

# Teaching the Good News to Kids

Sunday Evening – August 20, 2017

Sleater Kinney Road Baptist Church, Olympia, WA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

This isn’t a script about how to share the Gospel with kids. This is a *really brief* discussion for workers about some *really important topics*. The better you understand these things, the better you’ll be able to explain the Gospel.

So, today is all about a foundation so you can understand and explain the Gospel better. We’re going to talk about:

- What the “big story” of the Bible is, and why it matters
- What “sin” is actually is, and how to explain it
- What “repentance” actually us, and how to explain it
- What elements, building blocks and facts make up “the Gospel”
- How to explain to an unbeliever “how to be saved”

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I'm realistic – I know you probably won't be able to sit down with a child, and systematically explain every single thing in this information packet. I understand what real life is like. That's why this *isn't a script*. Instead, the information in this presentation is a brief theological foundation so you'll be able to *better and more accurately* explain the Gospel to kids with the time you do have.

Next time, we'll practice. For now, however, we'll talk about building a foundation.

### **2. TELL THEM THE "BIG STORY" OF THE BIBLE:**

The Gospel doesn't exist in a vacuum; it has a context and a backstory. What would you think if somebody described the plot of the Disney movie *Cinderella* this way:

- "Cinderella is a girl who marries a handsome prince with some help from her Fairy Godmother."

Is this really what *Cinderella* is about? Not at all. But, is there anything untrue about this description?

- Cinderella *is* a girl
- Cinderella *does* marry a prince
- The prince *is* handsome
- She only pulls it off with some help from her Fairy Godmother

What's wrong, then? I'll tell you what's wrong – the facts are correct, but the backstory and context are missing. It leaves you with an incomplete picture. In fact, that makes the description *wrong*. It leaves out so much:

- What about the backstory of the death of Cinderella's father, and the "true nature" of the wicked stepmother?
- What about the part when the narrator says, "Cinderella was abused. Humiliated, and finally forced to become a servant in her own house. And yet, through it all, Cinderella remained ever gentle and kind?"
- What about her relationship with the friendly mice?

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- What about Lucifer the Cat?
- What about the King, and his desire to find a girl for his son, the Prince, to marry? This is the entire backstory for the ball Cinderella attends!
- What about the tragic account of how the evil stepsisters tear Cinderella's dress to shreds in a fit of rage, right before they're due to leave for the ball?
- What about how Cinderella only manages to get to the ball because she had magical help from the Fairy Godmother?
- What about how Cinderella meets the Prince, and they fall in love at first sight?
- What about her flight from the castle at the stroke of midnight, and leaves the glass slipper behind?
- What about the Grand Duke's frantic search for Cinderella throughout the kingdom, with his glass slipper in tow?

If you leave out these important elements, the "story" of Cinderella is lost, truncated, and changed. At best, you'll be left with an incomplete story. At worst, it will be a *totally different* story. It might have some of the same names (e.g. "Cinderella," "Prince," "Fairy Godmother," etc.), but it *will not* be the same story.

It's the same with the Gospel. You can't start with this:

- "Hi. I'm a Christian. Can I have a moment of your time? You're a sinner, and the Bible says you're headed straight for hell (*pause to read Romans 3:23 and 6:23*)!
- The Good News is that Jesus came to save you from your sins, and all you have to do is believe in Him. He loves you, and died for you (*pause to read John 3:16*).
- If you believe in Jesus, you'll have eternal life (*pause to read Romans 10:13*)!
- Pray this prayer with me, if you want to accept Jesus right now . . .

You haven't given this person the Good News. Just consider the kinds of questions an un-churched person would have after hearing this well-meaning, but awful presentation:

- What does it mean to be a Christian?
- What is "sin?" What does that have to do with the person you're talking to?

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- What is the Bible, and why should he care about it?
- What is “hell,” and why is he headed there?
- Who is Jesus?
- How will He “save” this person? What does that mean?
- What, exactly, does this man have to “believe” in? What does that even mean?
- How does the man know Jesus “loves” him, and what does that have to do with anything?
- What does Jesus’ death have to do with anything?
- Again, what does the man have to “believe” in? What *is* “belief,” anyway?
- What is “eternal life?”
- Do you have to “pray a prayer” to be saved? Is there something magical about “the prayer?”

