear your Redeemer say, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;" and because of that sending, you go forth to the little ones in obedience to His will. He who obeys is doing well, and in this sense your service among the little ones is well-doing.

Well-doing it is, again, because it brings glory to God. . . . Whenever we attempt that which will clearly promote the divine glory, we are well-doing. When we make known Jehovah's grace, when we work in accordance with His purposes of love, when we speak forth the truth which honours His beloved Son; whenever, indeed, the Holy Spirit through us bears witness to the eternal verities of the gospel, there is well-doing towards God. We cannot increase His intrinsic glory, but through His Spirit and among the choicest ways of doing this we give a high place to the teaching of children the fear of the Lord, in order that they may be a seed to serve Him, and to rejoice in His salvation.

(Quote from pages 90 and 91 in
Words of Counsel for Christian Workers)

Chapter 2:
The Future Is In Their Hands

Every children's worker needs spiritual bi-focals! He is interested in, and involved in, both the present and the future.

- He needs to see the children **as they are** with all their present needs and possibilities.
- He needs to see the children **as they will become** one day. The children of today are the parents, police force, politicians and preachers of the future.

Children's work is therefore a two fold investment. We invest in the lives of the children as they are, and we invest in what they are going to become in the future.

A little boy was once asked "What do you plan to be when you grow up?"

He replied, "Maybe a missionary; maybe a gangster."

"What do you mean?" his enquirer asked.

"Well," said the boy, "It all depends upon who gets me first."

It is true to say that the future is in the children's hands. It is equally true to say that the children are in our hands. Therefore the future is in our hands, and we need to ask ourselves the question "What are we doing with it?"

John Wesley, the great 18th century preacher and founder of Methodism, wrote "Unless we take care of the rising generation the present revival of religion will last only the age of man."

We should, like him, be thinking of the future—and not just the present.

Moses and the Future Generation

Moses made this fact very clear to the children of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy. They were preparing to enter the Promised Land and on at least four occasions Moses emphasized to them that their future in that land depended upon their attitude, and approach, to their children.

He commanded them "Ye shall teach them your children"

(Deuteronomy 11 v19) and, at the same time, he gave the result of obedience to that command "that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children in the land" (Deuteronomy 11 v21).

He commanded them again "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6 v7). But he had prefaced this command by outlining what would happen if they obeyed it "that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6 v3).

This same emphasis can be seen in Deuteronomy 4 verses 9 and 10 and in Deuteronomy 31 verses 12 and 13.

Moses and Joshua—and the Future Generation

Moses also had "the future generation" in mind when, as a result of God's command, he instituted the Passover. One of the main purposes of the Passover was to provide a visual aid for teaching future generations of children about the power of God. "When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover . . .' " (Exodus 12 v26–27).

Joshua followed his example when he set up twelve stones out of the river Jordan as a memorial to what God had done there. One of the major reasons for this was to use it to teach future generations of children concerning God and His great power, "This may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off. . . ." (Joshua 4 v6 and 7).

These were men who saw that the future of the nation was in the hands of the children and they wanted to prepare for that day.

The Psalmist and the Future Generation

The Psalmist also shared this concern for "the future generation" when he wrote Psalm 78. He promised in verse 4 that he would not hide the Word of God from the children, "shewing to **the generation to come** the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He hath done." His purpose was "that **the generation to come** might know them . . . that they might set their hope in God"

(verse 6 and 7). Then he underlines his desire and prayer for the children, and for "**the generation to come**"—that they "might not be as their fathers a stubborn and rebellious generation: a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God" (verse 8).

He believed that if he did not reach the future generation now they would become like the present generation and the same cycle would be repeated over and over again.

Ourselves and the Future Generation

This should bring a challenge to our hearts. The children of today are the church of tomorrow and the country of tomorrow. We neglect them at our peril. We need to prepare for tomorrow by reaching our children with the gospel today. Our investment in them will be a good and a profitable one—even if we don't always see the results of that investment as quickly as we would wish. It is a common practice to invest money with future returns in mind. Having done so, we wait patiently for the sure returns expected. In the same way we will eventually reap the results of our evangelism among children—if we learn to be patient. But, in a wonderful way, God often gives us many wonderful present returns for our investment. These are in addition to what we will receive in the future.

A Swiss Pastor Invests in the Future

Doctor Armin Mauerhofer, who has written the foreword to this book, was until recently pastor of one of the largest free churches in Switzerland. When the church was still small he saw the great potential in the children of Langenthal, and he decided to build for the future. He and his church planned and built up two types of ministry to the children of the town and its surrounding area:

- A Sunday school for the children of the church members
- A number of week day Bible clubs conducted in homes for the children outside the church

These two large groups of children were kept quite separate and distinct until they reached teenage years when they were then united

into a church based youth ministry.

Doctor Mauerhofer says that his church was built upon this evangelistic ministry to the children; and that many of those in the church today were reached and saved through the week day Bible clubs.

He saw that the future of the church was in the hands of the children, and he invested in them. The investment was eventually to prove a very fruitful one.

He says that in his capacity today as a professor at the Free Evangelical Seminary in Basel, Switzerland, he wants his seminary students to understand that their most important ministry will be to lead children to Christ and to reach the lost children in their neighbourhood. He continually emphasizes that believing children are tomorrow's missionaries, tomorrow's pastors and tomorrow's leaders.

"We need," he repeats, "to be aware that it **is** worthwhile to invest, in the children." Consequently, some of his students in the seminary have told him "One day we will be pastors and then we will have children's work in our churches."

Every worker among children needs to have spiritual bi-focals. He evangelizes children because he sees their present need for Jesus Christ and His salvation. But he also evangelizes them because he sees their potential for the future, and he is investing in that future.

CONCLUSION NO. 2
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND THE COUNTRY IS IN THEIR HANDS.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

A truth dropped into a child's heart will there fructify and his manhood shall see the fruit of it. Yon child listening in the class to his teacher's gentle voice may develop into a Luther, and shake the world with his vehement proclamation of the truth.

Let no man despise the young, or think them insignificant. I claim a front place for them.

They are the world's future. The past has been and we cannot alter it; even the present is gone while we gaze on it; but our hope lies in the

future: therefore, by your leave, room for the children, room for the boys and girls.

(Quote from page 45 of *Come Ye Children*)

Oh teachers, see what you may do! In your schools sit our future evangelists. In that infant class sits an apostle to some distant land. There may come under your training hand, my sister, a future father in Israel. There shall come under your teaching, my brother, those who are to bear the banners of the Lord in the thick of the fray. The ages look to you each time your class assembles.

*(*Quote from page 66 of *Come Ye Children*)

I do not expect to see the churches of Jesus Christ ordinarily built up by those who have through life lived in sin, but by the bringing up in their midst, in the fear and admonition of the Lord, of young men and women who become pillars in the house of our God. If we want strong Christians we must look to those who were Christians in their youth; trees must be planted in the courts of the Lord while yet young if they are to flourish well and long.

(Quote from page 127 *Words of Counsel for Christian Workers*)

Who knows what glory God may have of them? Heathen lands may call them blessed. Whole nations may be enlightened by them...

We may justly look with awe upon converted children for we do not know how soon they may be among the angels, or how greatly their light may shine among men. Oh brethren and sisters let us estimate children at their true valuation and we shall not keep them back but we shall be eager to lead them to Jesus at once.

(Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

Chapter 3:
One of These Little Ones Who Trusts Me

The command of the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 16 v15 to evangelize everybody is an absolute command, and does not in any way depend upon the results of that evangelism. In other words we are commanded to evangelize even if those we evangelize do not, for some reason, accept or even understand what we are preaching.

But, at the same time, it is a great incentive and encouragement to our evangelism, and also a valid reason for it, if **it is possible** and feasible for those we evangelize to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour. What a tremendous encouragement it can be to us as evangelists when we realise that those we are teaching **can** trust Jesus Christ if, and when, the Holy Spirit works in their hearts.

Consequently, one of the reasons why we evangelize children is because we know from the Word of God that it is possible for a child—even a little child—to put his trust in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour and to be saved. It is unfortunate that in a number of our evangelical churches it is not really believed that a child can be saved—unless in very special and exceptional circumstances. D.L. Moody, the well known American evangelist, once said, "You do not know how much infidelity there is in the church with regard to child conversion. There are but a few who believe that children can become Christians; but thank God there is a bright day coming."

Dr. Andrew Bonar, a well known pastor in 19th century Scotland and biographer of Robert Murray McCheyne, wrote "There is a practical error very common among God's people. All of them profess to believe that the Holy Spirit may convert souls of any age and that conversion cannot be too soon while they do not look for the conversion of children with the same lively faith that they do for those of riper years. The same warm hearted believers who labour for older people and are satisfied with nothing but their conversion do not practically so feel and act in reference to children. They do not press home on them, as on older persons, their present acceptance of Christ."

Doctor Armin Mauerhofer says "Children can really understand the message of salvation in a deep way. I came to Christ when I was ten. I was so angry with all those who did not believe me. I was

thankful to all those who took that seriously. I am still a believer today."

The practice followed by many who work with children is to teach them Bible stories and lessons. The way of salvation is often included in this teaching. But this is only seen as "the sowing of seed". No harvest is looked for or expected, until the children are well entered into their teenage years.

Doctor Donald G. Barnhouse, pastor of a large church in Philadelphia, with an extensive radio ministry and a speaker at the Keswick Convention in England, wrote:

"Of what value is it for a child to know how many miles it is from Jerusalem to Nazareth if he does not know the distance that separates a human heart from God."

Consequently, there is, in a number of our churches and Sunday schools, little or no evangelism of the children, and the main reason for this is because they do not believe or expect that children can be saved.

However, the Bible makes it very clear that a child can be saved.

Specific Verses Show Us a Child Can Trust Christ

In Matthew 18 verse 6 the Lord Jesus speaks about "One of these little ones which believe in Me." The context shows us that He had a child in His arms and He referred to him as He said this (Matthew 18 v2; Mark 9 v36). The Greek word used for "child" in Matthew 18 verses 2, 3, 4 and 5 and in Mark 9 v36 is "paidion": This word means a **little** child—not a baby, but a child who was still quite young. In Matthew 18 verses 6, 10 and 14 He then uses the word "mikros." This word means something or someone who is small. It is therefore similar in its use to the word "little child" and has the same basic meaning. This is confirmed by the fact that the Lord Jesus had a child in His arms as He spoke, and to whom He referred when He used both these words. He was therefore speaking about children and specifically about little children.

The word "believe in" in verse 6 is the translation of the Greek word "pisteuo" which means to "trust" or "place confidence in." It signifies "reliance upon" and not just "credence" or "believing." This is the word which is used in John 3 v16 "Whosoever **believeth**

in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It is also used in Acts 16 v31 when Paul answers the question "What must I do to be saved" by replying "**Believe on** the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Consequently, the Lord Jesus is letting us know in Matthew 18 v6 that it is **possible** for a little child, or a little one, to put his trust or confidence, in Him, and thereby to be saved. Such a statement by the Lord Jesus makes it clear and beyond doubt that a child can be saved—no matter what anyone else might say.

This truth—that a child can be saved—can also be seen in specific Bible verses in other parts of the New Testament.

In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus (Ephesians 1 v1) he speaks to **all** the saints from chapter 1 verse 1 to chapter 5 v21. He then starts to speak to specific groups of saints and communicates to each of those groups specific guidelines and commands which apply only to that group. These groups are wives (5 v22–24), husbands (5 v25–33), fathers (6 v4), servants (6 v5–8) and masters (6 v9). It is obvious that all of these groups addressed are believers and saints.

But there is another group of believers or saints which he also addresses directly. They are the children (6 v1–3). "Children," he writes, "obey your parents in the Lord." This clearly shows us that there were children at Ephesus who were saints or believers and it is them he is now addressing. This means therefore that it is **possible** for a child to be a saint or a believer. The same conclusion can be drawn from reading and comparing Colossians 1 v2 and Colossians 3 v20.

The Greek word used for children in these two passages in Ephesians and Colossians is not the word "paidion" referred to earlier; but the Greek word "teknon." This is a more general word for children of all ages. But this word does also refer, at times, to little children e.g. Matthew 15 v26; Acts 21 v5, 21; 1 Thessalonians 2 v7; 1 Timothy 3 v4; Revelation 12 v4. Therefore we could conclude that, at least, these references include little children. The fact that these children are commanded to "obey their parents" would also imply that they are relatively young.

In the first chapter of Paul's letter to Titus he outlines the qualifications demanded of an elder. One of these is that he have "**believing** children, not accused of riot or unruly" (verse 6). The

word "teknon" is used here again; and the logical conclusion is that it must be **possible** for children—of different ages—to be believers in Jesus Christ.

