

**EQUIPPING TEACHERS TO
SPIRITUALLY NURTURE CHILDREN
FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Major Objective of the Study

The primary area of research and focus of this major writing project involves how lay teachers can encourage the spiritual development of children. This subject will focus on spiritual development from a conservative evangelical biblical viewpoint which will be defined in detail as a premise for the study. Concentration on how volunteer lay teachers can encourage the spiritual maturation of children will be the primary focus rather than looking at the role of parents or other care givers in this process. There is recognition that the parents of a child are the most influential entities in the spiritual development of children, but due to the availability of material on parenting, this study will concentrate on the role of teachers, the second most influential source in helping children develop spiritually. The study will provide a practical approach for lay teachers who are serious about helping children grow toward spiritual maturity. With an increasing awareness of the importance of teaching young children this study seeks to provide specific direction to equip teachers at least in the basics necessary to guide children along the journey to spiritual maturity.

Thesis Statement

It is the thesis of this study to demonstrate how volunteer lay teachers can effectively encourage spiritual growth in elementary-age children from a conservative evangelical biblical perspective. This study will develop clarifying definitions of terms and foundational concepts that can be implemented by churches and para church organizations to equip lay teachers with the tools necessary to engage children in their spiritual journey. Teachers can encourage the spiritual formation of children in their class with unique influence through effective teaching of the Bible.

Delimitations of the Study

When considering the task of teachers in the spiritual development of children, delimitations must be established for practical reasons in order to provide adequate development of the focal subject. The definition of “spiritual” used in this study will restrict the broader aspects of secular and religious spirituality that do not fit the biblical concept related to new life in Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Narrowing the study to elementary-age children, ages five through eleven or twelve, eliminates consideration of preschool children and adolescents or older youth in junior high and high school. This restriction of age allows the study to become more specific in how teachers can assist elementary-age children to grow toward spiritual maturity. The definition of regeneration and the essence of salvation as used in this project will narrow the field of spiritual development to those who have been born-again. The logic is spiritual growth requires spiritual birth as physical growth demands physical birth. The conservative

evangelical premise that, “The Bible, and only the Bible, is the absolute authority for faith and life” (McQuilkin 1992, 69) used in this study will naturally produce the elimination or curtail certain conflicting positions. Numerous studies are currently available regarding the relationship of human developmental theories. It almost seems some Christian education materials worship what secular developmentalists write, more than the Word of God.

“Secular developmentalists do not recognize sin’s poisonous effects on human development” (Wilhoit and Dettoni 1995, 38). Teachers need to study material from these individuals who have spent their lives studying human behavior and learning, in order to increase their effectiveness in guiding youngsters spiritually, as far as their theories do not contradict the Word of God. While vital to the teaching learning process, emphasis will not be given to learning styles as other resources provide ample guidance in this aspect of human development.

Definition of Terms and Concepts

Confusion reigns in the matter of spiritual development due to insufficient definitions which establish a common foundation upon which the subject matter can be discussed. The following definitions provide the basic structure upon which teachers can formulate a strategy for encouraging spiritual development of their students from a biblical perspective. The purpose of these definitions is not to resolve conflicting views, nor offend those with differing views, but to establish a biblical foundation upon which teachers can build. This foundation will provide teachers a clear goal so they can encourage the spiritual development of their students.

Biblical spirituality: Ryrie “lists three factors involved in genuine spirituality, first regeneration, second the Holy Spirit is preeminent in producing spirituality and third it takes time. He then shares four areas in which spirituality will be evident in a believer: in his character, in his knowledge, in his attitudes, and finally in his conduct” (Ryrie 1969, 12-20).

Elementary-age child: Children between the ages of five and eleven or twelve or in school between kindergarten and grade six.

Evangelical Christian: An individual who has placed their faith alone in Christ alone for their salvation and fully believes in the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God. Evangelicals believe “the doctrinal boundaries are circumscribed by a commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in particular and to the historic tenets of orthodox Christian truth in general, as described in Holy Scripture” (Akers, Armstrong and Woodbridge 2000, 218). Evangelicals affirm God is sovereign and a triune being. “Because the name *evangelical* implies ‘good news,’ evangelicals believe strongly in evangelism, the necessity of telling the message of salvation by grace through faith” (Enns 1989, 613).

Salvation: Biblically there are several aspects to salvation however in this project the term will be limited to the aspect of justification whereby an individual places their faith in Christ alone for eternal life and the forgiveness of sin. At that point they are born by the Spirit of God into the family of God thereby receiving new life and a capacity for spiritual development.

Secular spirituality: Anything beyond the physical realm that transcends materialism.

Spiritual development/maturity: The lifelong process in which a believer in Christ grows more intimate with God resulting in a transformation of their character and behavior to become more like Christ.

Volunteer teacher: An individual commissioned by God to instruct and guide the education and development of children primarily in a classroom setting but not limited to that environment as a volunteer predominately versus a paid professional in a religious setting such as a church or para-church organization.

Philosophical and Theological Assumptions

The philosophical and theological assumptions to be described have strong connections to the major thesis that teachers can encourage children to grow and develop

toward spiritual maturity. First for the teacher, prior to spiritual growth is the spiritual birth of the child. Just as physical birth must precede physical growth, so spiritual birth must precede spiritual growth. This follows the pattern set forth in John chapter 3 when Jesus compared spiritual birth to physical birth by telling Nicodemus he must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven. John 3:6 says, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (NIV). As parents come together to produce a child that is physical so the Holy Spirit produces this new spiritual life in the individual who places their faith in Christ. The teacher has the privilege of teaching the child the gospel and observing God work in their life, making them new creatures in Christ.

Regeneration is the impartation of a new and divine life; a new creation; the production of a new thing. It is Gen. 1:26 over again. It is not the old nature altered, reformed, or re-invigorated, but a new birth from above. (Evans 1974, 152)

This new life is essential because we all come into this world dead in sin according to Ephesians 2:1, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins” (NIV).