So, my point is very simple – the Gospel has a context and a backstory. It’s called the Old Testament. If you’re going to share the Gospel to somebody, you need to try (as much as you can, depending on the circumstances), to tell the whole story. The Gospel is a grand story – the *grandest* story ever!

Briefly, here is the outline:

### 1. **God:**

- There is only one God. He made us and made everything.
- He has always existed as three divine people – Father, Son and Spirit.
- Each person has always been around forever, each Person is equal, and they are each divine - and the Bible says that, together, they make up our one God.
- The Bible says God is holy and perfect. He is completely truthful, so you can know that His special message to you, the Bible, is always true.
- He is full of love, and He always does the right thing, for the right reasons.
- He is faithful, and always keeps His word.
- He has rich mercy, and is even willing to not punish people who deserve it.
- He is full of grace, which means He gives out love and favor when it cannot ever be deserved or earned

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### **2. Creation and Fall:**

- God made everything good and perfect.
- God gave Adam and Eve rule over His creation, and gave them rules to follow. They deliberately broke His rule and rebelled against Him, ruining themselves and all creation in the process.
- God cursed them and all creation as a punishment. Because of their rebellion, Adam and Eve's natures changed from innocent to wicked, and they've passed this on to all their descendants.
- All this explains why the world is the way it is right now.

### **3. Promise of Salvation:**

- Right after Adam and Eve rebelled against Him, God promised He'd send a Savior to destroy Satan and set everything right.
- Jesus' work isn't *just* about us; it's about setting *everything right* that has gone wrong. He's the One who will fix everything and rule the new world as King!

### **4. The Fall to Abraham:**

- The people continue to rebel against God, no matter what He does, and God eventually chose to make a special nation from one man - Abraham.
- This is the nation God would use to bring His Son into the world.
- This includes (a) the story leading up to Noah's Flood, (b) the events leading up to the Tower of Babel, (c) then God's calling of Abraham, all the way until (d) his descendants settling in Egypt to escape famine.

### **5. Exodus to Malachi:**

- The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, but God sent a prophet named Moses to lead them out from slavery and to the land He'd promised Abraham so long ago.
- The Israelites left Egypt, agreed to follow God's laws because they loved Him, and settled in the Promised Land.

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- The laws taught them right and wrong, how to live their everyday lives as God's people, and how to have forgiveness, atonement for their sins, and an enduring relationship with God.
- The entire history of Israel is one of complete failure. They didn't do right, they didn't live like Godly people, and they weren't sorry for their rebellion against God – over and over again.
- There had to be a better way; someone who would end this never-ending cycle of wickedness and failure.

### **6. Jesus to Eternity:**

- Jesus left heaven and came here to save a whole, massive group of people from every corner of the globe – just like the Bible promised He would.
- He stayed divine, but became human and was born as a baby, then grew up like everybody else.
- He was an Israelite, descended from Abraham.
- He lived a perfect life for us, died for our sins, and rose from the dead to defeat sin, the curse of death, and Satan.
- He'll come back one day soon to judge the living and the dead, judge Satan, make everything new again and rule over all creation as King, on David's throne!

I could say so much more, but you get the idea. And, I'm sure you could add a whole lot more, yourself! I'm sure a whole host of stories from the Old Testament were jumping through your mind as you read all this; the Flood, Abraham's journey from Ur, the parting of the Red Sea, the giving of the law, the sad story of the time of the Judges, the triumphs and tragedies of the historical books, the even sadder warnings from the prophets, etc.

Now, we need to talk about some "big words" that you'll need to explain to kids.

### **3. EXPLAINING THE "BIG WORDS:"**

Christians are used to talking in our own language. Every sub-culture has a "language" that only insiders can understand. I'm an insurance fraud investigator for the State of Washington. When I write an investigative report, and it reads:

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- This investigation concludes Joe Friday misrepresented the terms and benefits of an indexed, deferred annuity because he did not disclose the annual fees on the guaranteed lifetime income benefit rider. In addition, he used these misrepresentations to induce Jane Doe to surrender an existing, fixed annuity which incurred a \$23,651 surrender charge.

. . . then you quickly realize I'm speaking in a specialized language. It's the same for Christians. We have a necessary, important language in our own sub-culture. You have to remember the folks you're sharing the Gospel with **don't know what on earth some of this language means!** When you're talking to kids, it's even more serious.

And, to be honest – many Christians have never had to explain what these terms mean. Today, we'll talk a bit about that.