Specific verses in the New Testament such as these show us that it is **possible** for a child to trust Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

We should therefore believe that it is possible for children to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

In the Old Testament there are also several clear indications that it is possible for a child to have a real experience with God.

In Deuteronomy 31 verse 12 Moses instructs the priests and elders "Gather the people together, men, women **and children,** and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and **fear the Lord** your God . . ." The Hebrew word used for children here is "taph"—and it specifically means "little ones." It is clear from this command that Moses believed it was possible for **all** four groups, including the children (the little ones), **to fear the Lord**. Fearing the Lord is a spiritual experience often referred to in the Bible and especially in the Old Testament (Psalm 34 v7, 9, 11; Psalm 103 v11, 13, 17).

In Psalm 34 v11 David says to the children "Come, ye children, (a more general Hebrew word—but one which is also used with regard to little children) hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." David obviously believed that the children could understand what the fear of the Lord was, and that they could fear Him.

In Proverbs 8 v17 God gives a gracious promise when He says "I love them that love me; and those that seek me **early** shall find me." While this promise refers directly to seeking God in the morning, surely the principle involved also relates to seeking God in the morning of life, and indeed in its early morning.

We should therefore believe that it is possible for children to fear the Lord.

As we read the first 8 verses of Psalm 78 it is obvious that the Psalmist had a great burden for children (verses 4, 5, 6), or as he also refers to them—"the generation to come" (verses 4, 6). He wants them to hear the Word of God (verse 4, 5 and 6). But his primary purpose and desire is that "they might set their hope (or trust) in God" (verse 7). He therefore must have believed that it was **possible** for children to set their hope (or trust) in God. He did not want them

to grow up to be like "their fathers a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God" (verse 8).

We should therefore believe that it is possible for children to set their hope (or trust) in God.

The story of Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 3 is an excellent illustration of a child—a young child—who had a real experience with God. Verse 7 shows that he had not previously known the Lord. But in verse 10 he heard the voice of the Lord and responded to it. In verse 19 we read that from that time onwards he grew both physically and spiritually.

We should therefore believe that it is possible for a young child to hear the voice of the Lord, and to respond to it.

We read in 2 Chronicles chapter 24 verse 1 about Joash who became king of Judah when he was seven years old. The following verse tells us that he "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" for years to come. Also in 2 Chronicles chapter 34 v1–3 we read about Josiah who at 8 years of age became king, and "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in the ways of David". Both of these royal examples show us that it is **possible** for children to do what is right in the sight of God.

We should therefore believe that it is possible for a child to do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

Other Bible Verses Show Us a Child Can Trust Christ

The specific verses outlined above show us clearly that it is **possible** for a child, and even a young child, to have a real experience with God, and to put his trust in the Saviour. But there are also many other verses—especially in the New Testament—which clearly teach that salvation is for **everyone**. Salvation is not only for those who have reached a certain age. The only condition required is not one of class, colour, creed or age; but that the person involved should believe and put his trust in Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that **whosoever** believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3 v16). The word "whosoever" includes children; and it is wrong to read or interpret this verse as

saying "whosoever over the age of 10 or 12 or 14 believeth in Him should not perish." The Bible does not give an age level or age limit for conversion. Therefore **we** should not do so.

There are many other verses which teach that salvation is for everyone—provided they trust Jesus Christ (John 1 v12, 3 v36; Acts 13 v39, 16 v30 and 31; Romans 10 v9–13, Ephesians 2 v8).

Therefore we believe that salvation is not restricted to any group or groups. It is for everyone provided they trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

If a person is old enough to believe in, or to trust Christ, he is old enough to be saved. Is a child able to understand what sin is? Is it possible for him to be convicted of sin? Can he have a desire to turn from sin? Is the child able to understand that, in some way, Jesus Christ died for him and for his sin? Is it possible for him to come, in his heart, to Jesus Christ, and simply to put his trust in Him? Then he is old enough to be saved.

At what age can a child be saved? We don't know. The Bible does not tell us. Every child is different and each child comes at different times to an age of understanding and to an age at which he or she can trust Christ and be saved. But it is certainly well below 14 years or 12 years of age. I have found, in my own experience in evangelistic work with children, for example, that many of the children I led to Christ were between 8 and 10 years old, although a number were even younger than that. There are, indeed, many examples of children from both Christian and non-Christian homes who have trusted Christ at the age of 7, 6, 5 or even 4—and have, from that moment, started to live for Him.

Experience Shows Us a Child Can Trust Christ

The fact that the Holy Spirit can regenerate children may be witnessed in the lives of many who trusted Jesus Christ **as children**. I am sure also that a number of those who read this book could testify to having truly trusted Jesus Christ **as children**. In addition, some of you know people who testify that they trusted Jesus Christ as **children**. A number of you have yourselves led **children** to Christ and have seen real spiritual growth in their lives. It is also a recognised fact that a number of well known Christians came to Christ as **children**.

This list includes Corrie Ten Boom, Jim Elliot, Leighton Ford, Mrs Billy Graham, Jonathan Edwards, Isaac Watts, Matthew Henry, Stephen Olford, Richard Baxter and Lord Shaftesbury. I know that many other names could be added to this list, from many countries around the world—including your own.

Apostolos Bliates, a well known pastor and one of the evangelical leaders in Greece, was born into a devout Greek Orthodox family. He describes how an evangelical neighbour presented the Gospel to him when he was still a young child; and testifies that at the age of six he personally trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He told his parents what he had done and incurred their wrath and opposition. But he never wavered from his new found faith and had the joy, years later, of seeing both his parents put their trust in Jesus Christ.

It is, perhaps, rather surprising that so many children have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour in the light of the doubts some evangelicals have concerning child conversion. There are some, perhaps many, Christians who believe that children cannot really understand the way of salvation, and are not able to trust Christ. However, they underestimate the ability of children to understand. Children understand much more than we think. They also underestimate the power and ability of the Holy Spirit to give them the spiritual understanding they need, and to regenerate them. The consequence is that those who do not believe that children can be saved, or who have serious doubts about it, usually do not evangelize them.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, obviously believed that children could trust Jesus Christ and have genuine experiences with God. He writes in one of his journals "In Newburgh, a small fishing town fifteen miles from Aberdeen the (Methodist) society swiftly increases—not only men and women but a considerable number of children are either rejoicing in God or panting after Him."

George Whitfield, the renowned English preacher and evangelist, wrote "On Thursday evening I preached to the children of the city with a congregation of near 20,000 in the park. It is remarkable that many children are under conviction, and everywhere great power and apparent success attended the word preached."

A letter to George Whitfield concerning his ministry states "We now see great numbers of the young awakened to see the Lord and cry after Jesus, and still their numbers are increasing. Many very

young persons were admitted to the Lord's Table here on the first Sabbath of this month."

Mr. Whitfield himself writes, "Three of the little boys that were converted when I was last here came to me and wept and begged me to pray for and with them."

A report of one of the visits to Scotland made by Mr. D.L. Moody, the well known American evangelist, says: "On the Saturdays the services of the noon prayer meeting have been specially adapted for children. By the most simple presentation of Gospel truth, by illustrative incident, by the most direct appeals to the conscience and by the most fervent and winning entreaties to receive Christ **now** as a personal Saviour Mr. Moody has on all these occasions sought to win these young souls to Christ; and we understand with much blessing and success."

Other comments on Mr. Moody's meetings in Scotland include the following statements:

> "Parents and children are seen together in the same attitude of earnestly seeking after Jesus."
>
> "Three girls and two boys in age ranging from eight to sixteen were weeping most bitterly and entreating the Lord to convert them."
>
> "There has been a very manifold work of grace in the Sunday school here with large numbers of children remaining to be spoken to. Those who are saved have been holding a prayer meeting."
>
> "Many little children have felt the sharp arrows of the King in their hearts and have yielded to His sceptre."

Matthew Henry, the famous Bible commentator, when he was preaching in 1713 said, "Oh that we who are ministers were filled with a zeal for the spiritual welfare and eternal salvation of young people, and a concern for the rising generation; and were to do our utmost as our ability and opportunity is to fill the minds of young ones, in their early days, with the knowledge of Christ, and to fix them for Christ that the next generation may be better than this."

As we see the reality of child conversion we realise that our ministry to children should not just be telling them stories—even Bible

stories. It is not just a question of keeping them quiet and interested or of getting them to do something or make something. It is not just a ministry of teaching or of sowing the seed—although all of these will be included in our ministry. Our ministry and our first responsibility should be primarily **to evangelize them—**without, of course, putting any pressure upon them**.** Our prayer and goal should be that they trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour and that they be born again by the Holy Spirit when they are still young.

CONCLUSION NO. 3
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO WORK IN THEIR HEARTS SO THAT THEY CAN TRUST CHRIST AND BE SAVED.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

I thank God that in our Sabbath-school we believe in the salvation of children as children. How very many has it been my joy to see of boys and girls who have come forward to confess their faith in Christ! And I again wish to say that the best converts, the clearest converts, the most intelligent converts we have ever had have been the young ones.

(Quote from page 72 of *Come Ye Children*)

I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into this church than I have in the spiritual life of the adults thus received. I will even go further than that and say that I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the Gospel and a warmer love to Christ in the child converts than in the man converts. I will even astonish you still more by saying that I have sometimes met with a deeper spiritual experience in children of ten and twelve than I have in certain persons of fifty or sixty.

(Quote from a sermon preached in October 17th, 1886)

Go on, dear teacher, and believe that God will save your children. Be not content to sow principles in their minds which may possibly develop in after years, but be working for immediate conversion.

Expect fruit in your children while they are children. Pray for them that they may not run into the world and fall into the evils of outward sin, and then come back with broken bones to the Good Shepherd; but that they may by God's grace be kept from the paths of the destroyer, and grow up in the fold of Christ, first as lambs of His flock, and then as sheep of His hand.

(Quote from page 65 in *Biblical Basis of Child Evangelism Fellowship* published by European Child Evangelism Fellowship)

As soon as a child is capable of being lost, it is capable of being saved. As soon as a child can sin, that child can, if God's grace assist it, believe and receive the Word of God. As soon as children can learn evil, be assured that they are competent, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to learn good.

I hold that children are capable of salvation. He who, in Divine sovereignty, reclaimed the grey-haired sinner from the error of his ways, can turn a little child from his youthful follies.

(Quote from page 100 of *Come Ye Children*)

We expect to see children converted and we do see it.

*(*Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

I will not say at what age children are first capable of receiving the knowledge of Christ, but it is much earlier than some fancy; and we have seen and known children who have given abundant evidence that they have received Christ and have believed in Him at a very early age.

(Quotes from pages 36 and 37 of *Come Ye Children*)

Have we laid ourselves out for the conversion of children as much as we have done for the conversion of grown up folks? But tell me now if you did care for the salvation of souls would you not think it rather too commonplace a matter to begin with boys and girls? Yes, and your feeling is shared by many. The fault is common.

(Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

We must bring back decided, plain, simple teaching, and there must be pleading and praying for the conversion of the children, the

immediate conversion of children unto the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God waits to help us in this effort.

What have you been doing for the conversion of children, each one of you? What have you done for the conversion of your own children?

(Quote from pages 128 and 129
of *Words of Counsel for Christian Workers*)

The conversion of children is not expected in many of our churches and congregations. I mean that they do not expect the children to be converted as children. The theory is that if we can impress youthful minds with principles which may in after years prove useful to them, we have done a great deal. But to convert children as children and to regard them as being as much believers as their seniors is regarded as absurd. To this supposed absurdity I cling with all my heart.

(Quote from a sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

Dear Sir,

My conviction is that our converts from among children are among the very best we have. I should judge them to have been more numerously genuine than any other class, more constant and in the long run more solid.

I speak of those who are tried and kept under the wing of the church.

(Quote from a letter written by Charles Spurgeon
to Rev. Payson Hammond, the evangelist
who had large children's rallies in the Metropolitan Tabernacle)

Mr Spurgeon once said that he had been in the habit of receiving thirty or forty (born again) children into his church every year; that he had found it necessary to excommunicate one or two adults in that time, but that he had never yet found it necessary to dismiss one received in the early years of childhood.

(Quote from *The Conversion Of Children*
by Rev. E. Payson Hammond)

Chapter 4:
Not His Will—
That One of These Little Ones Should Perish

Is it correct for a mother to warn her young child not to cross a busy road?

If you were to see a child playing near the top of a steep cliff would you warn him to be careful lest he fell over?

What would you do if you were aware of a child—perhaps your own child—handling a sharp knife or some other even more dangerous object?

In each case the action of the adult concerned is determined by the possible danger the child faces, and his responsibility to take whatever steps to help the child avoid that danger.