Succinctly stated, to regenerate means ‘to impart life.’ Regeneration is the act whereby God imparts life to the one who believes. . . . It is instantaneous. Just as a child is born at a specific moment in the physical birth, so the spiritual birth occurs instantaneously when the Holy Spirit imparts new life. (Enns 1989, 338-339)

Teachers ought to be equipped to share the process of regeneration or new birth in which a person receives a new “divine nature” or is made a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV). The teacher may guide students to understand that by faith in Christ they can be born into the family of God. “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (Jn. 1:12 NIV). This study will examine Scriptures to help teachers understand that

children can be saved and in fact there were children saved in the Bible. Believers are directed to evangelize children and then to nurture them in spiritual development as demonstrated from Scripture. Biblical admonitions for teachers would carry little influence or impact apart from the belief that the Bible is inerrant, infallible, and authoritative thus fully reliable and trustworthy as the very Word of God.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL VIEW OF CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL NEED

Volunteer teachers interested in the spiritual development of children in their class will want to know the mind of God regarding children and their spiritual welfare. They need to be cognizant of the spiritual opposition they encounter. The scriptural instruction and strategy to train children will enable them to focus clearly on their task. When teachers understand the moral decline of the world they will value the opportunity to encourage spiritual development according to the Word of God. The teacher may be the primary facilitator of spiritual development if the parents are unable or incapable of providing such training. The evangelical volunteer teacher stands in a unique position to encourage spiritual development from a biblical perspective whereas the world and social sciences often obstruct true spiritual growth. Mainline denominations recognize deficiencies in spiritual development and have produced research from their perspective to combat the problem. Evangelicals are seeking to produce current research on the spiritual development of children. The child's destiny and future rest heavily upon the teacher's ability to provide training that will produce spiritual maturation. In a real sense the future of the family, the church, and society is at stake so the responsibility upon the lay teacher is tremendous.

God's Will for Children

It is crucial for a teacher to fully grasp God's will for children if they hope to succeed in an effective ministry of producing godly children fully mature in the Lord.

Understanding God's will for humanity, his instruction for teaching children and His specific concern for children from the Word of God will lay a solid foundation upon which a teacher can develop a strategy and philosophy for ministry with children that will produce effective results spiritually. Since "the Bible, and only the Bible, is the absolute authority for faith and life" (McQuilkin 1992, 69) examination of biblical references regarding God's will for children should lay a solid trustworthy foundation for teachers to build their ministry philosophy.

God's perspective in general for humanity which can appropriately be applied to the spiritual development of children is found in Colossians 1:24-29.

Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness - the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people.

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. (Col. 1:24-29 TNIV)

As Paul was chosen to be God's servant to present to the Colossians the Word of God in its fullness, so teachers today are called to present the same to their students which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Like Paul, teachers today proclaim God to their students

so they can present everyone fully mature in Christ. This is the purpose of God for teachers which will be discussed in greater detail in the future.

The final words of a person are considered to be of importance. The final words of Jesus while upon the earth provide the marching orders for the church or what is often referred to as the Great Commission. Teachers may consider these specifically for the ministry God has called them into as the will of God.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV)

These words of commission by the Savior to the early disciples continue to apply to the church today and in particular for teachers as they minister to their students. They are to make disciples of them by sharing the gospel and then teach them to live obediently to the Word of God. These verses convey the will of God for the world to enter a relationship with Him and then develop that relationship by living obediently to His Word.

Two other passages of Scripture that convey the general will of God for the world in which teachers can apply to their situation would be, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9 NIV). This clearly states God’s will for humanity is that they be saved. John 3:16-17 also declares the love of God for the world and His desire for humanity to have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17 NIV)

“God loves the world and it is not His will that any should perish. He has done and is doing all He can for the salvation of souls. The perishing of millions year after year is against His will” (Overholtzer 1971, 11). God’s heartbeat is reflected in this passage of Scripture demonstrating His tremendous love for all the world. This would include the boys and girls for whom Christ died, which is amplified more in the general call in Scripture for reaching and teaching children for Christ.

In Scripture there is a general exhortation for teaching children about God which demonstrates the will of God concerning children. Proverbs 22:6 admonishes God’s people to “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (NIV). In a similar fashion the New Testament commands, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4 NIV). The implication of these verses seems to indicate God’s love and concern for the well being and spiritual training of children. These passages of Scripture are but a few that demonstrate the importance God places on training children. Larger portions of Scripture, like Psalm 78:1-8, spell out God’s desire for children to be taught about all God had done in the past so the children would come to know God personally and place their hope in Him. Ultimately the knowledge of God would be passed on from one generation to the next. Moses gave very specific instructions for the adults in Israel to walk with God and pass along the laws of God to the children in Deuteronomy 5:30 - 6:9. The specific concern of God was that the children learn about Him so they would place their faith and trust in Him. The repeated admonition to teach the children seems to indicate God’s

special concern for them. This general implication is strengthened by direct commands from Christ in regarding children and His concern for them.

Mark 10:13-31 stands out as a pronounced declaration of God's will for children. The passage opens with the disciples rebuking people that were bringing little children for Jesus to touch and bless. The response of Jesus recorded in Mark 10:14 NLT and KJV was that He was very displeased or much displeased while NIV and NASB translate His response as one of indignation. The word "aganakteo" used in this verse is defined as "from *agan*, much, and *achomai*, to grieve, primarily meant to feel a violent irritation, physically" by W. E. Vine (1966, 321). The New Analytical Greek Lexicon verifies and adds to this definition saying, "to be pained; to be angry, vexed, indignant; to manifest indignation" (Perschbacher 1990, 2). The question can rightfully be asked, why was Jesus angry with the disciples over this incident? Examination of the passage reveals no malice on the part of the disciples. Inspection of the remainder of the text reveals the answer to Christ's indignation. Immediately He boldly declares, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14 NIV). The will of God is instantly revealed regarding children. They are to be allowed to come to Him. It appears that verse 31 ties this whole passage of Scripture into one teaching segment for the disciples when Jesus said, "But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:31 NIV). In verse 13 the disciples dismissed the children as unimportant to the Master and His kingdom only to be rebuked by Him. As they traveled down the road a man of wealth and influence approached Jesus regarding eternal life. The indication is the disciples considered this individual to be a prime candidate for God's

kingdom. Hearing the response of Jesus, he departs leaving the disciples in a deep quandary. In Mark 10:26 NIV they ask, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus responds, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27 NIV). There seems to be a short parentheses in the discussion, verses 28-30, as Peter states his misunderstanding and Jesus responds. Returning to the lesson at hand Jesus says in Mark 10:31 NIV, “But many who are first will be last,” referring to one the disciples thought was a prime candidate for the kingdom of God, “and the last first” referring to the little children they turned away earlier in verse 13. God’s will is for the little children to be allowed to come to Him.