### **a. What does "sin" mean?**

It means at least three things:

1. Sin is an *external action* that is against God's moral code
2. Sin is an *internal thought* that is against God's moral code
3. Sin is a *status, a state of being* that is opposed to God's moral code

It's clear definition #3 is the most basic one, the root from which the other two flow. Because we are born as "sinners" (i.e. in the state of being sinful), we think evil thoughts, and we sometimes do them, too.

### **i. What does it mean to be "a sinner?"**

So, consider this – what does it mean to have the status of "sinner?" We're all born that way, so what does it really mean? When you get right down to it, to be "a sinner" means to be in rebellion against God; to not *live, act and be* the way His law says you should be.

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What do you call somebody who deliberately breaks laws? A criminal (see 1 John 3:4). So, here is the bottom line for explaining this to children:

- **Q:** What does it mean to “sin?”
- **A:** It means to think or do something that God says you shouldn’t do. The Bible says everybody does this, even if they try not to! (*Ask the kids to confirm that they can’t follow their parent’s rules perfectly; they’ll all agree and even give stories, if they feel brave!*)
  
- **Q:** What does it mean to be a “sinner?”
- **A:** It means to break God’s laws. Somebody who breaks laws is a criminal (*Give a simple example of a crime and ask the kids what they’d call somebody who committed the crime*). The Bible tells us that everybody breaks God’s law by what they think about and do, so that means everybody is a criminal to God.
  
- **Q:** What has to happen to criminals who break the law?
- **A:** They have to be punished to pay for their crimes. This is what God will do to each of us, because we have to pay for *our* crimes.

I usually preface all this with assurances that, even though I’m about to give them really bad news, God loves them so much that He has some even *better news* for us afterwards. Make sure to emphasize “Jesus’ Mission” by reminding them that God promised His Son would fix everything, and the Good News is all about that!

### **b. What is “the Gospel,” or “what do they have to believe in”?**

This section is going to be deliberately short, because I think we understand the concepts I’m going to discuss. My focus here isn’t on explaining *what* the concepts are, but on *the collection of facts that make up “the Gospel.”*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The best way to determine what the “building blocks” of the Gospel are is to read the sermons by Peter and the other apostles from the book of Acts (see especially Acts 10:34-48). You will see a comprehensive presentation of who Jesus is, a strong connection and dependence on the Old Testament Scriptures, an emphasis on the resurrection and on future judgment. In short, you’ll see the building blocks I’ve outlined, above. I’ve elaborated on some aspects, like Jesus being God’s Son and the Messiah, because Peter and Paul often *assumed* their Jewish audiences understood these concepts. In our “gentile” context today, we can’t assume that at all.

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It isn't enough to tell people, "believe on Jesus!" As I wrote earlier, they don't know what "belief" is, they don't know who Jesus is, they don't know what He's done or why He did it, so they don't know why they should "believe" in Him.

What are the components that make up "the Gospel?" Basically, you need to understand and believe (1) who Jesus is, and (2) what He did. You should mention each item in the following list. You may not be able to get to all of them, but you should try very, very hard. *If the person (child or adult) doesn't have all these facts, he doesn't have the whole picture:*

### **1. Jesus is God's Son.**

He's equal to God in power and authority, and He's been around just as long as God, too.<sup>2</sup>

### **2. Jesus stayed divine, and also became a man.**

Because God loved us, and wanted to fix everything that had gone wrong with us and the world He made, He sent Jesus to be born as a baby, and grow up to do just that.

He did this to fulfill the promise in the Old Testament to Adam and Eve, Moses, all the prophets and especially to King David.

He proved who He was by the miracles He performed (Luke 7:18-23; 11:20). He healed diseases, gave sight to the blind, and raised people from the dead.

He told everybody He was the Chosen One (or, *Messiah*) who God had sent to fix everything and rule over all creation.

### **3. Jesus was perfect for you.**

He never broke God's law. He did this for you, because you can't.

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<sup>2</sup> The curriculum we're using has a lesson on the Trinity for the kids, so we'll cover it fairly soon after Bible Club begins.

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### 4. **Jesus died for you.**

He let people arrest Him and kill Him, and He died for your sins and crimes. He did this for you, so you don't have to be punished for your sins and crimes against God – unless you want to be.