All Children Have Spiritual Needs

What can we learn from the Bible about these needs?

- The Bible teaches that everyone born into this world (apart from the Lord Jesus Christ) is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2 v1; 2 v5).
- The Bible teaches that everyone born into the world has a sinful nature (Psalm 51 v5; Psalm 58 v3; Ephesians 2 v3). That sinful nature will very soon manifest itself in sinful actions (Isaiah 53 v6; Romans 3 v23).It is recorded of Jehoiachin that "he was eight years old when he began to reign and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem; and he **did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord**" (2 Chronicles 36 v9).
- The Bible teaches that everyone is born outside God's kingdom (Matthew 18 v3), and needs to be regenerated to enter that kingdom (John 3 v5).

The Bible also makes three facts very clear:

- that the **only** way a person, young or old, can receive spiritual life and everlasting life is through repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ (John 5 v24; Acts 11 v18; Colossians 2 v13).
- that the **only** way a person—young or old—can receive a new

nature is by coming in faith to Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5 v17)

- that the **only** way a person, young or old, can enter God's kingdom is through the new birth (John 3 v3, 5) and conversion (Matthew 18 v3).

Consequently, it is clear from the Bible that a child who has not trusted Jesus Christ as his Saviour—no matter how young he is—is therefore spiritually dead, a sinner by nature and action, and that he is outside God's kingdom. And he will remain in this condition unless, or until, he trusts Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

This also applies to children born into a Christian home. The Bible makes it clear that these children enjoy a special privilege when they are born into such a home (1 Corinthians 7 v14). But they are also spiritually dead with a sinful nature and outside God's kingdom. They need to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour—just like any other child—even though they do have a greater opportunity to do so because of their Christian home and background.

Children can only trust Jesus Christ if they hear the Gospel (Romans 10 v13–17), and if they respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts (John 16 v8–11). When they respond in faith and repentance they become spiritually alive, they receive everlasting life and a new nature. and they enter God's kingdom.

Do we want our children to remain in a state of spiritual death, with a nature which is thoroughly sinful, and outside God's kingdom, or do we want them to be alive spiritually, with a new nature that pleases God, and everlastingly inside the kingdom of God?

If you want the second group of consequences to become a reality for your children, then YOU NEED TO EVANGELIZE THEM. It is only through evangelism, through the teaching of the Gospel and their response to it, that your children can trust Jesus Christ. Then these wonderful consequences can become a reality for **them**.

Is this not a vital reason for evangelizing children?

Also we all know from experience and from our own memories of childhood that children's hearts are tender, and that they can be very sensitive and feel guilty concerning sin. They are more sensitive than adults and feel guilt more easily than adults. Yet in Jesus Christ and in His Gospel there is the answer to **all** their spiritual needs. The Gospel

provides the answer which can give them forgiveness, peace, victory and security. Why should we wait until they are in their teenage years before giving them the answers they need to their childhood problems?

Children Face Evil and Temptations in Today's World

There are so many frightening things happening among, and to, our children today—such as drugs, crime, violence, pornography, false teaching, occultism, alcoholism, and video nasties. The only solution to, and defence against, these is Jesus Christ and His salvation. Jesus Christ can strengthen your children and enable them to live for Him, and resist temptation and evil. But first of all they must trust Him as their Saviour.

It seems to me that the devil is attacking our children today in a very concentrated fashion. I believe that no previous generation of children has had to face the evil and temptations which boys and girls encounter today. It is as if the devil has a plan to destroy our children. He sees their value and potential—even if we don't.

I am reminded of the story of the father who asked the Lord Jesus to heal his son who was possessed by a demon (Mark 9 v20–24). He told the Lord Jesus that his son had been in this condition and with this problem since he was a child—and that the demons had tried over and over "to destroy him" (verse 22). This is, I believe, the devil's goal for our children today—to destroy them. We need to be aware of this. But we also need to realise that God has provided a way of salvation and escape for our children through Jesus Christ—and that it is our responsibility to show, and teach, this way of salvation to our children.

The problem is compounded, and the need for evangelism is greatly increased, by the fact that in many of our countries (especially here in Europe) the children have little or no Gospel background and almost no understanding of Bible truths. This was not always the case in a country like England where past generations had received much Bible teaching. The fields were "white already to harvest." But not today. As we look around we see a scene of spiritual devastation. Instead of harvest fields we see acres of thorns, briars and scrub. And we who evangelize the children in a situation like this practically need to start right from the beginning.

God's Solution for Our Children

Let us suppose that all the children in your community or in your country had a disease which no one could cure, and, as a consequence, they were all dying one by one. Then let us also suppose that in some way you, and you alone, discover the cure and the remedy for that disease. What would you do? Would you stay at home and do nothing—while the children around you were suffering and dying? Of course not. You would go to as many children as you could and you would tell them what the cure was and encourage them to take advantage of it. I am sure that you would also recruit other adults and share what you have discovered with them. In this way your help could be multiplied and many more children could be cured.

This is only an illustration. But it is, I believe, a good and accurate illustration of the situation today. We have seen from God's Word the needs and problems children have. These needs and problems are much more serious than a physical illness, and could lead to much worse consequences. But God in His Word has given us the answer. We know from the Bible that the answer to the children's needs and the cure to the children's problems lie in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and their response to it. Should we not therefore take this answer, this solution, to the children who need it so much? Is this not an encouragement and stimulus for us to evangelize children?

And should we not help other adults also to see it so that together we can reach out to many, many more children. We can then rejoice as God the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of boys and girls and leads them to Jesus Christ.

There Is the Possibility of a Child Being Lost Forever

But the situation is, or could be, much worse than what I have outlined. We have already seen that **all** children (who have not trusted Christ) are spiritually dead, that they possess a sinful nature, and that they are outside God's kingdom. This is as true of an infant, as it is of a child of 8 years or 10 years old, or 12 years old.

However, the Bible also teaches that a person who disobeys the voice of God, and rejects God's salvation is under the judgment and wrath of God (John 3 v18, 19, 36; Ephesians 5 v6), and that if he dies in

that condition he will be lost forever. This is a general principle throughout the Word of God. So it must also apply to children who are old enough to understand the Gospel, and to reject the voice of God. According to the Scriptures all those who have deliberately and consciously chosen to "love darkness rather than light" (John 3 v19) will be judged by God. The one who has the opportunity and "ability" to believe, but chooses not to "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3 v36).

We cannot ignore such clear teaching in the Word of God; and we need to realise that children are not excluded **provided they are old enough to understand the Gospel,** and provided they reject what God is saying to them. We must not allow ourselves to be governed by tradition or sentimentality, but by what the Bible clearly teaches, no matter how we might feel about it.

In Revelation 20 v12–14 we read with regard to God's Great White Throne of Judgment "I saw the dead **small** and **great** stand before God . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books . . . and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." John uses the words "mikros" and "megas"—small and great. While the two words used may refer primarily to rank and importance surely they could also refer to size and age. Children who have reached an age of understanding, and are not saved **will** be judged.

If a child is old enough to know that he has sinned before God, and to understand that Jesus Christ died for his sin and, if he deliberately rejects God's way of salvation, then that child must be under God's judgment, and if he died in that condition he would be lost for ever.

We believe therefore that there is the **possibility** that children will be lost forever. Is it not logical to believe that if a child can be saved for ever if he trusts Christ then that same child can be lost for ever if he does not trust Christ?

At what age is this possible? We don't know. The Bible does not say. But surely it is **much** earlier than 14 or 15 years. Yet this is the age level people often have in their minds when they think of the age of accountability. Only God knows the hearts of the children and only God knows those who are old enough to understand and reject. We don't know when they reach this age. That is not our business. We have been commanded (Mark 16 v15) to evangelize all children. We can then

leave the consequences in God's Hands. He will do what is best, and what is right.

BUT THEY NEED TO HEAR THE GOSPEL.

What about Infants?

It is obvious that what we have said in the previous section does not apply to infants and to little children who have not reached this age of understanding and accountability. They are spiritually dead, they have a sinful nature and they are outside God's kingdom. That is clear. But they cannot yet be under God's wrath and judgment because they are not yet responsible people. They have not yet consciously rejected Him, and we have seen that it is **that** rejection which brings condemnation (John 3 v18 and 19).

I believe therefore and am personally sure that if an infant, or a little child who has not reached the age of accountability, dies he goes immediately into the presence of God. He is not yet responsible. He has not rejected Jesus Christ and is therefore not condemned.

Charles Spurgeon said in a sermon preached on Sunday morning, September 29th 1861 "We ground our conviction that infants who died are saved very much upon the goodness of the nature of God. The doctrine that some infants perish and are lost is altogether repugnant to the idea which we have of Him whose Name is love. Would your God cast away an infant? If yours would I am happy to say that He is not the God that I adore."

These infants and very little ones are spiritually dead and outside God's kingdom. How can they, therefore, enter Heaven? The Bible does not make this clear. It could well be that God regenerates these little ones who are not responsible and have never rejected Him by an act of grace at the moment of death. They can then enter Heaven because they have by a sovereign act of God received spiritual life and can now enter His kingdom.

When David's baby son was very sick and at the point of death (2 Samuel 12 v15-19) he was very distressed. But when the baby died (2 Samuel 12 v19) David was no longer distressed. Why? Because he believed that he would, one day, be reconciled with his baby boy. He said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12 v23).

This brought great comfort to David.

It Is God's Desire That Children Are Saved—Not Lost

God does not want any child to be lost for ever. This is clear from the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18 v11 and v14. These verses were spoken in the context of a child whom He was holding in His arms.

> "The Son of man is come **to save** that which was **lost**" (Matthew 18 v11).
>
> "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that **one of these little ones** should **perish**" (or be lost) (Matthew 18 v14).

These verses show us firstly that God the Father does not want any of these little ones to be lost for ever, and secondly that God the Son came to save them. However, these verses also clearly imply that there is the possibility of them being lost forever and that because of this possibility we need to evangelize the children.

In Matthew 18 v12 and 13, the Lord Jesus tells us the story of a sheep which was lost. In the context of these fourteen verses we could conclude that this sheep is a picture of a child. He, the Good Shepherd, goes to look for that lost sheep; and He finds it and brings it home with rejoicing. This is a picture of His love and His work in salvation. But is it not also an example for us to follow, as His under shepherds (1 Peter 5 v2–4; John 21 v15)? When we realize that all children are lost as far as their position is concerned and that there is also the possibility of children being lost for ever and as far as eternity is concerned should we not go out and seek them with the Gospel?

R. Hudson Pope, was a well known children's evangelist who worked with the Children's Special Service Mission (now known in Great Britain as Scripture Union). He wrote "That the child is a sinner needing a Saviour is a truth which judging by their addresses to children many speakers seem to ignore. These addresses are, for the most part, stories with a moral showing the need for a child to be kind, thoughtful, good and so on. . . . Unless the children addressed are converted this kind of teaching is nothing but "salvation by works . . ." Our Lord's command was to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16 v15).

This must include children for, if it does not, then at what age are we to begin?"

One of the main reasons why there are so relatively few who evangelize children, and one of the reasons so few are engaged in a full-time evangelistic ministry to children seems to be because many do not see, and understand, the needs of our children. We all want to minister where there is a need. If we see children as simple, innocent creatures who do not understand what sin is, who are, somehow, already in God's kingdom by birth or by baptism and who could not possibly be lost for ever then we do not see the need to evangelize them. Instead we evangelize those whose needs are so obvious—the adult and teenager, the drunkard and the drug addict.

Matthew Henry, the well known Bible commentator, once said "Let us look with pity upon the great numbers of children, even in our land, who are not taught these forms of sound words but are bred up in ignorance and profaneness; strangers and enemies to Christ and true Christianity. They are poor, they are foolish for they know not the way of the Lord nor the judgment of their God. If you can do anything, sirs, have compassion upon them and help them; pick up some of these abandoned young ones, you who have ability, and rescue them from ruin, by putting them into a way of receiving instruction."

May God help us to see the needs of the children and may we seek to meet those needs through the preaching of the Gospel to them.

> "How beautiful **upon the mountains** are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52 v7).

> "How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into **the mountains**, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matthew 18 v12).

> "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10 v15).

CONCLUSION NO. 4
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY ARE LOST AND NEED TO BE SAVED.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

This will necessitate your teaching the child his need of a Saviour. You must not hold back from this needful task . . . Tell him he must be born again.

These boys and girls need pardon through the precious blood as surely as any of us . . . Tell him also of the punishment of sin, and warn him of its terror. Be tender, but be true. Do not hide from the youthful sinner the truth, however terrible it might be. Now that he has come to years of responsibility, if he believes not in Christ, it will go ill with him at the last great day.