Considering the will of God for the children would be incomplete without considering Matthew 18:14 which specifically shares God’s will for children. “In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost” (Matt. 18:14 NIV). This lesson for the disciples was illustrated by Jesus having a little child stand among them as an object lesson. In conclusion Jesus makes this dynamic declaration that God their Father does not wish for a single little one to perish. The truth of God’s expressed will for the salvation of children should motivate teachers to do all they can to reach and teach children for Christ as a means of fulfilling the will of God.

Spiritual Warfare for the Children

The enemy of God rises up in opposition to the will of God as demonstrated in the Word of God. Satan opposes the will of God. The salvation of children brings glory to God so His enemy opposes every effort to introduce them to the Savior.

The world's most fruitful mission-field isn't anywhere . . . it's everywhere. It can be found in the remotest corners of the Australian outback or on the busiest corners of downtown Manhattan. The field is located everywhere because it isn't really a place – it's a people. It's . . . a special group of human beings who respond to the Gospel more openly and wholeheartedly than any other people on the face of the earth.

Who is that special group? It's the world's children.

They hear and respond to the Gospel, welcoming its message of forgiveness; accepting its terms; believing its claims and trusting its promises more readily than adults, collegians, teens or any other group. (Benke 1977, 1)

Logically that which is most effective is likely to receive special attention or opposition in this spiritual war. Each child responding in faith to Christ is lost in the kingdom of darkness but when they receive Christ as their Savior they are translated out of that kingdom into the kingdom of light. It would be very reasonable to conclude that Satan would specifically oppose ministry to children due to the effective nature of that ministry.

The real battle for the hearts and minds of children is spiritual. Satan the enemy of their soul is determined to hold on to the children if he can. Christian teachers seeking to encourage spiritual development of children will be engaged in a spiritual battle. It is critical for teachers to recognize the nature of the conflict they will encounter in order to be prepared adequately and use the correct weapons if they want to experience victory.

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. (2 Cor. 10:3-5 NLT)

Ephesians 6:10-18 delineates the armor or weapons used in spiritual warfare and how to be spiritually strong using God's mighty power to defeat the teacher's enemy. The passage

speaks about putting on the armor and the type of conflict in which believers will be engaged. The armor enables the believer to stand firm in the battle and not be overtaken by the enemy. The armor can be prayed on by the teacher for success in the spiritual battle to be waged in the classroom and ministry with children assigned to their spiritual care and oversight. The battle is of a spiritual nature. “For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12 NLT).

Since teachers are engaged in spiritual warfare, battling for the children assigned to them by God, they need to be spiritually prepared so they can succeed. Peter indicates leaders should, “Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. . . . Don’t lord it over people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example” (1 Pet. 5:2-3 NLT). Students are not accidentally under the care of a teacher but assigned by God indicating God knows this teacher can add value to the student’s life. The student is assigned to the spiritual care of the teacher. This places amazing responsibility upon the teacher. It also speaks highly of God’s trust in the teacher. In order to live up to this trust, the teacher must assume the responsibilities that go along with the appointment. That responsibility is to teach by example. The teacher, as a leader, sets the pace or leads the way in which the student should walk. Students should be able to look to their teachers to see how they should live. Such a godly life would be impossible apart from the teacher’s walk with God. Their enemy, Satan, will do all he can to undermine their walk with God. Therefore, Peter provides additional guidance especially pertinent for teachers who serve as God’s leaders.

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. (1 Pet. 5:8-9 NLT)

Several apt points are made in this passage for teachers. First they are to be alert or aware of the danger they are facing. They do have an enemy who is cunning and powerful. He is looking to bring them down spiritually. Teachers need to stand firm against Satan. The best way to successfully stand firm is by allowing the Word of God to dwell strongly in them. God wants to provide the strength they need to overcome the evil one. “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4 NIV).

Teachers also need to recognize there is a spiritual battle going on regarding the children they are trying to reach and teach for Christ. These children were born “dead in transgressions and sins” (Eph. 2:1 NIV). They are living in spiritual darkness and Satan will not release them freely without a fight. “Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them” (2 Cor. 4:4 NLT). The battle will be fierce because “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14 NIV). He plays dirty and he plays to win. Trickery and deception are part of his tactics to hold on to the children. Facing such an opponent, teachers need the spiritual armor and all the power of God to win this spiritual battle for the sake of the children God entrusts to them.

One of the first responsibilities for those engaged in a war is to study and understand the enemy we are fighting. . . . The devil is our enemy. He is our arch-enemy, and he is the commander-in-chief of all the forces, which oppose us and with whom we battle. (Doherty 2004, 256-257)

Scriptural Instruction to Train Children

Earlier, under the section, God's Will for Children, some Scriptural passages were noted regarding the will of God for children to be taught spiritual truth and to know Him personally. However, the expansion of Scripture is necessary to lay the Biblical foundation for teachers to fully grasp their calling from God to train and nurture children spiritually.

Deuteronomy 11:18-22 is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 repeated by Moses to reinforce the importance of this message. The people were to love and obey God then to guide their children in this same response.

So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors. Be careful to obey all these commands I am giving you. Show love to the Lord your God by walking in his ways and holding tightly to him. (Deut. 11:18-22 NLT)

Only by letting God's words invade every area of their lives and homes and by diligently teaching them to their children (cf. 6:7) could the nation hope to escape the seduction of false worship and find permanent prosperity in the land of promise given by the Lord on oath to their forefathers.

The same principle applies to Christians today. Commitment to know and obey the Scriptures keeps believers from contemporary forms of false worship. . . . Therefore Paul exhorted all Christians to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). (Walvoord and Zuck 1985, 283)

Old Testament saints were challenged to live obediently to the Word of God and teach it diligently to their children. Congruence between life and lesson has been a primary principle for teaching effectively from the beginning of time and will be examined in more detail under, Teachers are a Living Model in the section Teaching for Spiritual

Development and the section on the Scriptural Strategy to Train Children. The necessity of diligently teaching children the Word of God continues to be God's design to guide a new generation into a spiritual relationship with their Creator. God reveals this plan again to Moses in Deuteronomy 31:11-13.