### 5. **Jesus came alive from the dead after three days** (just like the Bible said He would).

There is nothing sacrilegious or “wrong” about saying “came alive again,” instead of the usual “rose from the dead.” In fact, “came alive again” may communicate better to children because it's more literal. The point is that Jesus *really* died, and then He *really* came back to life after three days.

The resurrection proved the curses of sin and death didn't apply to Him. It also proved He defeated Satan, who'd had Him killed.

### 6. **Jesus proved He rose from the dead.**

He appeared to hundreds of people to prove He *really did* rise from the dead. Some of them wrote down what they saw and heard, so we can read about it in the Bible.

### 7. **Jesus is Lord and King.**

He rose back to heaven, where He's sitting on a throne next to the Father, waiting to come back and to rule over all creation as King.

### 8. **Jesus will judge you.**

He'll come back one day to judge the living and the dead about whether they have repented and believed in the Good News he died to bring to the world.

This is the whole picture. ***A person must believe all this.*** This might sound like a lot, but it isn't. A person *can* understand less than this and still become a Christian,

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of course. But, we shouldn't strive to convey less knowledge. We should always try to communicate as full and complete a picture as we can. Consider this:

1. If they think Jesus was just created by God when He was born at Bethlehem, then they don't believe in the real Jesus or the real God.
2. If they don't understand God sent Jesus because He loves us, then they're missing something important!
3. If they don't understand Jesus came because all the Hebrew Scriptures said He would, then the Gospel has no context.
4. If they don't understand that Jesus was perfect *in our place*, then they'll never understand why He had to come in the first place
5. If they don't understand that Jesus died *for our sins, in our place*, then they'll never understand why He died in the first place
6. If you leave out the resurrection, then you're presenting a dead Savior, who isn't a "Savior" at all
7. If you leave out that Jesus is in heaven, waiting to come back rule over all creation, then you have a Savior that isn't a King
8. If you leave out judgment, then you're leaving out something pretty important!

But, simple "belief" in the Gospel isn't enough, all by itself. After all, the demons believe all this. Jesus created them. They know exactly who He is, what He did, and what He's going to do to them one day – that's why they begged Him to not torment them (Mark 5:7).

You have to believe the Good News (which is what the word "Gospel" means). But, you also have to "repent" of your sin.

### **a. What does "repentance" mean?**

It means a change of attitude and behavior brought on by genuine remorse. Repentance is when you're truly sorry for your crimes against God, and you decide to turn back and submit to Him.

- It's not *just* a change of mind, but it includes that
- It's not *just* remorse for sin, but it includes that

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- It's not *just* a change of behavior, but it includes that
- It's not *just* submitting to God's authority over your life, but it includes that

Some Christians are confused about what "repentance" really is. Some people even believe it isn't part of the Gospel at all, but they're wrong. Repentance really isn't very hard to understand, because you already understand it. Consider this:

### i. The parable of little Jeffrey:

Pretend your 8-yr old boy, Jeffrey, steals a cookie from the kitchen. You find him hiding in his bedroom, stuffing the treat into his mouth. Crumbs are all over his hands and mouth, and chocolate is smeared all over his face.

- "Did you take a cookie!?" you ask.
- "Nooooo!"
- "You're lying! I see crumbs and chocolate all over you!"
- "I'm soooooorryy!" Jeffrey sobs, tears welling up in his eyes. "I won't do it again!"

Clearly, because tears are involved, he must be *really* sorry, right? "It's all right, sweetie," you coo. "Mommy forgives you!" Twenty minutes later, he steals another cookie, but this time he hides in the bathroom to eat it.

It's clear the child wasn't *really* "repentant" at all. The tears were an act. The words were a lie. The promise was another lie. How can you tell? By his actions; if he were sorry, then he'd actually stop the behavior and submit to his mother's authority!

### ii. The word "repentance" in the Bible:

It's the same way with "repentance." You're genuinely sorry for doing something wrong, so you stop it and submit to authority. Look at these passages to get the idea:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I'm including a few passages here because "repentance" is so often confusing to Christians, because they've likely been taught so many false things about it.

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- Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Beth-saida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes,” (Matthew 11:20-21)

Jesus criticizes the people who live in these cities, because they didn’t “repent,” which here means to “change their ways.” In the Old Testament, the term “sackcloth and ashes” symbolizes terrible sorrow (see, for example, Esther 4:1). So, Jesus upbraided these people because they didn’t change their behavior in a sorrowful way (i.e. they weren’t sorry for their sins, so they didn’t change and “repent”).