(Quote from pages 71 and 72 of *Come Ye Children*)

Your child needs teaching. He was born in iniquity; in sin did his mother conceive him. He has an evil heart; he knows not God, and he never will know the Lord unless he is taught.

You profess to be His instruments to scatter seed upon that child's heart; remember, if that seed be not sown, he will be lost for ever, his life will be a life of alienation from God; and at his death everlasting punishment must be his portion.

(Quote from page 96 of *Come Ye Children*)

*If you indulge in the novel idea that **your** children do not need conversion, that children born of Christian parents are somewhat superior to others and have good within them which only needs development one great motive for your devout earnestness will be gone. Believe me, brethren, your children need the Spirit of God to give them new hearts and right spirits or else they will go astray as other children do.*

(Quote from a sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

In what respect are children deficient of capacity? Do they lack capacity for repentance? Assuredly not: have I not seen a girl weep herself ill because she has done wrong? A tender conscience in many a

little boy has made him unutterably miserable when he has been conscious of a fault. Do not some of us recollect the keen arrows of conviction which rankled in our hearts when we were yet children? I distinctly recollect the time when I could not rest because of sin, and sought the Lord, while yet a child, with bitter anguish. Children are capable enough of repentance, God the Holy Spirit working it in them: this is no conjecture, for we ourselves are living witnesses.

(Quote from pages 48 and 49 of *Come Ye Children*)

We know that infants enter the kingdom, for we are convinced that all of our race who die in infancy are included in the election of grace, and partake in the redemption wrought out by our Lord Jesus. Whatever some may think, the whole spirit and tone of the Word of God, as well as the nature of God Himself, lead us to believe that all who leave this world as babes are saved. If saved, as we assuredly believe they are, infants must be saved simply according to the will and good pleasure of God, because He hath made them to be His own.

They are raised to the kingdom of heaven by the free and sovereign grace of God. How are they saved, then? By works? No, for they have never wrought any. By their natural innocence? No; for if that innocence could have admitted them to heaven, it must also have sufficed to save them from pain and death. They die because of Adam's fall. The dear babes live again, however, because Jesus died and rose again, and they are in Him. They perish, as far as this life is concerned, for a sin which they did not commit: but they also live eternally through a righteousness in which they had no hand, even the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed them. We know little of the matter, but we suppose them to undergo regeneration ere they enter heaven: for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and to enter the spiritual world they must be born of the Spirit. But whatever is wrought in them, it is clear that they do not enter the kingdom by the force of intellect, or will, or merit, but as a matter of free grace, having no reference to anything that they have done or have felt.

(Quotes from pages 37, 38 and 39 of *Come Ye Children*)

Chapter 5:
Invest Where the Returns Are Greatest

"I have a wonderful plan," said the young evangelist to me. "I will go to the centre of each village, and I will play my piano accordion and sing. Then as the people gather to listen to me, I will preach the gospel and evangelize them."

I smiled but did not say too much. I knew what would happen.

Later he shared his experiences with me.

"I was disappointed," he said "when I saw that no man or woman seemed to want to listen to me. None of them came, or even appeared. But everywhere I went many children gathered to listen to me and they were very interested in what I had to say."

I was not surprised. This was what I had expected to happen. Such stories and experiences can be repeated over and over again. The adults, and even today's teenagers, are, on the whole, very closed to the gospel. The children, and especially the younger ones, are completely different. They are so open and so responsive. So we should not be surprised when something like this happens. The section of any community which is most open to the gospel are the children. Many of them **want** to come, and **want** to hear the good news; and often there are those among them who really **want** to trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

Should we not then evangelize those who are open, willing and ready to listen? Or should we, instead, concentrate **all** our efforts on those whose hearts are hard and resistant, and who are not at all interested in our message?

The Bible Teaches That Children Are More Open to the Gospel than Adults

In Mark 10 v15 the Lord Jesus says that "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God **as a little child,** he shall not enter therein."

In Matthew 18 v3 the Lord Jesus says "Except ye be converted and **become as little children,** ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Before any adult can be saved he must become like a child. He must become simple, humble, trustful and dependent. The child is not to

become like an adult; instead the adult must become like a child. The adult finds this very difficult. But the child does not. He is already a child. He is, by nature, simple, humble, trustful and dependent. Although he is as spiritually dead as the adult is, he is surely one step closer to the kingdom than the adult. Also because he is younger he has spent fewer years in sin, and his heart is more open and tender.

God can use all of these natural qualities to guide the child into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ without him having to go through the sometimes traumatic experiences of the adult who needs "to become a child."

Solomon writes to children and young people in Ecclesiastes 12 v1 "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." This verse is translated in the New International Version "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them."

The older a child, or any person, becomes, the more and more resistant he is to the gospel and the harder he is to reach for Christ. Continued rejection makes the heart harder and harder (Hebrews 4 v7; 2 Corinthians 6 v1–2). Therefore childhood and youth are the best years for salvation, and consequently the most fruitful fields for evangelism.

Martin Luther said on one occasion with reference to the work of teaching the young, "I know that next to preaching this is the best, surest and most useful vocation—and I am not sure which of the two is better; for it is hard to reform old sinners with whom the preacher has to do while the young tree can be made to bend without breaking."

When freedom came to Eastern Europe one Christian leader said to me, "Let us concentrate as much as possible on the children. They are the ones who have been least poisoned by, and influenced by, the evils of Communism." And that is true—everywhere.

Experience Shows Us That Children Are More Open to the Gospel

Many workers among children, and also many workers among adults, have seen for themselves the comparative openness of the young

to what they are teaching. It seems that today's adult—and even today's teenager—is becoming harder and harder, and more and more resistant to the gospel and to the claims of Christ. I would challenge any reader who has doubts about what I have written to put it to the test, and compare and contrast the reaction and response of children, teenagers and adults to your gospel message.

Other groups are aware of the openness of the children to what they have to say and teach, and to the influences they want to bring to bear upon them. Because of this they concentrate much of their work on the children:

- The Communists in Eastern Europe always focused their attention, and propaganda, on the children
- The advertisers on television frequently aim at the children
- The Roman Catholic Church gives children top priority

We read that after the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church "conceived the plan of reaching out after the children of the combatants and of rearing up in them a new generation of lovers and defenders of Rome." The Jesuits based their counter Reformation on this strategy of reaching the children. And Frances Xavier "gave the young and the ignorant first place in his evangelism of India." It was he who said, "Give me the children until they are seven years old and any one may take them afterwards."

Unfortunately not all evangelicals appreciate the openness of the children and the wonderful rewards of reaching them with the Gospel while they are still children.

It seems to me that the Psalmist had seen the openness which children have to God's Word when he wrote the first eight verses of Psalm 78. He had clearly seen the stubbornness and rebellion of his own generation (verse 8), and the fact that so many of them had not set their heart aright, and that their spirits were not stedfast with, or faithful to, God. What was the answer? He gives it in the previous two verses. He emphasizes the importance of the children, the next generation, the generation to come, coming to know the Word of God (verse 6), and setting their hope (or trust) in God (verse 7a) so that they would remember and obey God's commands (verse 7b). The result of this would be that they would **not** become stubborn and rebellious like the present adult generation mentioned in verse 8.

Now is the time to reach them and to teach them, when they are still open and ready to listen. **Now** is the time to reach the generation to come before they become as disobedient and as sinful as this present generation.

However, we must also recognize and remember that the children are not just open **to the gospel**. Their very nature means that they are open to everything which could influence and affect them. They are open to every message, and to every sin.

Statistics Show That the Older a Person Is the Less Likelihood There Is of Him Coming to Christ

Most people are saved when they are young—either as children or in teenage years. After those years the number of those who come to Christ becomes proportionately less year by year.

Again you can put this to the test. Ask a group of believers at what age they came to Christ. You will almost certainly find that many, or most, of them did so when young. One young man wrote to me recently from the Bible school where he is a student to tell me that two thirds of the students in his class were saved as children. And the amazing fact is that this often happens in evangelical circles which do not, on the whole, believe too strongly in child conversion, and who do not engage much in child evangelism. I wonder what would happen if they did!

The Lord Jesus said to His Father in Matthew 11 v25 "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and **hast revealed them unto babes**."

So often it is the proud, superior, intellectual adult who cannot see, or does not want to see, the spiritual truths of God's Word. But it is, instead, the child who in his simplicity, humility and trustfulness sees and accepts God's truth. When someone denies the possibility of a child being saved because of his lack of intellect we reply that it is often this "lack of intellect" which makes him **more** likely (not less likely) to understand what God is saying. Often the child is "father to the man."

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813–1843) is a name well known and respected in church history. He was the minister at St. Peter's church, Dundee, Scotland, for 7 years until his early death. His ministry there was marked by deep personal holiness, prayer, compassion for the salvation of the lost, powerful evangelism and tireless counselling. In

1839 a revival broke out in his congregation which soon spread all over Scotland and thousands were converted. He had a real love for children and believed firmly in evangelizing them. It was recorded, "In Mr McCheyne's church and especially during the revival there many children were converted." He himself wrote with regard to his church "The ministers engaged in the work of God in this place believing that children are lost and may through grace be saved have therefore spoken to children as freely as to grown up persons; and God has so greatly honoured their labours that many children from ten years old and upward have given full evidence of their being born again."

He also said on one occasion "Most that were ever saved fly to Christ when young. . . . Those that were come to years were too wise and prudent to be saved by the blood of the Son of God and He revealed it to those who were younger and had less wisdom. . . . If you ask aged Christians most of them will tell you that they were made anxious about their souls when young. Oh what a reason is here for seeking an early inbringing to Christ. If you are not saved in youth it is likely you never will be. Youth is converting time." In a sermon dealing with the family he said "Satan spreads a kind of false modesty among parents, that they will not inquire of their little ones, 'Have you found the Lord or no?' Ah how sinful this will appear in eternity . . . begin tonight. Take them aside and ask, 'What has God done for your soul?' "

John Cotton, a well known 17th century pastor and Puritan theologian in America, once said "Young children are flexible and easily bowed. It is far more easy to train them up to good things now, than in their youth and riper years."

When a businessman has funds to invest he usually invests in that part of his business which brings him the greatest returns and highest profits.

While we cannot really compare evangelism to business, I do feel, at the same time, that there is a common principle involved. Does it not make sense to evangelize those who want to hear; who are open to our message and from among whom come the largest proportion of conversions? Why should we spend so much time evangelizing those who don't want to listen and, at the same time, by-passing or neglecting those who do?

I am not saying that adults should not be evangelized. Of course they should, but not at the expense of neglecting the most fruitful and

rewarding field of evangelism, and bypassing 35% of the world's population.

There is a real danger that we concentrate most of our efforts, personnel, time and finance upon the evangelism of adults. Yet we find that very few unsaved adults attend our evangelistic meetings and very few respond. Whereas when we devote at least a part of our time and efforts to evangelize children we get a much higher attendance of unsaved children and a much better response. Does it not make good sense to invest a substantial part of our work and time in those who we know will be the most responsive?

CONCLUSION NO. 5
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY ARE OPEN TO THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND ARE THE MOST FRUITFUL FIELD FOR EVANGELISM.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

Capacity for believing lies more in the child than in the man. We grow less rather than more capable of faith: every year brings the unregenerate mind further away from God, and makes it less capable of receiving the things of God.

(Quote from pages 24 and 25 of *Come Ye Children*)

No ground is more prepared for the good seed than that which as yet has not been trodden down as the highway nor has been as yet overgrown with thorns. Not yet has the child learned the deceits of pride, the falsehoods of ambition, the delusions of worldliness, the tricks of trade, the sophistries of philosophy; and so far it has an advantage over the adult. In any case the new birth is the work of the Holy Ghost and He can as easily work upon youth as upon age.

(Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

Give us the first seven years of a child, with God's grace and we may defy the world, the flesh, and the devil to ruin that immortal soul. Those first years, while yet the clay is soft and plastic, go far to decide the form of the vessel. Do not say that your office, you who teach the young, is in the least degree inferior to ours, whose main business is with older

folks. No, you have the first of them, and your impressions, as they come first, will endure last; oh, that they may be good, and only good.
(Quote from pages 110 and 111 of *Come Ye Children*)

The little child has no prejudices, no preconceived theories nor openness it cannot give up; it believes what Jesus says.
(Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

Minds in their early days are plastic. The first seven years of our being often shape all the rest. At any rate give to godly teaching the first twelve years of any child and it will be difficult to erase the writing.
(Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

What capacity is wanted? Capacity to believe? I tell you, children have more of that than grown-up persons. I am not now speaking of the spiritual part of faith, but as far as the mental faculty is concerned, there is any quantity of the capacity for faith in the heart of the child. His believing faculty has not yet been overloaded by superstition, or perverted by falsehood, or maimed by wicked unbelief. Only let the Holy Spirit consecrate the faculty, and there is enough of it for the production of abundant faith in God.
(Quote from page 91 in *Biblical Basis of Child Evangelism* published by European CEF)

Chapter 6:
Two and a Half Were Saved

A story is told of the famous American evangelist Dwight L. Moody. He was returning from an evangelistic meeting and someone asked him if it had been a good meeting.