You must read this Book of Instruction to all the people of Israel when they assemble before the Lord your God at the place he chooses. Call them all together—men, women, children, and the foreigners living in your towns—so they may hear this Book of Instruction and learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully obey all the terms of these instructions. Do this so that your children who have not known these instructions will hear them and will learn to fear the Lord your God. Do this as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy. (Deut. 31:11-13 NLT)

God's plan has been to use people as His instrument to reveal himself to upcoming generations and preferably people who are walking with Him and experiencing His praiseworthy deeds in their life. This is further demonstrated by the psalmist saying,

what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers-- a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him. (Ps. 78:3-8 NIV)

The praiseworthy deeds of God can best be related from first-hand experience. As adults share their experience with the younger generation, the objective is, these children will want to share the same experience and place their faith in God. Then they will have hope for the future and loyalty to God.

The Hebrew pattern for transmitting values and beliefs consisted especially of handing on the treasured store from father to son. . . . This transgenerational communications system is clearly displayed in Psalm 78. . . . A similar pattern, clearly set within family life, shows up in Proverbs 4:1-4 (NASB):

Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father,
 And give attention that you may gain understanding,
 For I give you sound teaching;
 Do not abandon my instruction.
 When I was a son to my father,
 Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother,
 Then he taught me and said to me,
 “Let your heart hold fast my words;
 Keep my commandments and live.”

“Father” and “son” were labels somewhat larger than strict usage in North America today would allow. They had tribal overtones, and one saw his own actual offspring as the “sons” of his own father and grandfather also. As the tribal tasks were divided, formal instruction was arranged in the synagogue school, but the sense of urgency remained high for transmitting community values -beliefs of the larger family. (Clark, Brubaker, and Zuck 1986, 7-8)

God specifically said of Abraham, “I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just” (Gen. 18:19 NLT). This would indicate Abraham should instruct his sons in the ways of the Lord. The New Testament has similar instructions for elders that their children were to be believers (Titus 1:6). 1 Timothy 3:4 says the elder “must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect” (NIV). In a similar way, deacons are also to provide training for their children (1 Tim. 3:12). As church leaders the elders and deacons are to set the example of training their children well so others in the church have an example to follow for the godly training of their children. The crux of the issue is that children need to be nurtured and trained as Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 indicate.

Children in Scripture such as Timothy, Samuel, Rhoda, Moses, Daniel and Naaman's servant girl would provide good examples to encourage teachers that children can be trained and guided to walk with the Lord. The scriptural admonitions to train children are not beyond the realm of reality. It is a supernatural process requiring the intervention of God to produce the growth desired in the children. The teacher's part in the process is to walk with God, faithfully teach the children the Word of God and trust Him to produce the spiritual birth and growth that will enable the student to mature in the walk with God.

The final passage of Scripture to probe on this subject occurs at the end of Moses' life when he said to Israel,

Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe - all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life. (Deut. 32:46-47 NKJV)

The instructions from Moses are extremely appropriate for volunteer teachers wanting to encourage spiritual development in their students today. "It is not a futile thing for you" really means teaching children the Word of God is not a waste of time. Don't give up if results are not immediately obvious. Results often are not noticeable right away. Spiritual growth takes time before they become visible (Fowler 2004, 48).

Teachers who value the Word of God highly can present it to students in a fashion that will motivate them to assimilate it into their lives. Cognitive comprehension of the Word of God and understanding its meaning and relevance to life will help motivate the student to apply or obey the principles of the Bible so it transforms their behavior and character to become more Christ-like which ultimately will bring glory to God. Teachers have to consciously work at application for this to occur.

Scriptural Strategy to Train Children

A thorough study of Scripture regarding teaching strategy could be made and written but the strategy to be considered here is not one of delivery methods and technique but more closely related to the personal relationship of the subject and the teacher. Integration of the subject into the teacher's life is critical if the teacher is to teach with authority and credibility. Students not only listen to the words of a teacher but watch their walk to see if the Bible is significant enough to be lived by the teacher. "A teacher is incapable of communicating qualities or characteristics of spirituality with life impact without personal growth in those same qualities" (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 153). Prior to living the lesson the teacher must learn the lesson as will be illustrated from the book of Deuteronomy. Teachers need to master lesson content through thorough preparation before they are able to live the material. The matter of integration of Scripture into everyday living is pivotal to the adoption of biblical principles by students.

The personal spiritual life of the teacher is instruction's first consideration. Instruction in God's Word calls for a teacher who is himself or herself personally responsive to God. . . . Thus the one who communicates the Word must be one who lives it. Communication of a living faith calls for living faith in the instructor. (Richards 1983, 23)

Major scriptural instruction regarding this strategy aspect of training children comes from Deuteronomy. This book is frequently cited for its instruction to diligently train children in the laws of God and the way they should live. Parents are clearly taught to diligently instruct their children in Deuteronomy which is the second law or repetition of the law or Ten Commandments from God. However, to only see the importance to

“impress them [the laws of God] on your children” (Deut. 6:7 NIV) is to overlook what seems to be an extremely valuable lesson on how to engage in that task. No less than twenty times in Deuteronomy 4-6 are the adults commanded to live the laws of God. Prior to reiterating the Ten Commandments in chapter five obedience to the law is commanded repeatedly before any mention is given to teaching them to their children. Prior to restating the ten commandments in chapter five, Moses urged the people to “learn them and be sure to follow them” (Deut. 5:1 NIV). Immediately following the presentation of the commands of God the people are told to keep, follow, do, walk, observe and obey these commands. This action would demonstrate their love for God as declared in the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, “the basic confession of faith in Judaism” (Walvoord and Zuck 1985, 274). Not until after these issues are covered does Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tell the people to diligently teach these truths to their children. The significance of order here would suggest the lessons were to be learned and lived first by the teacher and then passed along to the child.

Teachers that assimilate scriptural truth into their lives before trying to communicate it to children are able to teach from first-hand experience. They can teach with passion having walked the path first before trying to convey the truth to their students. First hand testimony can lend support to the scriptural principle and provide vivid illustration or examples of the truth. Walking the talk first makes the lesson more believable. “What is taught must match what is lived” (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 153). Congruence lends credence and credibility to the teacher’s lesson. Hypocrites want others to do what they

are unwilling to do. Students will pick up on such behavior quickly and reject the message the teacher wants to convey.

After mastering the content of the lesson and putting it into life experience the teacher has to teach the lesson to students. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to examine the various teaching models but ample material is available to assist teachers in discovering effective teaching methods. Scripture lends support to teaching via verbal and non-verbal communication. Once the lesson is learned by the teacher and lived by the teacher it has great potential of being taught effectively with passion and conviction to the student.