Jesus also warned a large crowd,

- “The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here,” (Luke 11:32).

What does “repent” mean, in this context? The same thing. The book of Jonah tells us Jonah warned the Assyrians God would destroy the city in 40 days. The result?

- “And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them,” (Jonah 3:5).

The king of Assyria was moved, and commanded *everybody* (and all animals!) be covered with sackcloth and ashes. The Bible tells us the result:

- When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it (Jonah 3:10).

It’s clear that repentance here means “turning” from your evil ways, and this “turning” is accompanied by genuine sorrow over sin.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Some Old Testament scholars argue that the people in Nineveh didn’t *really* repent at all. I don’t think this is correct, and Jesus’ own words (Luke 11:32) prove that idea wrong.

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In the temple, not long after Jesus' ascension back to heaven, Peter and John healed a crippled man (Acts 3:1-8). A large crowd gathered to see what had happened. Peter preached to them, and concluded with this:

- Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old (Acts 3:19-21).

What does “repent” mean, here? It means these Jews are supposed to “turn back” or “return” from their wicked rebellion and believe Jesus is their Messiah. If you return from your evil ways, that necessarily includes a change of heart and mind. It's not *just* an intellectual exercise. It's also an honest, sincere *conviction*, from the heart, that you must change your ways.

Most of us know what Jesus said to the congregation at Laodicea. This wasn't a good church. He told them:

- I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:15-17).

He went on, and told them:

- Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent (Revelation 3:19).

When Jesus commanded them to “repent,” he also told them to be “zealous,” which means *fervent* or *eager*. He wants them to change their behavior, but God sees through externalism. He demands *genuine* love. So, Jesus tells them to honestly change their attitude, heart *and* behavior.

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### iii. What “repentance” means:

I could go on for a long time, but the point is that “repentance:”

- Is *not only* an internal change of mind,
- Is *not only* an external change of action,
- Is *not only* genuine sorrow for sins,
- Is *not only* a decision to acknowledge God’s authority over your life

. . . it is all four of these. This is what Jesus means when he commanded, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel,” (Mark 1:15). Repentance is when you’re truly sorry for your crimes against God, and you decide to turn and submit to Him.

You understand this instinctively when it comes to your children. Remember little Jeffrey? Consider what Jeffrey did, and remember the four building blocks, above:

| Real Repentance   |     | Jeffrey’s Actions   |
|---|-----|---|
| Honest change of mind about sin                         | vs. | No; stole another cookie, hid in different spot to eat it!                  |
| Genuine remorse for sin and rebellion against Mom’s law | vs. | No; tears and remorse were fake   |
| Change of behavior to stop sin                          | vs. | No; lied and stole another cookie   |
| New submission to mom’s authority                       | vs. | No; immediately disobeyed again and hid in different spot to avoid capture! |

One proverb I like that sums up the entire thing pretty well is this:

- He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy (Proverbs 28:13).

This means, in order to have mercy from God, you have to confess your sinfulness *and* make a decision to forsake it and walk away from it. Confession entails genuine sorrow because you have disappointed God and broken His law. You prove your confession is genuine by walking away from that sin. You can’t just say

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“I’m sorry,” you have to prove it or it isn’t true. Don’t believe me? Remember little Jeffrey!

### iv. “Repent” of what, exactly?

What do unbelievers have to “repent” of? You might not have ever thought of this before, but it’s a good question. Do they have to deliberately list *every bad thing* they’ve ever done, and specifically repent of *every single thing* on that list? No. They won’t remember everything, and neither will you.

Remember, “sin” is an *evil action*, an *evil thought*, or a *status and state of being*. When you tell an unbeliever he “needs to repent,” you’re talking about his status as a criminal and rebel in God’s universe. At its most basic level, sin is rebellion against God that stems from the state of “being a sinner.” So, understand this and burn it into your memory:

- **When a sinner “repents” after hearing the Gospel, he isn’t listing and deliberately “repenting” of every single individual sin he’s ever done. He’s repenting of his general rebellion against God as a whole, pledging allegiance and loyalty to Him, and swearing to come back to Him.**

God is the creator and He’s in charge. We’re sinners who doesn’t recognize and respect His authority and jurisdiction in our lives. Repentance means we realize what we’ve done wrong, we’re sorry for our crimes, so we repent and submit to His authority.

