

# A Guide for Parents: Children and Salvation

As you study “Children and Salvation” on this page, look for these three key words: understand, want, and accept.

What is salvation?

*Read 2 Timothy 3:15.*

- “and that from childhood” – Timothy, a pastor in Ephesus, was taught the Scriptures as a child from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5).
- “you have known the Holy Scriptures” – Their teaching gave Timothy knowledge of the Scriptures.
- “which are able to make you wise for salvation” – The knowledge of the Scriptures helped “make him wise” or understand salvation.
- “salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” – Timothy was saved when he wanted to turn from trusting his way of works to trusting Jesus’ work, so he accepted God’s gift of eternal life.

*In order for a person to experience salvation he must:*

- Understand the Gospel – “I am a sinner; I can’t save myself; Jesus died for my sin; He promises me eternal life.”
- Want the Gospel – “I need Jesus and His work more than anything. I want to make the decision to trust Him.”
- Accept the Gospel – “I trust that Jesus’ work on the cross is the way for me to be saved!”

Can a child really be saved?

*Children have the ability to understand, want, and accept the gospel.*

Matthew 18:1-5 says a person can only enter the kingdom if he is “converted” and “becomes as a little child.” This passage teaches that not only do children have the capacity to be saved, but adults should have a childlike faith and humility if they want to enter into the kingdom.

Another passage teaches that only a person who “receives the kingdom as a little child can enter the kingdom” is Mark 10:13-17. Again Jesus that teaches children have the aptitude to be saved. Children easily see their sin, know they are dependent, and easily believe and follow. However, immediately after His talk about the faith of children, a Rich Man illustrates the contrast between the two. He is self-righteous (v.20), independent (v.22), and will not believe and follow (v.22). A person must have the faith of a child if he wants to be saved from his sin.

*Children are a part of the Bible’s inclusive language calling all people to salvation.*

Romans 10:13 says anyone can be saved: “For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” Mark 16:15 commands believers to evangelize all people groups—including children: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

How can I prepare my child for salvation?

*Help him understand the gospel. You can help him understand by:*

- Praying for God to give true understanding to your child of his need for salvation. Only God can grant a child the understanding he needs to comprehend how the gospel relates to him. Jesus did this in Luke 24:45: “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” And in 2 Corinthians 4:6 the spiritually blind only receive spiritual sight when “God who commanded light to shine out of darkness...has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
- Giving your child the gospel at various opportunities:
  - Teach your child during your Family Times: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house (Table Time), when you walk by the way (Van Time), when you lie down (Bed Time), and when you rise up (Awake Time)” Deuteronomy 6:7.
  - Use opportunities of obedience, discipline, fun, and nature to teach him the gospel. Jesus used everyday situations and objects to illustrate truth to people, and you can do the same with your child.
  - Explain the meaning of “Bible words” a child may not be familiar with. Then use your child’s “language” to connect with him and teach him the gospel.
  - Use the pictures from the *Forgiven Tract* or *God and You Tract* to help your child visualize the gospel.

How do I know if my child is ready to be saved?

*Understanding the Gospel*

Ask yourself: Does my child really understand his sin, his need, and the Savior's work?

As you prepare your child for salvation, remember your goal is to help him understand the gospel, not push him for an immediate decision. Your child may not understand the gospel because of maturity or other factors. He might know the facts, but he may not yet "get" how those facts relate to him. That's OK. Pray and wait on God to give your child the understanding he needs to be saved.

*Wanting the Gospel*

Ask yourself: Does my child genuinely want to be saved?

Sometimes children "want" to be saved for the wrong reasons. Maybe a child sees the excitement that surrounds another person's salvation, so he wants that excitement too. Or maybe he wants to fit in with everyone else who is a Christian. Or your child may want to please people, so they go through the actions of trusting Christ. Sometimes it may not be his desire to get saved but someone else's desire that pushes him to make a decision or pray a prayer after them. There are many reasons a child may have for wanting to get saved, but only one reason equals genuine salvation—because your child really wants to stop trusting self and start trusting Jesus.

*Accepting the Gospel*

Ask yourself: When my child accepts Christ, what is it that saves him?

His prayer? The child praying with a parent or a spiritual leader? His remembering the events of his salvation? Maybe writing the date in his Bible? NO! The only means of salvation is Jesus' work on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Praying is good; remembering is nice; writing the date in your Bible is great, but those things are not what saves—only Jesus' work saves. But what about a child who doubts his salvation? What can give him assurance? A child receives assurance when the question is answered, "What am I depending on to take away my sin?" If it is anything other than Jesus' work, that person has reason to be doubtful of his eternal destination. However, if that person is confident he is trusting in Jesus' work, then he can say, "God is greater than my heart, and knows all things. (1 John 3:20) He knows I am trusting in Jesus' work and nothing else!"

You know, more than anyone else, how important your child's salvation is. Talking with your child about Christ takes wisdom and discernment. It can be scary and difficult but also very rewarding! Let me know if there is any way we can help you as you point your child toward Christ. ~ Pastor Ben Ice