The ultimate goal is not for the teacher to learn, live and teach a lesson. Ultimately the goal is to see the student learn the Scripture adequately to live the lesson and pass it on to someone else. The goal of the teacher is to assist students in their spiritual maturation. Scripture indicates the result of effective teaching is not in a teacher's ability to communicate but in the adoption of scriptural principles by the student. While it is the goal of the teacher to facilitate spiritual growth the result of spiritual growth will be observed as the student adopts the truths of Scripture and then begins to pass them on to others.

The writer of Hebrews makes this point at the end of chapter five saying:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Heb. 5:11-14 NIV)

The result of their immaturity was they could not teach others instead they had to continue being fed basic truths of Scripture over and over.

The psalmist refers to the concept of learning truth adequately that it can then be transmitted by the student to another when he says,

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. (Ps. 78:5-6 NIV)

Paul refers to the principle that a person who is mature or strong in the Lord should in turn teach others who will be responsible to pass on the truth they learn to others.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Tim. 2:1-2 NIV)

This principle provides a means of propagating the gospel but it also gives evidence of the student's maturity. Once the truth is learned and internalized and integrated into the student's life the natural response is to share it with another so they will come into a relationship with God and have the joy of walking with Him.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND ON THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF CHILDREN

Current Research on Children's Spiritual Need

Society's Moral Decline

Moral decline seems to be rapidly moving across America which can be observed through a comparison of media productions. What seems to be acceptable to the general public today is considerably different from that which was acceptable a few years ago in movies and human lifestyle. With the global ability to communicate nearly instantly what affects one country will doubtless be felt around the world. Viva Network as a global network of 70 major agencies has produced a booklet online titled *Children - The Great Omission?*, in which it states, "The first, overriding reason for focus on children is that, more than any other segment of humanity, children suffer, in a sense paying for the sins of adults" (Brewster 2004, 4). The negative impact of the society upon the children is revealed by the Children's Defense Fund statistics for *Moments in America for Children* February 2007 or *Each Day in America* November 2005 found online at www.childrensdefense.org. The World Vision newsletter MARC, September 1997 paints a very negative picture of the plight of children around the world due to the influence of societal moral decline.

Glancing through the front twelve page section of the Honolulu Star Bulletin, March 14, 2007 reveals twenty separate crimes which makes it poignantly clear children are being

raised in a violent society of decaying morality. In the same newspaper thirty-seven movies are advertised in theaters with only two being rated G, eighteen are rated PG/PG-13 and seventeen carry an R rating which illustrates the level of corruption children are exposed to in this society.

Parent's Role in Providing Spiritual Guidance

The biblical perspective of responsibility for training children spiritually falls squarely on the shoulders of parents. Most of the passages of Scripture presented earlier as foundational for instruction to train children and the strategy to train children were specifically written to parents. John Trent, Rick Osborne and Kurt Bruner were the general editors of *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children* (2000) which shows the parent's role as a primary catalyst for the spiritual development of children. They write in the opening chapter of their book,

Throughout the progression from diapers to diplomas, there is one overarching issue that confronts every Christian parent: the spiritual growth of our children. We read in Proverbs 22:6, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it," and we realize that we're not all that clear on what it means. . . . At this point you may think, What about the church? Isn't the spiritual training of our kids the church's responsibility? After all, that's what pastors are trained for, right? . . . But they'd be the first to tell you that the spiritual training of children was never meant to be relegated to a single hour on Sunday morning. Alongside gathering together at church, spiritual training was meant to be lived out every day before children by loving parents and grandparents. (Trent, Osborne and Bruner 2004, 9)

While society has changed and tremendous pressure and demands are exerted upon parents they still remain the primary influence upon their children for spiritual formation.

"Despite all the changes taking place in the American family, evidence continues to mount

that family experiences are critical in children's development" (Richards 1983, 184).

Families have changed dramatically in the past century but the influence of parents upon children remains critical for their spiritual growth.

In the Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives Conference held in June 2006, Bud Burk, of Whittier Hills Baptist Church, presented one of the ministry models called "The Plan": An approach to assisting parents in the good work of parenting. He describes the model saying, "The foundational truth that has driven this model is the understanding that parents are the primary disciplers of children" (Burk 2006, 1). This coincides with Scripture placing the primary responsibility for discipleship of children on parents. This concept is confirmed by other authors such as Robert Choun and Michael Lawson in *The Christian educator's handbook on children's ministry* (1998), Tedd Tripp in *Shepherding a child's heart* (1995), in *Teaching your child about God* (1974) by Wes Haystead and also by Bruce Lockerbie in *A passion for learning: The history of Christian thought on education* (1994).

"Our national surveys have shown that while more than 4 out of 5 parents (85 percent) believe they have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, more than two out of three of them abdicate that responsibility to their church" (Barna 2003, 77-78). Furthermore, in his research Barna discovered that parents consider one of the greatest benefits of the local church they attend is the church assumes the responsibility of nurturing their child (Barna 2003, 77). His research also uncovered that "most churchgoing parents are neither spiritually mature nor spiritually inclined and, therefore, they do not have a sense of urgency or necessity

about raising their kids to be spiritual champions” (Barna 2003, 78). The same idea is expressed in *Making Your Children’s Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid’s Week* where it is stated, “Parents expect the church to inculcate spiritual thinking, behavior, experiences, and knowledge in the minds and hearts of their children because, after all, the church is the ‘expert’ in that arena” (Miller and Staal 2004, 12).

The Church’s Role in Providing Spiritual Guidance

While Scripture seems to place the responsibility for spiritual training with parents, it does not restrict parents from accepting help from others in this task. In writing *Revolutionary Parenting* Barna makes the observation that successful parents in raising spiritually mature children “acknowledge the importance of being active in a healthy community of faith, but they also define that community’s role as one of supplementing what the parents are doing” (Barna 2007, 95-96). For children whose parents do not attend church or who are in dysfunctional situations “their soul care must then come from members of the faith community” (Beckwith, 2004, 120). As God’s agent to a hurting world the church provides the spiritual nourishment some children will find in no other place.