### v. Explaining “repentance” to kids:

So, in children’s terms, what is repentance? It’s when:

1. you’re really sorry for breaking God’s law (you’re not faking it!),
2. so you decide to stop doing it,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> With adults, I don’t like to emphasize desire more than action. Christians know we *should* stay away from sin, but we often mess up and commit them anyway. But, the key is that we don’t have the *desire* to keep doing those things, so we feel bad when we do them, which drives us to repent and confess our

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3. do what He says,
4. and put Him in charge.

How do you explain this so they can understand? Here is one way to get there:

- **Q:** Have any of you ever done something really bad at home, and your mom and dad got really mad at you?
- **A:** *You'll get all kinds of funny stories.*
- **Q:** When your mom and dad found out what happened, what did they want you to do?
- **A:** Say I was sorry (*emphasize that everybody knows that saying "sorry" is important when you do something wrong*)
  
- **Q:** How many of you have brothers or sisters, or cousins? (*Many hands will go up*)
- **Q:** How many of you have gotten in trouble for being mean to your brother, sister or cousin? (*Many hands will go up*)
- **Q:** How many of your parents told you had to say "sorry" to the person? (*Many hands will go up*)
- **Q:** How many of you said "sorry," but really didn't mean it? (*Many hands will go up*)
- **Q:** How many of you have said "sorry" lots of times, and never really meant it? (*Many hands will go up*)

The foundation is in place. Now, explain this:

- God's word says we have to tell Him we're "sorry" for hating Him and breaking His laws.
- But, the difference with God is that He knows if we're telling the truth about being "sorry."
- So, if we tell God we're "sorry," we actually have to mean it. We have to *really* be sorry about being bad, hating Him and breaking His law.

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sins afterwards. So, the point isn't really about the *action* of forsaking sin. It's about the internal change of mind, attitude, and heart that drives an outward change in behavior.

It's very hard to explain this distinction to little children, so I suggest you keep it simple and emphasize *action* with children. It's more concrete and understandable. Abstract ideas don't work well with little kids!

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- We prove we're sorry by not wanting to do it anymore. We don't want to break His law anymore because we love Him, we know He's in charge, and we don't want to disappoint Him.

You can emphasize this with some more questions. Here is an example:

- **Q:** How many of you have moms, dads, grandparents, uncles or aunts who have told you they love you?
- **A:** *Everybody will raise their hand.*
- **Q:** How do you *know* they love you? How do you know they're telling the truth?
- **A:** Because they prove it! *(They'll respond in a million different ways; draw this out with simple questions if you need to)*

We prove we're really "sorry" by loving God, putting Him in charge, and doing what He says. It's not enough to tell Him "sorry;" we have to *mean* it, and then *show Him* we mean it by what we do.

If kids come to me and ask "how do I become a Christian," one of the things I challenge them with after explaining everything is this:

- "If you want to become a Christian, that means God gets to be in charge of your life, because you love Him, you're sorry for breaking His laws, and you want to do what He says. Do you like that idea?"

If they are not happy with this, I tell them they're not ready to become Christians. *I have never had a child get upset about this.* They understand authority and instinctively "get it," because they live under direct authority daily.

### **4. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER, OR "WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"**

#### **a. Make sure they "get" it – and don't rush!**

How, exactly, is a person "saved?" What should you tell somebody who wants to be saved? After all, you can intellectually understand everything we've talked about, but still not be a Christian. So, what building blocks make up "salvation,"

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which is the act that turns somebody from darkness to light, from Satan to Christ, from Satan's family to an adopted child in God's family? You do what Jesus said, "Repent, and believe in the Gospel," (Mark 1:15).

As I said before, you have to do more than just tell people, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!" That's what Paul said to the Philippian jailer. That's a good start, but you need more. Paul felt the same way, that's why the Bible says Paul and Silas then, "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house," (Acts 16:32). In other words, they *explained* what this meant.

So, first, you must make sure the unbeliever actually understands the Gospel, and that the Gospel is "real" to her:

1. **You must understand.** The person has to "get" what the "building blocks" of the Gospel are, and you have to explain it to her enough so she understands it.
2. **You must agree.** The unbeliever has to agree with it, in her mind. She has to acknowledge it is true, and that what Jesus did actually *impacts her personally*. In other words, these "building blocks" of the Gospel have to become "real" to her. You may *intellectually* know you could die in an airplane crash, but that's all theoretical until the plane starts going down. Now, this intellectual possibility is suddenly *very real*, and *very personal*. It's the same way with the facts of the Gospel.