"Yes," he replied.

"Were any saved?" his questioner continued.

"Yes," said Mr. Moody. "Two and a half were saved."

His questioner laughed at the answer and remarked, "I know what you mean. Two adults and a child."

"Not at all," replied Mr. Moody. "Two children and an adult."

What exactly did he mean?

How many souls were saved that evening? Three.

How many lives were saved? Two and a half.

The two lives saved were those of children who, coming to Christ when young, had their whole lives to live for Him. The half-life was that of the adult, who had already lived most of his life in the world, and had only the last part of that life to give to Jesus Christ.

A Child Saved Is a Life Saved

We who evangelize children are not just interested in their souls; but also in their lives. When a child trusts Jesus Christ he has still many years, God willing, to live for Him.

A lady on one occasion asked me this question.

"What is the best age to trust Jesus Christ?"

My answer was:

"The earlier the better. Sixty is a good age. Forty is better. Twenty still better. Fifteen better still. But how much more wonderful to trust Jesus Christ at the age of ten, or eight or six! Almost the whole life lies ahead!"

Dr. Reuben Torrey was a well known American evangelist in the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and the first President of Moody Bible Institute. He outlined five points about children:

- **That children can be Christians.**

- That children can pray.
- That they can live beautiful lives.
- That they can give testimony for Christ.
- That they can plead with others.

After a number of children had trusted Christ in one of his meetings he said that they meant more to him than the conversion of the same number of adults. After comparing the average length of service which may be reasonably expected from a child of ten and a grown man converted at the same time he said that in his experience a Christian child did much more than most Christian men. He also said that he had never known a Christian child who "did not get to work."

The Personality Is Being Formed

It is a recognized fact that the human personality is formed, and many of life's habits created, during the early years of a person's life. It is good for a child to come to Christ so that his personality and habits can be influenced and guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Is this not better than his coming to Christ later in life when the personality and habits are already quite fixed, and will need **radical** change?

The time to change and redirect the growth of a sapling is when it is still young and flexible. After it becomes a tree, change is well nigh impossible.

The time to train an animal and teach it how to respond to your commands is when it is young. Later on it will be very very difficult.

Jeremiah writes in Lamentations 3 verse 27 "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The context relates this statement to waiting for and seeking God (verse 25), and to hoping and waiting for God's salvation (verse 26). A yoke speaks of submission, service and partnership; and Jeremiah is emphasizing how important it is for a person to commence these when he is young rather than having to be "broken into it" later in life.

A Life of Fruitfulness and Service Lies Ahead

We can see in the Bible a number of people who had experiences with God or who were influenced for God when they were young and, following that, lived a life of fruitfulness and service:

- Samuel heard and responded to God's voice when still a child. Indeed he was certainly a young child at the time (1 Samuel 3 v7; 10 and 19)
- Joseph at the age of seventeen already showed himself to be an obedient son (Genesis 37 v13–17) and that the Lord was with him (Genesis 39 v2 and 3)
- The basis of Moses' long life of service and usefulness was laid during the years of infancy and early childhood when he was taught and influenced by his parents (Exodus 2 v1–10, Hebrews 11 v23–26)
- David first appears in Scripture as a youth (1 Samuel 16 v11 and 12) and he testifies to God's work in him and his trust in God from his youth (Psalm 71 v5, 17)
- Joash became king at seven years of age, and it is recorded that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest (2 Chronicles 24 v1, 2)
- Josiah became king at the age of eight and did right in the eyes of the Lord. He then began to seek the Lord at the age of 16 (2 Chronicles 34 v1–3)
- Daniel was one of a selected group of children or young people (Daniel 1 v4) who took a clear stand for God in a heathen environment (Daniel 1 v8)
- Timothy came to Christ under the ministry of Paul probably as a teenager (Acts 14 v6, 7; Acts 16 v1–3; 1 Timothy 1 v2; 2 Timothy 1 v2), but it is clear that the foundations of that were laid from infancy onwards (2 Timothy 3 v15)
- Obadiah feared God from his youth (1 Kings 18 v12)

While the Bible makes it clear that Samuel knew God from an early age, there is no definite reference to the time when God first started to work in the hearts of most of the others listed above. But it could well have been in childhood. Certainly the foundation of their long and fruitful lives must have been laid during their childhood years—either by parents or by others.

We can also see this same principle operating today. Corrie ten Boom was a well known Dutch Christian and evangelist. She died at the age of 91. But she had trusted Jesus Christ when she was a child of 5. How wonderful to serve God for 86 years! Does this not make the evangelism

of children worthwhile—and logical?

Many other servants of God trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour when still children, and began lives of service and fruitfulness. These include the following:

- Richard Baxter a pastor and one of the top Puritan theologians of the 17th century
- Matthew Henry the world renowned Bible commentator of the late 17th century
- Jonathan Edwards the American pastor, preacher and theologian of the 18th century who was much used by God in revival blessing
- Isaac Watts the well known English hymn writer of the early 18th century
- Jim Elliot who was martyred a number of years ago by the Auca Indians of Ecuador
- Leighton Ford who is the brother in law of Dr. Billy Graham and himself a well known evangelist
- Stephen Olford who is an English pastor and writer who has been a means of blessing to many

Also a large number of today's missionaries, serving the Lord Jesus in many countries of the world, trusted Him as their Lord and Saviour when still young.

Gypsy Smith, the well known British evangelist of the early 20th century said "Save a man and you save a unit; save a boy and you save a multiplication table."

We are thankful that there have been those who came to Jesus Christ later in life. However, many of them would say that while they rejoiced in their salvation, their main regret was that they had not trusted Jesus Christ when young.

An older man said to me one evening.

"I am so glad that I am saved. I trusted Christ 5 years ago at the age of 60; and I am thankful that He is my Saviour. But my life has been wasted. I have given my best years to the world and to the devil. And I have only a few years left to give to Him. I wish with all my heart that I had trusted Him when I was young."

Build the Wall at the Top

We have already seen in Psalm 78 how important it is for the children to set their hope in God (verse 7) so that they do not become like their fathers (verse 8)—a stubborn and rebellious generation. Could you picture life like a steep cliff over which many many people are falling and their lives are being smashed and broken? We can, in our imagination, see the heaps of broken lives at the bottom of this cliff. God calls many people to minister to these broken lives at the bottom and this is a very necessary and important ministry.

However, God also calls some of us to go up to the top of the cliff **to build a wall there**. This wall will prevent people from falling over and becoming so broken. That wall is child evangelism. In this way we reach the children before they "become like their fathers," and before their lives are broken and their hearts hardened by sin. Does this not make sense? Is it not logical?

An old man was given the charge of a small church in the Highlands of Scotland. One Sunday evening there was just himself, his wife, the church caretaker and a little boy at the service. Afterwards the minister said to his wife "Is it worth it, just for us three?" He had forgotten to include the little boy, but the boy overheard him and said, "But, Sir, don't I count?" That little boy was Robert Moffett. He later went out as a pioneer missionary to Africa. He came to Christ early in life and as a boy he said, "But, Sir, don't I count?"

D.L. Moody the famous American evangelist, referred to earlier in the chapter, always recognized the importance of children. At one of his meetings in Denver, Colorado he saw a little boy crying on the steps in front of the church because there were no seats left in the meeting for him. Mr Moody led him through the crowd onto the platform. He then told the congregation "This boy was told that there was no place for him to sit. Well, I want him here. So I have given him a place on the platform. Pray that he will turn out to be the best boy in America." A loud "Amen" came from the crowd.

Much impressed by Mr Moody's love and concern the little boy listened to every word of the message. When he grew up he became a prominent and well known evangelist himself, leading thousands to Christ. His name—Paul Rader.

CONCLUSION 6
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY HAVE THEIR WHOLE LIVES TO LIVE.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

Will you be very angry if I say that a boy is more worth saving than a man? It is infinite mercy on God's part to save those who are seventy; for what good can they now do with the fag-end of their lives? When we get to be fifty or sixty, we are almost worn out; and if we have spent all our early days with the devil, what remains for God?

But these dear boys and girls—there is something to be made out of them. If now they yield themselves to Christ they may have a long, happy, and holy day before them in which they may serve God with their hearts.

(Quote from page 25 of *Come Ye Children*)

You do not need that I should speak to you at large upon the advantages of early piety. To be a believer in God early in life is to be saved from a thousand regrets. The man brought to Christ early in life is helped to form holy habits and is saved from being the slave of their opposites. Habits soon become a second nature; to form new ones is hard work; but those formed in youth remain in old age.

(Quote from pages 120 and 121 of *Come Ye Children*)

Do what we may with persons converted late in life, we can never make much of them. We are very glad of them for their own sakes; but at seventy what remains even if they live another ten years? Train up a child, and he may have fifty years of holy service before him.

(Quote from page 9 of *Come Ye Children*)

I notice that, very frequently, those who are brought to Christ whilst young grow in grace more rapidly and readily than others do. They have not so much to unlearn, and they have not such a heavy weight of old memories to carry. The scars and bleeding sores which come of having spent years in the service of the devil are missed by those whom the Lord brings into His church before they have wandered far into the world.

(Quote from pages 121 and 122 of *Come Ye Children*)

The church's Samuels and Solomons are made wise in their youth; the Davids and Josiahs were tender of heart when they were tender in years. Read the lives of the most eminent ministers and you will usually find that their Christian history began early.

(Quote from page 127 of
Words of Counsel for Christian Workers)

The earlier a soul has light the shorter is its night of darkness, so the earlier in life salvation comes to the heart the better, and greater is the benediction. To receive the dew of grace while we are yet in the dew of youth is a double boon. You desire, by the grace of God, to win the heart for Christ at the beginning of life, and this is the best of blessings. I hope you are not among those who only hope to see your children converted when they are grown up, and feel satisfied to let them remain in their sins while they are children. I hope that you pray for the conversion of children as children, and are working to that end by the Spirit's gracious aid. If you are doing so, I know not of any service more fit to engage the angels of heaven if they could be permitted to undertake it. Surely if they could teach the Gospel to mankind and had their choice of learners, they might well pass those by who are already hardened in sin and who can only give their tottering age to Christ; and gather for Him the young whose day is but dawning. We may not set one work against another, but at any rate, we may count ourselves happy if our sphere is among the young. Let us gather the rosebuds for Jesus.

(Quote from page 92 of
Words of Counsel for Christian Workers)

There is this additional matter for joy, that a great preventive work is done when the young are converted. Conversion saves a child from a multitude of sins. If God's eternal mercy shall bless your teaching to a little prattler, how happy that boy's life will be compared with what might have been if it had grown up in folly, sin, and shame, and had only been converted after many days! It is the highest wisdom and the truest prudence to pray for our children that while they are yet young their hearts may be given to the Saviour. To reclaim the prodigal is

well, but to save him from ever being a prodigal is better. To bring back the thief and the drunkard is a praiseworthy action, but so to act that the boy shall never become a thief nor a drunkard is far better.

(Quote from pages 126 and 127 of
Words of Counsel for Christian Workers)

The Story of Four Candles

Just see how short this candle is, this candle that I hold.
It represents a man, who found the Lord when he was old,
And though His light is shining now, and bright beyond a doubt,
He hasn't much to give because his light will soon be out.

This candle that I have will burn much longer than the other.
I love its glowing light, don't you? It represents a mother,
Who found the Lord in middle age; her children were all grown.
If only she had known the Lord when they were still at home.

This candle is a longer one. It represents a youth,
Who gave his heart to God and walks the path of right and truth.
His light can shine out long and bright with many trophies won,
With more to give because he found the Lord when he was young.

This candle is the longest one I'm sure you'll like it best,
Because you know 'twill shed its light much longer than the rest.
It represents a little child who heard the call and came
With many years to serve the Lord and shine in Jesus Name.

(Author unknown)

Build the Wall at the Top

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;
But over its terrible edge there had slipped
A duke and full many a peasant.
So the people said something would have to be done,
But their projects did not at all tally;
Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff,"
Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

Well, the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
For it spread through the neighboring city;
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
But each heart became brimful of pity
For those who slipped over the dangerous cliff;
And the dwellers in highway and valley
Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence
But an ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked: "It's a marvel to me
That people give far more attention
To repairing results than to stopping the cause,
When they'd much better aim at prevention.
Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he,
"Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally!"
If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley."