Unfortunately there are churches that rarely assist parents or supplement the spiritual training they are providing for their children. There are churches with this mentality that think “the church can do the spiritual nurture and soul care of children better than families can. This is simply not true” (Beckwith 2004, 105). Considering the amount of time a child is under the influence of church leaders versus the amount of time a parent has with

the child it would seem ludicrous. The flip side of this issue demands the church use wisely what little time they have to invest in carefully guiding the spiritual development of the children entrusted to their care. This wise investment of time is vital for the parents seeking supplemental help from the church. It is even more critical for the children whose parents abdicate their responsibility of spiritual nurture to the church or those who are totally unable to provide such care. In these cases where spiritual nurture is minimal or non-existent outside church there is so much to be accomplished and so little time to do it. The church must be careful to make the most of every opportunity they have.

For churches, a logical place to recruit teachers for children is among the parents of the children. Barna research confirms what this writer has frequently experienced that “adults who agree to serve in the classroom are often minimally qualified and barely trained for their duties” (Barna 2003, 39) if trained at all. With the enormous responsibility placed upon teachers of children, to shape their lives and share the gospel that will influence their eternal destiny, training is extremely important. Thrusting teachers into the responsible task of spiritually nurturing children in the most formative years of their life with no training, is setting them up for discouragement and failure, and is not the most advantageous for the future of the church or the next generation. Along with the title teacher comes tremendous responsibility. The teacher is a person of influence who inevitably will shape the future beliefs and conduct of students. Due to the responsibility a teacher carries James warned believers in the early church, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (Jam. 3:1 NIV).

Beckwith observes that while it is great that people in church often volunteer to teach children, rarely do they have any training or knowledge of how children learn or about classroom management. Their lack of training is a recipe for bad Bible teaching. It will not help children see the relevance of the Bible to life or their world (Beckwith 2004, 130)

In *Parent's Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children* the author comments "Young Life ministry founder Jim Rayburn was fond of saying, 'It's a sin to bore a kid with the gospel'" (Trent, Osborne and Bruner 2000, 11). Yet it seems many children are bored with Sunday school and the teaching of God's Word. In his video training series *Teaching with Style*, volume 1, Universal Principles (1994) Bruce Wilkinson reports on a scale of one to ten, one being extremely boring and ten very dynamic, teachers nationally rank 4.5. The good news is boredom is caused by a teacher's style and delivery. Style and delivery is totally within the teacher's control. Therefore, teachers can change. How does style and delivery impact learning? According to Wilkinson, using the same content teacher and students with only the style being different and the students took a test following the lesson the test scores would vary greatly. He says students learn 100 percent more with a dynamic teacher over one who is very boring. The point is that style directly impacts ability to learn. Proper training of teachers can equip them to be more effective in teaching, thereby improving the quality of Christian education and spiritual development of students.

Teachers entrusted with the responsibility of educating children academically are required to attain a certain level of academic training and practice through internship in order to be equipped and qualified to teach effectively. Their training helps insure their

success in the classroom for their sake as well as for the children they are teaching. If the Bible really shows the only way to salvation, and God's principles for Christian living, then teacher's must do their best to communicate the Bible effectively to their students. Teacher training sessions will help teachers teach in a way that is beneficial to their students Cionca 1986, 112).

Roehlkepartain shares five myths about Christian education of which number four is, "Teaching can occur without training." He goes on to say,

Good teaching requires good training. The study (conducted by Search Institute) confirms that teachers who have training tend to be better teachers. And the result is better Christian education. (Roehlkepartain 1993, 32)

Later in this book the author notes that "Instead of teaching because they feel called to ministry, many people end up teaching because they were cajoled until they gave in to pressure. The result is anything but effective teaching" (Roehlkepartain 1993, 107). Often these conscripted teachers do not have the essential training needed to succeed nor do they have the desire to acquire it. They also lack the motivation to adequately prepare in order to be effective. Lack of preparation time is a huge challenge for teachers with little encouragement to invest time for the rich dividend it pays in the lives of students. Another dimension is addressed by John Cionca when he says, "The greatest task of church leadership is not to fill a program vacancy; it's the broader task of opening people's horizons to the privilege of service" (Cionca 1990, 13). To be asked to serve the president of the United States would be an honor. If incompetent to perform the task the individual would likely want to be trained in order to succeed in the assignment. The privilege to serve God, the creator of the universe is of far greater importance and honor. Training to

succeed in the assignment for God makes as much sense as training to succeed in a political appointment. In His sovereignty God calls teachers/leaders and appoints those to be under that person. It is a logical action to seek training in order to succeed when fulfilling such an honored position as serving the Lord of lords. Unfortunately, the honor of serving the Lord is not fully appreciated and too many face service as a necessary duty rather than a privilege and thus enter their task without adequate training. Barna agrees that “The adults who agree to serve in the classroom are often minimally qualified and barely trained for their duties” (Barna 2003, 39).

Other Research on Children’s Spiritual Need

Social Science and Spiritual Development

There is a strong movement today to mainstream spiritual development into the social sciences. The most recent attempt to present a comprehensive alliance between the social sciences and spiritual development is the work edited by Roehlkepartain, King, and Wagener, *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (2006). In *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Downs 1994), *Nurture That Is Christian* (Wilhoit and Dettoni 1995) and other sources the behavioral sciences are discussed as they relate to teaching and these studies would be very beneficial for teachers seeking to effectively understand the children they teach. Shirley Morgenthaler wrote *Social Living: Our response to God's love* in the Lutheran Education Journal where she focuses on the social development of children. This author says, “We need to provide the environment and the ethos that communicates an

expectation of caring and empathy. In that way, the social development of each child will be supported in ways that also foster children's spiritual development"(Morgenthaler 2002, 158).

Through encouragement children can be taught to care and support others which can become a valuable social skill used to demonstrate an internal spiritual development. It could be argued that the social skills developed provide the avenue for expression of spiritual development rather than fostering spiritual development. The point is well taken that social development is important in the overall development of the child and teachers can nurture that development or stymie it in the lives of their students.

Social scientists have provided valuable insight to assist teachers in knowing how to more effectively teach their students. While the insights are valuable, teachers need to be cautious that developmental theories do not supersede the Bible. In response to *Education for Renovation* by Dr. Dallas Willard's presentation at the 2004 NAPCE conference Dr. Kenn Gangel says, "Willard's frequent citation of Scripture reminded me again that Christian education is a theological discipline informed by the social sciences rather than a social science discipline informed by theology" *Christian Education Journal* 3 2 (spring): 159. The importance of using theories of development cannot be neglected if a teacher wants to be successful. However, these valuable insights must be kept in perspective with the Word of God.