There is **no need to rush**. You're not a salesperson, and you don't earn commission. If God is using the Holy Spirit to draw somebody to Christ, she won't "lose out" on her chance. God is in charge of salvation. If the child is confused, give her time to think about it. Tell her you'll talk to her some more next week.

### **b. "Repent, and believe in the Gospel"**

If we're sure the child understands and "gets" it, then we must urge and beg her to **repent** and **believe**, and these two actions tie everything we've talked about into a neat bow:

1. **You must repent and submit to Christ as your King and Ruler.**

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Submission to Christ as King is part of repentance. Can you tell a King you're sorry, but stay in rebellion? I didn't think so! Can little Jeffrey tell his mom he's sorry, but *not* submit to her authority in his life?

- "I'm sorry for stealing the cookie, Mom, *honest!* But, I won't recognize and acknowledge your authority to govern my life, to order my steps, or to keep tasty cookies from me!"

No, that's not what happens, and we all know it! Repentance involves submission to God's authority and jurisdiction in your life – Christ must be your King!

If you repent of your sin, it means you realize you've sinned against God and are genuinely sorry for it. It also means you've decided, in your heart and mind, to stop your rebellion. This means you've decided that God gets to rule your life. Jesus is the coming King. You can't believe the building blocks of the Gospel, and still refuse to make Him your King.<sup>6</sup>

### **2. You must make the decision to believe and trust in all the building blocks of "the Gospel" (above).**

Knowing and agreeing something is true is not the same as trusting and believing in it. This is a belief and trust that touches both your mind *and* your heart. You understand the Gospel is true, and you trust Jesus can do everything His Good News promises it will do.

So, when you talk to kids about the Gospel, this is what you should do:

1. Make sure they actually understand it
2. Make sure the Gospel is "real" to them, personally

Then, tell them:

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<sup>6</sup> Some Christians have a problem with telling an unbeliever that Christ is his King, and he has to bow to Him and repent of his sins. Children *never* have a problem with this, because they understand authority. Adults sometimes *do* have a problem with it. Unless you want to deny that Christ is every Christian's King, then there should be no problem. You can't believe the Gospel and reject Christ as the King over your life. It's a packaged deal.

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3. You have to believe who Jesus is, everything He did, and everything He will do (*review the “building blocks” of the Gospel, if necessary*)
4. You have to tell God you’re sorry for breaking His law, really mean it, decide to stop doing it and put Him in charge of your life as your King
5. If you do this, then God will forgive you forever, adopt you into His family, and you’ll be a part of His Kingdom when He comes back to fix everything!

### **c. Blessed assurance, or the proof of salvation:**

What is the mark that assures a person she’s a child of God? Easy. She’ll want to do what God says, because she loves Him.

A true Christian will have the *desire* to do what God’s word says, and he’ll prove it by action. You tell a tree by its fruit. An apple tree bears apples. An orange tree bears oranges. A Christian will bear the fruits of the Spirit. Of course, some trees are healthier than others. God, the master gardener, will prune, trim and tend to every tree in His orchard (see John 15:1-11). But, every one of His children will bear fruit.

So, you should tell kids:

- You prove you love God by doing what He says, because you love Him, and you don’t want to disappoint Him

### **5. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!**

Everything we’ve talked about is preparation for our practice session, next time we meet. This is what will happen next time:

#### **a. What will we practice?**

We’re going to practice everything we’ve talked about today. This means:

- What the whole story of the Bible is about
- What “sin” means

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- What “repentance” means
- What “the Gospel” is
- How to be “saved”

### **b. How will we practice?**

We’re going to practice on children from our own church, from ages K-6. You won’t have to practice with adults. You’ll get to practice on *actual children!* I will instruct the children to ask *you* if they’re confused by anything you tell them, while you’re practicing!

### **c. What do I do?**

Read this packet of information, and practice explaining these five things in a simple way. Look at the examples I gave about how to talk to children about this. Think of some of your own variations. Think about how to explain important stuff without talking in a “foreign language” to children! Read your Bible. Pray!