"Oh, he's a fanatic," the others rejoined,
"Dispense with the ambulance? Never!
He'd dispense with all charities, too, if he could;
"No No" We'll support them forever.
Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall?
And shall this man dictate to us? Shall he?
Why should people of sense stop to put up a fence
While the ambulance works in the valley?

But a sensible few, who are practical, too,
Will not bear with such thinking much longer.
They believe that prevention is better than cure,
And their voice will soon be the stronger.
Encourage them, then, with your purse, voice, and pen,
And while other philanthropists dally,
They will scorn all pretense and put up a stout fence
On the cliff that hangs over the valley.

Better guide well the young than reclaim them when old,
For the voice of true wisdom is calling,
"To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis best
To prevent other people from falling."
Better close up the source of temptation and crime
Than deliver from dungeon and galley;
Better put a strong fence 'round the top of the cliff
Than an ambulance down in the valley.

(Author Unknown)

Chapter 7:
Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me

There are clear indications in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ loves children. Indeed it might even **seem** that He has, in some way, a special love for them. Perhaps the fact that men and women everywhere have a special love for children is, in some way, a faint reflection of the love our Creator has for them.

It is, of course, true that the love of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ extends to the whole world (John 3 v16), and that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2 v2). But, at the same time, we might well conclude that it is possible that children, somehow, have a special place in the heart of God.

The Lord Jesus and the Children

In Matthew 18 verses 1–14 this divine love for children can be seen in several ways:

- **Jesus Christ identifies Himself with little children.**
  When we receive them in His Name it is just as if we are receiving Him.

  "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me" (verse 5).

- **The Lord Jesus feels strongly when a little one is offended or caused to stumble**
  "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (verse 6).

- **The Lord Jesus tells us not to despise or look down on little ones.**
  "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (verse 10).

- **God the Father does not want even one of these little ones to be lost.**
  "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (verse 14).

- **The Lord Jesus Christ is searching for the little ones who are lost.**
  "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray (verses 11, 12, and 13).

In Matthew 19 verses 13–15, Mark 10 verses 13–16, and Luke 18 v15–17 we can see the reaction of the Lord Jesus when His disciples rebuked and turned away those who were bringing children to the Saviour for Him to touch them and bless them.

- **He was much displeased at what they did**
  "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10 v14).

- **He warned the disciples not to do it again**
  He told them not to forbid the children to come unto Him (Matthew 19 v14; Mark 10 v14; Luke 18 v16).

- **He gave a command concerning children to the disciples**
  "Suffer (let) the little children to come unto me" (Matthew 19 v14; Mark 10 v14; Luke 18 v16).

- **He made a statement concerning children to the disciples**
  "Of such (of people like this) is the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19 v14; Mark 10 v14, 15; Luke 18 v16, 17).

- **He showed His love to the children**
  "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them" (Mark 10 v16).

  "And He laid His hands on them, and departed thence" (Matthew 19 v15).

These verses clearly show how much the Lord Jesus loves children and wants them to come to Him. He wants His disciples to be stepping stones for the children to come to Him and not stumbling blocks to prevent them from coming.

We want, I am sure, to be like our Saviour. To be like Him is to love the children as He did. We don't want to be like the disciples of old who turned the children away or who got in their way and prevented them from coming.

Feed My Lambs

Because of this we can understand the concern the Lord Jesus expressed for the children when He commanded Peter in John 21 v15 "Feed my lambs." It seems a reasonable deduction to conclude that He is here referring to children. The lambs are the young of the flock. In the following two verses He gives Peter two additional commands "Feed my sheep." We have already seen earlier in the book that approximately two thirds of the world's population at any one time consists of adults and one third of children!

The first priority and concern of every shepherd is always for the lambs. They are the sheep of the future; and his first responsibility is to feed them because his future depends upon them. Also they are often incapable of feeding themselves. There is always something attractive about lambs and their helplessness which encourages special love—and, as a result of that, special attention. The sheep who make up two thirds of the population need shepherding (John 21 v16) and they also need food (John 21 v17). But the first priority and attention always need to be directed towards the little ones who on their own are so helpless and so defenseless. Any farmer or shepherd will confirm this.

Dr. Richard Lenski, the well known Bible commentator, writes "Jesus mentions the lambs first but certainly not because they are less valuable or require less care; rather the reverse is true. Jesus here places His most loved possessions into Peter's care. The spiritual feeding and nourishment of children is here made the first part of the great apostolic office."

Matthew Henry, the Bible commentator, said when he preached to pastors in 1713, "Let the ministers of Christ look upon themselves as under a charge to feed the lambs of God's flock . . . either publicly or

privately, either in their solemn religious assemblies or in meetings on purpose for the work."

Our Lord's love and concern for the lambs come out clearly again in Isaiah 40 v11 "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall **gather the lambs with His arm**, **and carry them in His bosom**, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Our reaction could well be that of David in Psalm 34 v11 when he wrote "Come **ye children** hearken unto me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

CONCLUSION NO. 6
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY SEEM SO CLOSE TO THE HEART OF OUR SAVIOUR AND HE WANTS THEM TO COME TO HIM.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

When our Lord blessed the little children He was making His last journey to Jerusalem. It was thus a farewell blessing which He gave to the little ones and it reminds us of the fact that among His parting words to His disciples, before He was taken up, we find the tender charge "Feed my lambs." The ruling passion was strong upon the great Shepherd of Israel, "who gathereth the lambs with His arm, and carrieth them in His bosom"; and it was fitting that while He was making His farewell journey He should bestow His gracious benediction upon the children.

(Quote from page 41 of *Come Ye Children*)

Jesus says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Take heed that ye say not an unkind word against your young brethren in Christ, your little sisters in the Lord. Jesus sets much great store by His dear lambs, that He carries them on His bosom; and I charge you who follow your Lord in all things to show a like tenderness to the little ones of the Divine family.

(Quote from page 14 of *Come Ye Children*)

His heart was a great harbour wherein many little ships might cast anchor. Jesus, the child-man, was never more at home than with

children. The holy child Jesus had an affinity for children.
(Quote from page 16 of *Come Ye Childre*n)

Jesus sets such store by His dear lambs that He carries them in His bosom; and I charge you who follow your Lord in all things to show a like tenderness to the little ones of the divine family.
(Quote from sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

Let Me Guide a Little Child

Dear Lord, I do not ask
That Thou should'st give me some high
work of Thine,
Some noble calling, or some wondrous task.

Give me a little hand to hold in mine;
Give me a little child to point the way
Over the strange, sweet path that
leads to Thee;
Give me a little voice to teach to pray;
Give me two shining eyes Thy face to see.

The only crown I ask, dear Lord, to wear
Is this: That I may teach a little child.

I do not ask that I may ever stand
Among the wise, the worthy, or the great;
I only ask that softly, hand in hand,
A child and I may enter at the gate.

(Author Unknown)

Chapter 8:
A Little Child Shall Lead Them

In Isaiah 11 v6 we read the words "A little child shall lead them." The context of that verse indicates a future period of righteousness (verse 5), peace (verses 6–8) and widespread spirituality (verse 9). But the principle stated in it is not, I believe, confined to any particular period or set of circumstances.

How often it is true that an adult is influenced by, or even led by, a child—and especially by a child with whom he has a close family relationship. The hearts of adults, and even those adults who are themselves hard and resistant to spiritual matters, are often open to the influences of their own children. The way to a man's heart can frequently be through his child.

The previous chapters have outlined and emphasized a number of reasons why we should evangelize children. All of these reasons are directly related to the child himself—his future, his salvation, his needs, his openness, his potential, the attitude of the Lord Jesus towards him and His command to evangelize them. In other words, we evangelize children because of **themselves**. **They** are the focus of our evangelism, and that is correct and Biblical.

But we need to recognize another factor, and another motive, for our evangelism of children. When we reach a child for Christ we can often, through him, reach into an unreached home, and reach the rest of the family there—especially the parents. We do not of course evangelize children just so that we can, through them, reach their parents. But it is true that this often becomes a reality and it does give us an extra motivation for evangelism—even if it is not one of the major reasons for doing so.

Children Influence Adults

We can see several examples in the Scripture of how children influenced adults:

- A good example is the little maid who witnessed to her mistress, Naaman's wife, concerning the power of God through Elisha (2 Kings 5 v2, 3). Through her witness Naaman

was healed (2 Kings 5 v14) and became a true believer (2 Kings 5 v15–19).

- It is interesting to read about the children who praised the Lord Jesus as He entered Jerusalem the week previous to His death (Matthew 21 v15). This drew the criticism of the priests and scribes (Matthew 21 v15). But it was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 21 v16) and it resulted in the approbation and appreciation of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 21 v16). The children saw what others were blind to. The children sang when others were silent. The children received a blessing which others lost. And their witness and example have influenced and encouraged many generations since then to praise the Lord Jesus.
- The openness of little Samuel to the voice of the Lord (1 Samuel 3 v4–10) seems to have been a rebuke to Eli, the one who should have been the vehicle of God's revelation. God used the child Samuel to reveal His Word to Eli (1 Samuel 3 v17, 18), and then later to all Israel (1 Samuel 3 v19–21).
- Although we do not know what age Daniel was in Daniel chapter 1 we can be sure that he was still young when he purposed not to defile himself (Daniel 1 v8). What a testimony he was to the prince of the eunuchs when he saw how God blessed him and his three friends (Daniel 1 v15–19).
- For two thousand years many have been influenced by the willingness of the lad with five loaves and two fishes to give all he had to the Lord Jesus (John 6 v9). His gift was the means by which many adults were fed.

In our world today the child who knows the Saviour can be a means and a channel of blessing to parents and other family members who have no time for God. Those who work with children can give many examples of this principle in practice.

Evelyn was a 10 year old girl who came every week to the Good News Club or children's meeting which we conducted once each week for the children of our area. She listened eagerly, and with rapt attention, to the gospel message. but she never gave any indication of having put her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I asked her one evening if she had done so; and she told me that she

had not. She said that she would have liked to trust Jesus Christ; but her parents had forbidden her to do so. They told her that if she ever did so they would not allow her to return to Good News Club.

However, after the Good News Club the following week Evelyn told me that she really wanted to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour, and I had the joy of leading her to Christ. I then felt that I should advise her not to tell her parents, just yet, about what she had done—so that she could continue to come to Good News Club. I made two suggestions. I told her, firstly, that she should **show** her parents what she had done by the change in her life. And, secondly, that at a later date, as the opportunity would come, she should tell them by word of mouth.

Some months later Evelyn's mother came to speak to me. She told me that both she and her husband had trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and wanted to join a local evangelical church. I was delighted; and I asked her how this had happened. She told me that God had spoken to both of them through the change in Evelyn's life.

Another mother told me that she had trusted Christ. She explained that God had spoken to her through the choruses her little four year old sang each day after she had come from our Good News Club.

Yes, it is still true today. "A little child shall lead them."

CONCLUSION NO. 8
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE THROUGH THEM WE CAN OFTEN REACH INTO THEIR HOMES, AND INTO THE HEARTS OF THEIR PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

As to early piety in its bearing upon others, I cannot too highly commend it. How attractive it is! Grace looks loveliest in youth. That which would not be noticed in the grown-up man, strikes at once the most careless observer when seen in a child. Grace in a child has a convincing force: the infidel drops his weapon and admires. A word spoken by a child abides in the memory, and its artless accents touch the heart. Where the minister's sermon fails, the child's prayer may gain the victory.

Where nothing else could win a way for truth, a child's love has

done it. It is still true, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

(Quote from page 122 of *Come Ye Children*)

Building for Eternity

A builder builded a temple,
He wrought it with grace and skill,
Pillars and groins and arches,
All fashioned to work his will.
Men said as they saw its beauty,
"It shall never know decay,
Great is thy skill, Oh builder
Thy fame shall endure for aye."

A teacher builded a temple
With loving and infinite care,
Planning each arch with patience,
Laying each stone with prayer.
None praised her unceasing efforts,
None knew of the wondrous plan,
For the temple the teacher builded
Was unseen by the eyes of man.

Gone is the builder's temple,
Crumbled into the dust,
Low lies each stately pillar,
Food for consuming rust.
But the temple the teacher builded
Will last while the ages roll,
For that beautiful unseen temple
Is a child's immortal soul.

(Author Unknown)

Chapter 9:
Stars That Shine—Forever

The **highest** form of motivation is **not** the rewards we will receive from engaging in a particular form of service or activity. But at the same time the anticipation of reward and blessing is, can be, and should be, a motivation for us.