Christian educators should be careful not to limit what they think a child can do, because of research by behavioral scientists. At the same time, the discerning Christian educator may be aware of human behavior and child development. (Clark, Brubaker and Zuck 1986, 351)

An expert in the social sciences may know how to communicate and yet without the essentials regarding biblical spiritual development will be ineffective in encouraging spiritual growth. There is a need for teachers to develop skills in educational methods, psychological, and behavioral development or social development of children in order to be most productive in their ministry to elementary-age children. It is likewise critical for teachers wanting to encourage spiritual development to study and become familiar with biblical principles for that kind of growth to occur in their students. With a solid biblical foundation teachers can discern appropriate application of developments theories.

Mainline Denominations Research

The study, *Effective Christian Education: A national study of protestant congregations*, sponsored by the Search Institute in Minneapolis was designed to address the issues that "since the 1950's, mainline churches have faced declining memberships, increased illiteracy about the Bible and the faith, and a fear that faith was being reduced to a superficial peripheral part of life for many professing Christians" (Roehlkepartain 1993, 17-18). Shanna Stewart in, *Welcoming Children: KidFaith and Kid's Faith*, confirms the decline in the mainline churches has possibly been the catalyst to promote research in the area of spiritual development (Stewart 2000, 94-95). The research done by Search Institute provides valuable insight for people of various denominational backgrounds. While theological difference may cause some data to be less helpful, there are many valuable lessons all can learn from the research and following commentary on the research.

Evangelical Research

This study demonstrates how lay teachers can encourage the spiritual development of children from a conservative evangelical view juxtaposed the spiritual formation perspective of liberal or mainline denominations. Some literature is currently being produced to guide churches and teachers on how they can encourage biblically sound spiritual champions for Christ among the children. Yet there is concern the issue has not had as much attention as necessary. Possibly the lack of attention to the spiritual development of children relates to the wide divergence of theology. Michael Anthony says after nearly 2000 years the church still cannot agree on a definition for *spirituality* and the process of spiritual development is still hotly contested (Anthony 2006, 6).

The difficulty in defining spirituality is clearly illustrated by the inability to clearly define the subject in *Perspectives on children's spiritual formation* without opposition from contributing authors in the book. Discussion proceeds in the introduction suggesting ten things spirituality is not. The next twenty pages discuss how to define spirituality which dissolves into models of spiritual formation. Trying to be all inclusive with such wide divergence of theological views within the realm of evangelicalism makes the task impossible to define that satisfies everyone.

The purpose of *Perspectives on children's spiritual formation* is to describe and critique models of children's spiritual formation for children's ministry. Some of the ministry models are much more focused on the development of ministry or church growth than the spiritual growth of the child within the ministry. Another recent book from an evangelical perspective, *Making your children's ministry the best hour of every kid's*

week, also focuses on development of a ministry rather than the spiritual development of the child.

A clear definition of spiritual development or maturity based on a strong biblical foundation has been established from which teachers can draw fundamentals needed for the spiritual development of their children. Possibly the wide diversity has contributed to teachers floundering and not knowing how to achieve their goals of encouraging spiritual maturity within their students.

There has been some resurgence in the view that children's ministry is important in churches. In discussing this matter Beckwith says, "North American churches take seriously the need to provide spiritual nurture and care for their children and families" (Beckwith 2004, 9). On the other hand she also says, "The church's ministry to children is broken" (Beckwith 2004, 13). She expresses grave concern that the emphasis in children's ministry has shifted from spiritual formation of children and programs that accomplish that to "bigger, better and glitzier programs for children. . . [and] forgotten what spiritually shaping these young lives is really all about and how to do it" (Beckwith 2004, 11). The evangelical church must evaluate their purpose for children's ministry and equip people to minister biblically to the children for spiritual development.

The Future Relies on Spiritual Training Today

The Future and Destiny of the Child are at Stake

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt. 19:14 NIV). Children are very open

to spiritual truth. When their lives are being shaped and formed how better could they be shaped than around Jesus Christ. The whole idea of spiritual development is that the child's life will become Christ-like for in doing so the child's life will bring glory to God. To Jeremiah God said, "For I know the plans I have for you" (Jer. 29:11 NIV). God likewise has a plan for each child with whom teachers will work. The best plan for the child would be to live in the center of the will of God. As teachers guide children toward spiritual maturity, God's plans will unfold bringing the child into the very best future possible. Not only is spiritual development about the here and now but it will release the child to the very best possible future.

The formation of a person's spiritual and moral character is largely determined early in life. As a result of much research George Barna speaks authoritatively regarding this development.

Research regarding all facets of moral and spiritual development – whether related to worldview, beliefs or behavior – shows that such development starts as early as age two. The process then progresses rather quickly. Social scientists have known for years that the moral foundations of children are generally determined by the time the individual reaches age nine. Our research confirms a parallel outcome in the spiritual dimension: By age nine, most children have their spiritual moorings in place.

The implications of these findings is clear: Anyone who wishes to have significant influences on the development of a person's moral and spiritual foundations had better exert that influence while the person is still open-minded and impressionable – in other words, while the person is still young. (Barna 2003, 47)

The adults of tomorrow are being shaped today. The leaders of church and country are being prepared today. Therefore, effort must be made today to produce godly leaders with Christian character and moral values for tomorrow.

Not only can the future of the child be shaped by today's teachers, the child's destiny for eternity is at stake. The probability of a person being saved after childhood is very slim. Again research by the Barna Group confirms this to be accurate.

A series of studies we conducted regarding the age at which people accept Christ as their Savior highlights the importance of having people invite Jesus into their heart as their Savior when they are young. We discovered that the probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Savior was 32 percent for those between the ages of 5 and 12; 4 percent for those in the 13- to 18-age range; and 6 percent for people 19 or older. In other words, if people do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior before they reach their teenage years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim. (Barna 2003, 34)

The child's eternal destiny rides on the faithfulness of teachers sharing the gospel with them while they are very receptive to spiritual truth. The older and more independent the child becomes the harder it is to place their faith in Christ and depend on Him for eternal life. This would not be a surprise to God. No wonder Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt. 19:14 NIV).

The Family and Church are at Stake

There is a war going on against families as James Dobson and Gary Bauer describe in *Children at risk*. The outcome of this battle has serious ramifications. "The institution of the family is the basic unit of society -the ground floor on which the entire culture rests. If it collapses, everything of value will go down with it" (Dobson 1997, 408). Childhood is the time to instill the values of family. If parents and teachers do not instill family values children will adopt a postmodern worldview that is anti-family. The family is God's picture to the world of His relationship with the church as recorded in Ephesians 5:22-33.