I believe that one of the motivations in the ministry, and in the redeeming work, of the Lord Jesus Christ was His anticipation that through that work He would receive the joy and satisfaction of seeing people saved and following Him (Hebrews 12 v2; Isaiah 53 v11).

One of the motivations in the ministry of the Apostle Paul were the crowns or rewards he would be given one day for his service and ministry. The Bible speaks about a number of such crowns:

- the crown of righteousness for the one who serves in the light of Christ's return (2 Timothy 4 v8)
- the crown of glory for the faithful pastor (1 Peter 5 v4)
- the incorruptible crown for the servant who is disciplined (1 Corinthians 9 v24–27)
- the crown of life for those servants who love Him (James 1 v12), and faithfully endure (Revelation 2 v10)
- the crown of rejoicing for the servant who has been used by God to lead, or help lead, others to Christ (1 Thessalonians 2 v19; Philippians 4 v1)

Paul seemed to look forward especially to this last crown. He saw the believers at Thessalonica as his hope, joy and crown of rejoicing in that day when the Lord Jesus would come back and he would stand before His Presence (1 Thessalonians 2 v19, 20). He also referred to the Philippian believers as his joy and his crown (Philippians 4 v1).

What a joy it will be for us, when we are in Heaven to see and talk with those to whom we had witnessed and whom we had evangelized, taught, helped and encouraged—when they were children.

What a thrill when they come to us and say, "Thank you for what you did to help me come here."

A Promise for Teachers

There is a very special verse for those who teach and evangelize in Daniel chapter 12 verse 3.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" or "They that are teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."

This is a wonderful promise to those who teach the Word of God. I believe that the greatest profession in the world is that of the teacher. I personally am glad and thankful that God called me to be a teacher. The New Testament emphasizes that teaching is one of the major gifts of the Spirit in the church today (Romans 12 v7; 1 Corinthians 12 v28; Ephesians 4 v11; 1 Peter 4 v11). John Stott, the well known preacher, writer and theologian, believes that teaching is the most needed and most important gift of all today.

What a privilege to be a teacher. The teacher will, according to this promise, shine one day as the brightness of the firmament.

Then Daniel adds these words: "They that turn **many** to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

I believe that the teaching which turns **many** to righteousness could well apply to the teaching of children. We have already seen that they are the most open to our teaching, and that most people who "turn to righteousness" do so when young. This could therefore be a promise to those who teach the gospel to children. Teachers and evangelists of children could be "as the stars forever and ever."

That is motivation and encourages us to teach the **gospel** to the little ones. God promises to bless in the **future** those who evangelize children.

Present Rewards for Children's Evangelists

But there is **present** blessing also for those who evangelize children:

- The blessing of knowing that we have obeyed the Command of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16 v15).
- The blessing of knowing that we are using the gifts of teaching and evangelism which God the Holy Spirit has given to us (Ephesians 4 v11, 12; 6 v1-4).

- The blessing of learning God's Word as we teach it. Teaching is one of the most effective ways of learning.
- The blessing of learning how to communicate the Bible to others. One Anglican bishop in South Africa requires all his future pastors to spend a definite period of time working with children before entering the pastorate. He knows that if they can teach children they can teach anybody!
- The blessing of learning humility, patience and long suffering. Evangelizing children really teaches and encourages these qualities.
- The blessing of seeing children come to Christ, and start to live lives which are pleasing to Him.
- The blessing of seeing believing children grow into men and women used by God, sometimes in full-time service.
- The blessing of seeing God's work grow as children are reached and saved.
- The blessing, above all, of seeing God glorified in the lives of children.

I believe also that the church which reaches out to the unreached children and evangelizes them will be blessed by God and will grow. God promised the children of Israel that if they would teach the Word of God to the children they would "increase mightily in the land that floweth with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6 v3).

I believe that God promises similar blessing today to the church and to the individual, who teaches the Word of God and the Gospel to children, and who helps meet their spiritual need.

CONCLUSION NO. 9
WE EVANGELIZE CHILDREN BECAUSE GOD HAS PROMISED TO BLESS THOSE WHO DO SO.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

You shall receive a great reward if, when you enter heaven, as I trust you will, you shall find many dear children there to welcome you into eternal habitations; it will add another heaven to your own heaven, to meet with heavenly beings who shall salute you as their teacher who brought them to Jesus. I would not wish to go to heaven alone—

would you? I would not wish to have a crown in heaven without a star in it, because no soul was ever saved by my means—would you?

(Quote from pages 129 and 130 of *Words of Counsel for Christian Workers*)

Such work is profitable in a high degree. It is also most beneficial work to ourselves. It exercises our humility and helps to keep us lowly and meek. It also trains our patience; let those who doubt this try it; for even young Christians exercise the patience of those who believe in them, and are therefore anxious that they should justify their confidence. If you want big-souled, large-hearted men or women, look for them among those who are much engaged among the young, bearing with their follies, and sympathizing with their weaknesses for Jesus' sake.

(Quote from page 10 of *Come Ye Children*)

If we teach children the doctrine of the atonement in the most unmistakable terms, we shall be doing ourselves good. I sometimes hope that God will revive His church and restore her to her ancient faith by a gracious work among children. If He would bring into our churches a large influx of young people, how it would tend to quicken the sluggish blood of the supine and sleepy! Child Christians tend to keep the house alive. Oh, for more of them!

If the Lord will but help us to teach the children we shall be teaching ourselves. There is no way of learning like teaching, and you do not know a thing till you can teach it to another.

(Quote from page 73 of *Come Ye Children*)

The Teacher's Goal

Some would gather money along the path of life;
Some would gather roses, and rest from worldly strife.
BUT I would gather children from among the thorns of sin;
I would seek a golden curl and a freckled, toothless grin.
For money cannot enter in that land of endless day,
And roses that are gathered soon will wilt along the way,
But oh, the laughing children, as I cross the sunset sea,
And the gates swing wide to Heaven I can take them in with me!

(Author unknown)

Chapter 10:
Why Evangelize Children?

We have seen that we should evangelize children because:

- The Lord Jesus commands us to (chapter 1)
- The future is in their hands (chapter 2)
- They can be saved (chapter 3)
- They are spiritually dead, sinful and outside God's kingdom and there is the possibility of them being lost forever (chapter 4)
- They are open to the gospel (chapter 5)
- They have their whole lives to live (chapter 6)
- The Lord Jesus loves them and wants them to come to Him (chapter 7)
- Through them others can be reached—especially in their homes (chapter 8)
- God will bless us as we reach them (chapter 9)

These nine reasons show us that it is clear, logical and biblical that we should evangelize children.

This does not mean that we should **only** evangelize children. The Biblical plan of evangelism is, as we have already seen, to evangelize everybody, and not any one section of the community at the expense of another section. But as children make up approximately one third of the population is it not reasonable to expect that one third of the total amount of evangelism should be directed towards them?

This does not mean that **everybody** should work with, and evangelize, children. Not at all.

God calls some people to full-time work among children and to full-time child evangelism. Some of these work in connection with their own church or denomination. Others are appointed as specialist children's workers inside a missionary organisation which has otherwise a general ministry to everyone. Quite a number find their opportunity for full-time work among children by joining a Mission which specializes in children's work and especially in the evangelism of unreached children. The largest of these Missions is Child Evangelism Fellowship, the Mission with which we ourselves have had the privilege

to work since 1950, and at the time of writing (1996) CEF has 2,000 full-time workers serving in 133 countries. A Mission of this type gives full scope to those who feel God's guidance into a full-time ministry to children.

Dr. Frances Schaeffer, the world renowned preacher, teacher and writer said at a conference for children's workers "There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit lays a particular burden for child evangelism upon certain people that they will teach them at this period of their life. We all have a responsibility towards children but certain people have been entrusted with a special ministry among them."

Many people do not realise that Dr. Schaeffer and his wife first came to Europe from USA to evangelize children! God later led them into the other ministries for which they became well known.

There are also many men and women who have a real burden for children and want to see them come to Christ. But they remain in their secular occupations and give some time each week to a regular children's ministry—by teaching Sunday School, or Good News Club; and they also help during their holidays in children's camps and holiday Bible schools. They also do a tremendous and blessed work among children.

But there are also, and in addition to these, many many more people who do not see themselves as teachers or children's workers or children's evangelists—full-time or part-time. But they do come into contact with children to a lesser, or even a greater, extent. This group includes parents, pastors, grandparents, neighbours—and many others. It is difficult to avoid contact with children. It is vital for the people in this group to realise the importance of children in God's plan, and the need to evangelize them. They need to see that they also can do something—even if it is just giving the children a tract, or inviting them to come to Sunday school or Good News Club.

It is vital for everyone to play their part in evangelizing the boys and girls.

"OH GOD SHOW ME WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO. AND THEN HELP ME TO DO IT."

Charles Spurgeon writes:

What a mercy it will be if our children are thoroughly grounded in the doctrine of redemption by Christ! If they are warned against the false gospels of this evil age, and if they are taught to rest on the eternal rock of Christ's finished work, we may hope to have a generation following us which will maintain the faith, and will be better than their fathers.

Your Sunday schools are admirable; but what is their purpose if you do not teach the gospel in them? You get children together and keep them quiet for an hour and a half and then send them home; but what is the good of it? It may bring some quiet to their fathers and mothers and that is, perhaps, why they send them to the school; but all the real good lies in what is taught the children. The most fundamental truth should be made most prominent; and what is this but the cross.

Children need the gospel, the whole gospel, the unadulterated gospel.

Be encouraged; the God who has saved so many of your children is going to save very many more of them, and we shall have great joy as we see hundreds brought to Christ.

(Quote from pages 73 and 74 of *Come Ye Children*)

The Teachers Prayer

Love that never faileth, love that all prevaileth
Saviour Christ, O hear me now and give thy love to me.

Round me children dying, deep in darkness lying;
Thou didst love them unto death, O give thy love to me.

Grant that I may reach them, grant that I may teach them,
Loving them as Thou dost love, O give Thy love to me.

Love that ever burneth, love that ever yearneth
Saviour Christ, O hear me now and give Thy love to me.

(Author unknown)

Chapter 11:
Our Response

When children suffer we suffer. When we read in our newspapers of children being abused or hurt in any way our hearts are deeply touched and tears come to our eyes.

What is our reaction as we think of the spiritual needs and the eternal destiny of millions of our boys and girls? Are our hearts touched? Are we ready and willing to do what we can to help meet those needs?

One of the early leaders of Child Evangelism Fellowship used to pray, "Dear God, give us tears for the children of the world."

We need to see the GREAT NEED of the children (Matthew 18 v14). Boys and girls are lost, spiritually dead and outside God's Kingdom. This is worse than any physical or mental problems that they have. What can we do to help them?

We need to hear the GREAT COMMISSION. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16 v15). The answer to the children's needs is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is applied to their hearts by the Holy Spirit and we are commanded to bring that Gospel to the children.

We need to be aware of the GREAT OPPORTUNITIES which lie before us for the evangelism of children. Doors are wide open everywhere (Revelation 3 v8; 1 Corinthians 16 v9). There are unlimited possibilities on all sides. Our Mission, Child Evangelism Fellowship, has a great need for full-time workers to help us reach the multitudes of the world's children for Jesus Christ. We also have a need for part-time and volunteer workers who will enlist to evangelize children in Good News Clubs and open-air work in their own neighbourhood. In addition there is a great need for committee members, prayer partners and donors. Together we can take advantage of the great opportunities which exist everywhere—and reach more of the world's children for Jesus Christ.

We can then visualize the GREAT RESULTS which could materialize as we go through these doors to evangelize children and hopefully to see a number trust Christ (Matthew 18 v6).

We need to understand the GREAT RESPONSIBILITY we have to reach out and help these children.

"How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10 v14).

It is a special encouragement to us to realise the GREAT PRIVILEGE enjoyed by the one who sees the great need, hears the great commission, is willing to make use of the great opportunities available; and understands the great responsibility God has given to him.

- the privilege of welcoming Jesus Christ as we welcome children in His Name (Matthew 18 v5; Mark 9 v37)
- the privilege of being co-workers with God (1 Corinthians 3 v9; 2 Corinthians 6 v1)
- the privilege of being gifted and used by the Holy Spirit in the lives of children (Ephesians 4 v11 and 12)
- the privilege of seeing children come to Christ (Matthew 18 v6)
- the privilege of building the future of the Church and the country (Deuteronomy 6 v3–7; Psalm 78 v7, 8).

We need now to face the GREAT CHALLENGE before us as we would hear God say to us "Whom shall I send and who will go for us" (Isaiah 6 v8a).

Will our response be "Here am I; send me"? (Isaiah 6 v8b).

"Lord use me. Here am I, use me.
I want to be greatly used by Thee.
Across the street, or across the sea.
Lord, here am I, use me."

MAY IT BE SO.

Last words from Charles Spurgeon:

David said, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." You are not ashamed to tread in the footsteps of David, are you? You will not object to follow the example of one who was first eminently holy, and then eminently great.

If you want, however, a higher example even than that of David, hear the Son of David while from His lips flow the sweet words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for such is the

Kingdom of Heaven."

I am sure it would encourage you if you always thought of these examples.

Let the royal example of David, let the godlike example of Jesus Christ inspire you with fresh diligence and increasing ardour, with confident and enduring perseverance, still to go on in your blessed work.

(Quote from pages 103 and 104 of *Come Ye Children*)

I long, I pine, I cry before God that He may bless this feeble word of mine to your conversion and to ***the conversion of many dear children***.
(Part of the closing of a sermon preached on October 17th, 1886)

When the people of Judah and Jerusalem were carried into captivity, the poor with their children were left in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was left with them. Many of the children were starving and many died. There was not enough food and there was no human way to secure more food. Jeremiah cried, "Mine eyes do fail with tears… because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city" (Lamentations 2: 11,12).

Jeremiah pleaded with the Lord's people to weep and pray: "Let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street" (Lamentations 2: 18, 19).

Jeremiah accused the people of being cruel. "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the suckling child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no one breaketh it unto them" (Lamentations 4 v3, 4).

This condition of the children in Jerusalem, then, is a type of the condition of the children in the whole world today. The children in Jerusalem were starving for physical food; the children today are starving for salvation. Then there were thousands; now there are hundreds of millions.

No one but God can meet this terrible need today but ***He*** *can meet it if His people pray as Jeremiah prayed and as he pleaded with the Lord's people to pray. We have the "Bread of Life" now, but who, oh who, will take it to perishing millions of children?*

It is our God-given duty to go out after the children where they are. May God lay this burden on all His people everywhere. May we each humbly ask Him what we can do to evangelize the children.

J. Irvin Overholtzer
(Founder of Child Evangelism Fellowship)

Chapter 12:
A Simple Outline
To Help You Evangelize Children

I would suggest that you, first of all, buy a Wordless Book. If you cannot do this, you can make one. The Wordless Book is a book without words! It has a green cover, and inside there are 4 pages, or double pages. These are gold, black, red and white. Each colour represents a group of Gospel truths, and should be shown to the children as you speak about that group of truths.

The gold page speaks about God and His Holiness

The dark page speaks about sin and its consequences (It is better to use the word "dark" rather than "black." This is more biblical and also less likely to cause offence.)

The red page speaks about Jesus Christ and His Death for sin

The white page speaks about salvation, and especially about justification.

The green cover speaks about spiritual growth, after salvation.

You could then, if you wish, use the simple outline, which follows, as you speak to a child, or to a group of children.

The Gold Page

"Do you believe there is a God? Of course you do. When you look around and see all the wonder and beauties of nature you know that they did not just happen. Someone made them and that Someone is God.

"Do you know what God is like? The Bible is God's Word and it tells us what God is like. The most important truth about God is that He is holy. What does that mean? He is completely pure and completely without sin. When I look at this gold page I think of the metal gold. Gold is not just a very precious metal; it is also very pure. It has been heated and heated until all that is not pure has been removed from it. So, in a little way, this gold page reminds us of God who is pure, holy and without sin. The Bible says 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts' (Isaiah 6 v 3). The gold page also reminds us of Heaven where God lives, and where

there is no sin. The Bible says that the heavenly city, and the street of that city, are 'pure gold as it were transparent glass.'

"But God is also just. This means that He is fair and that He must punish sin. He cannot close His eyes to it nor turn His back on it."

The Dark Page

"This second page is a picture, not of God, but of ourselves. We were all born with dark sinful hearts, and because of that we find it so easy to do things which are wrong. The Bible says that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3 v23). God in His Word has given us a number of commands such as 'honour and obey your father and mother'; 'do not steal'; 'do not tell lies'; 'do not worship anyone else or anything else except God.' But as we read these commands we know that we have broken them or disobeyed them—or at least some of them. That means we have sinned. God is holy. There is no sin in His Presence. Therefore we cannot go to Heaven to be with Him when we die, unless our sin is forgiven.

"God is also just and fair. This means that He must punish our sin—unless someone else takes our place and takes our punishment instead of us."

The Red Page

"This red page reminds me of someone who did take our place and who did take the punishment for our sin. That someone is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God. He loved us so much that He came to this earth, almost 2,000 years ago, to live for 33 years and then to die on the Cross for us and for our sin. That is why this page is red. On the Cross the Lord Jesus Christ was punished by God the Father—not for His sin (because He never sinned) but for our sin—so that we would not be punished for it. He poured out His Precious Blood for us. The Bible says that 'While we were yet sinners Christ died for us' (Romans 5 v8). Oh how much He must have loved us.

"But He did not stay dead. After three days He rose from the dead and He is alive for evermore. Forty days later, He went back to Heaven and today He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and He wants to be your Saviour and your Lord."

The White Page

"Isn't that a nice page? It is very different from the dark page isn't it?

"The Lord Jesus died for you and He wants to save you so that you won't be punished for your sins, and so that you will be changed and begin a new life. But there is something you need to do to be saved.

"Do you know right down in your heart that you have sinned? Do you really want to be saved? The Bible says 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Romans 10 v13).

"Let me tell you a story. Bobby was on holiday. He loved the beach, he loved the ocean and he loved to swim. While his daddy sat and nodded sleepily on the beach, Bobby went in for a swim. But he went out too far. The water got deeper and deeper. His feet could not touch the bottom. He became afraid and he felt he was going to drown.

"What do you think he did? What would you have done? He called to his father 'Daddy save me.' And his father rushed in and saved his son from drowning.

"The Bible says that a child who knows he is a sinner, and who wants to be saved should call to the Lord Jesus, and should ask Him to save him. He will save you—not from drowning—but from sin and so that you will not be separated from God. And if you call today, in your heart, to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to save you, the Bible promises that He will do so—immediately!

"If you would like to be saved, but you are still not sure how to be, I would be glad to talk with you afterwards and show you more clearly what you need to do. When the meeting is over just remain seated, and I will come over and speak with you.

"Do you really want to be saved? Do you want to have your sins forgiven? Do you want to be changed and to start living a life which pleases God? If so why not speak to the Lord Jesus in your heart, even as you sit there. You do not need to speak out loud. Just call to Him and ask Him to save you and He will. He has promised that 'whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved'—and He always keeps His promises!

"If you do that God will see you as clean and as pure as the Lord Jesus Himself. You will be like this white page in God's sight. All your sin will be forgiven for ever, you will start a new life, and you will be

sure of going to Heaven when you die. Don't wait—do it today."

The Green Page

This page can be used to show the saved child how he can grow (1 Peter 2 v2) and how he can become more and more like the Lord Jesus:

- by reading and obeying His Bible
- by talking to God on a regular basis
- by telling others that he has trusted the Lord Jesus
- by confessing his sin to God if he has done something wrong. He does not need to be saved again.
- by meeting regularly with other Christians and by attending a good church

A Closing Challenge

Has God spoken to your heart about the children and their spiritual need? Does He want you to evangelize some children? Are you ready, and willing, to get involved—in some way?

Would you like to prayerfully consider each of the following possibilities?

- ***Children can be evangelized in their own homes***
  Are you a Christian parent or grandparent?
  Have you evangelized your own children?
- ***Children can be evangelized in the local church***
  Are you a pastor or Sunday school teacher?
  Have you been evangelizing the children under your care?
  Would you like to get involved, or more involved, in a ministry to children in your local church?
  Would you be willing to become a Sunday school teacher, or to help in a church-based week-day ministry to the boys and girls?
- ***The majority of children do not have Christian parents***

continued . . .

nor do they go to an evangelical church

Would you be willing to help reach some of those children who are OUTSIDE?

- ✓ *By starting a weekly Good News Club in your home for the local children?*
- ✓ *By leading a weekly open-air meeting in the summer time for children?*
- ✓ *By organizing a daily open-air meeting for children for five successive days?*
- ✓ *By inviting children to come to your Sunday School or to a week day meeting in your church—and then bringing them there?*
- ✓ *By inviting children to come to a week-long camp organized by your church—and by helping in that camp?*
- ✓ *By organizing, and teaching in, a Holiday Bible School in your church for one week?*
- ✓ *By organizing, or helping in, a children's rally, or a week of evangelistic meetings for children, in your church?*
- ✓ *By speaking to a child, somewhere, about the Lord Jesus if, and when, you have an opportunity to do so?*
- ✓ *By distributing attractive evangelistic tracts to children?*

If you would like more information or advice about any of the above activities please contact your local Child Evangelism Fellowship office.

In the Memory of Someone Who Cared

What was his name? I do not know his name.
I only know he heard God's voice and came,
Brought all he had across the sea—to live
and work for God and me,
And night and day with tears—brought from
the soil—with fearsome toil
The tender fruit of early years.
The souls of children in our countryside
And at the end, without memorial died.
No blaring trumpets sounded out his fame
He lived, he died—I do not know his name.

And I?
Is there a child at home—across the sea
Where thou, who lovest children, would'st send me.
The young for Him to seek and bring; to go for
His name's sake
Some handful of His corn to take
And scatter far afield—till it, in turn, shall yield
Its hundred fold—of grass of gold.
To reach the waiting children for my King?

Show me the street, oh Father, or the sea.
Is it thine enterprise? Great God, send me.
No matter where it is—no matter what the cost
I'll go with thee for children who are lost.

(Author Unknown)

Bibliography

The following books are recommended for further reading and study. Several of these books were also a great help in the writing of this manual:

Biblical Basis of Child Evangelism by Sam Doherty (European Child Evangelism Fellowship)

Come ye Children by C.H. Spurgeon (Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, Texas).

Evangelizing Children by Jennifer Haaijer (European Child Evangelism Fellowship)

Explaining Salvation to Children by Marjorie Soderholm (Free Church Publications)

The Necessity of Sunday Schools by Peter Masters and Malcolm Watts (Wakeman Trust)

Physician of Souls by Peter Masters (Wakeman, London)

Teaching a Bible Lesson to Children by Jennifer Haaijer (European Child Evangelism Fellowship)

Words of Counsel for Christian Workers by C.H. Spurgeon (Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, Texas).

Publications available for children's workers who will make good use of them in a Biblical ministry to children

- **A series of devotional books for children's workers:**
  "*The Problems of a Children's Worker - and God's Solution*"
  "*Obedience to the Heavenly Vision*"
  "*Smooth Sailing in Personal Relationships and Leadership*"
  "*ALife Worth Living*"
  "*Salvation by Faith Alone*"
  "*Truths for Teachers*"
  "*God's Word for God's Workers Vol 1*"
  "*God's Word for God's Workers Vol 2*"

- **A series of training manuals for children's workers:**
  "*First Steps*"
  "*How to Teach Bible Doctrines to Children*"
  "*Why Evangelize Children*?"
  "*The Principles of Teaching*"
  "*100 Questions and Answers Concerning a Ministry to Children*"
  "*Bible Talks for Children Vol 1*"
  "*Bible Talks for Children Vol 2*"
  "*Now I See It*"
  "*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*"
  "*CHILDREN - A Biblical Perspective*"

- **A series of visualized lessons to teach Bible doctrines to children:**
  "*Questions Children Ask*" (5 lessons)
  "*Who Is God*? (10 lessons)
  "*What Is God Like*?" (10 lessons)
  "*The Bible*" (5 lessons)
  "*The Lord Jesus Christ*" (5 lessons)
  "*What Is Wrong With the World?*" (5 lessons)
  "*Salvation – The Gift of God – Part I*" (10 lessons)
  "*Salvation – The Gift of God – Part II*" (10 lessons)
  "*Growth - The Plan of God*" (20 lessons in two parts)
  "*The Holy Spirit*" (10 Lessons)
  "*God Listens to His Children*" (11 Lessons)
  "*Creation and Evolution*" (10 Lessons)

For information on the availablity of these publications please contact -

CEF Specialized Book Ministry,
PO Box 308, Lisburn, BT28 2YS, N Ireland, UK
or online - www.cefbookministry.com

Child Evangelism Fellowship®

The CEF Specialized Book Ministry is an integral part of the worldwide ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship.
CEF is the world's largest mission dedicated to the evangelism of children. CEF trained workers are to be found in over 170 countries and each year more than ten million children are reached with the Gospel. CEF workers provide training opportunities which vary from a one hour course to a three month institute.
A full range of visualized Bible lessons and additional tools for the evangelism of children is produced in many languages.

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