As seen earlier, the spiritual values of a person are formed to a large degree while in childhood. The future of the church is literally at stake, for if teachers do not hand down their values and beliefs children will not know them. What they do not know they cannot live by so it is vital these values and beliefs be taught to children. With the vast majority of conversions taking place in childhood the future of the church literally depends on children placing their faith in Christ. It is clear that the health of the church a generation from now and the future spiritual vitality of children will be largely dependent on what the church does today to influence their lives. In essence, forecasting the health of the church in twenty-five years really means investing in the spiritual welfare of children.

The Society is at Stake

When the life of the child is transformed by Christ the child brings new potential to become model citizens with values that will enhance the society. The spiritual development of children will result in future leaders that have godly values and principles. Godly leaders bring stability and respect to the society. Leaders are not instilled with godly character in college for the most part those moral values are established in childhood and carry on into adulthood.

Literally the future is at stake, for in the children lies the future. What is done today to nurture and develop them will have enormous impact on the future. It may be hard to envision an eight-year old as a parent, teacher, pastor, police officer, doctor, mayor, or president but the future leaders are all children today. If the Christians today want to see a nation “under God” in the future, they must invest in the children.

CHAPTER 4

PERSPECTIVES ON SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The views on “spiritual development” run the gamut from a very secular outlook, having nothing to do with God, to a biblical position, where spirituality is intrinsically and essentially related to God. The wide perspectives on spiritual development make it very difficult to engage in meaningful discussion on how to encourage such development if the nature of it cannot be agreed upon by the participants. Even within the evangelical Christian community there is not consensus on the meaning of spirituality. “It’s been said that everyone knows what spirituality is until they’re forced to define it. At that point they stare blankly into space, muttering phrases that don’t make a great deal of sense”

(Anthony 2006, 3). Following ten descriptions of what spirituality is not Anthony says,

In the nearly two thousand years since the church’s inception, we honestly have to admit that the church has never agreed on a definition for the term *spirituality*. Spiritual formation, that process of developing one’s personal and/or corporate spirituality, has been hotly contested and debated for centuries; and it’s doubtful that the argument will be resolved anytime soon. (Anthony 2006, 6)

Anthony found disagreement with one of the chapter authors in *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation* which demonstrates the lack of unity on the subject of spirituality. At the end of his introduction Anthony says, “Though there are no agreed-upon definitions for spirituality, spiritual formation, or spiritual maturity, that shouldn’t preclude one from investigating it” (Anthony 2006, 42).

This chapter will briefly express in general some views of spirituality not for the purpose of resolving the debate on what spirituality is but to clarify a position and foundation from which the teacher can proceed to encourage spiritual development in their students. If a goal cannot be defined, the process for attaining it will be so blurred it will not be attainable. The first step to accomplish anything significant is to clearly identify the goal or target. Once the goal is clearly identified progress can be made toward reaching the goal. Rather than trying to satisfy everyone, resulting in no clear definition, it seems reasonable to identify spirituality from a theological perspective as done in chapter one, then proceed to develop a means whereby it can be encouraged within that perspective. It make little sense to be so open minded on the subject, so as not to offend anyone, that the teacher has no clear direction how to facilitate spiritual development in their students. Therefore, the following views of spirituality are presented not to resolve the conflicting views on spirituality but to clarify a position and basis from which the teacher can move ahead to advance spiritual growth in their students.

Secular View of Spirituality

There seems to be a resurgence in the subject of spirituality in the American society today with many books on the topic in most bookstores. Whether from a Christian perspective or totally secular view the interest in spirituality is prevalent. According to the article, *Spiritual development and education: a contemplative view*, in the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 8 (no. 3), Lois Duff draws upon the 1988 Educational Reform Act that requires curriculum to include spiritual development where she examines

three aspects of spirituality, awareness, self-knowledge, and transcendence. This spiritual development begins with an inner search of the self (Duff 2003, 227-237). While this is referred to as spiritual development, it could also be considered self discovery. The focus of this definition of spiritual relates more to the non-physical and is concentrating on an inner quest of self rather than focusing on the divine. In his article, *Can you train people to be spiritual?*, William David Thompson equates spiritual with ethics in the work place. He says, "The idea of spiritual training has nothing to do with religious beliefs or God but about ethics and character like honesty, beneficence, justice and respect. It relates to giving oneself for the greater good of the company or of others" (Thompson 2000, 18-19).

Donald Ratchliff has contributed significantly to the subject of children's spiritual development. In the unpublished book, *Experiencing God and Spiritual Growth with Your Children* (Ratchliff 2005, 8-14), the author describes spirituality from various perspectives. There is the extreme view of spirituality which is self centered and devoid of God. Awe and wonder are considered a type of spiritual experience because they transcend the physical realm. While there is a physical and non-physical side to people, which some refer to as spiritual, that is not the aspect being considered in which teachers can encourage development.

Michael Anthony quotes from *What is Spirituality and Is It for Me?* by Toon saying,

What appeared to have happened this century (and to have been accelerated in the last two or three decades) is that the basic understanding of the spirit/Spirit is no longer controlled by the general doctrines of the Christian religion. Any activity of the human spirit is eligible for being described as spirituality. And the fact that we live in a pluralistic and secularist society gives a certain validity to this

comprehensive and vague definition. This situation certainly means that if anyone is to use the word today then he/she must be clear what particular meaning is being offered or developed. (Anthony 2006, 23)

Religious View of Spirituality

The Study of Spirituality traces the history of spirituality through human history through various traditions including religious perspectives other than Christianity. A comment in the preface says spirituality is personal so,

. . .spiritual counsellors above all need to be aware of, and have knowledge of, other spiritualities than their own in order to detect and guide the needs of the countless differing individuals who consult them. For them a full working knowledge of diversities of spirituality is a professional necessity. (Jones, Wainwright & Yarnold 1986, xxii)

This type of spirituality can involve a person's effort to develop a relationship with or appease a deity, regardless of whom that may be, for inner harmony or self fulfillment. "Spiritual experiences are aspects of life that take us beyond the mundane to the acute and vital aspects of living. Everyone is a spiritual being, and thus everyone can have spiritual experiences of some kind" (Ratcliff 2005, 16). This aspect of religious spirituality has validity for those defining spirituality as having to do with anything non-material and or religious. This is not the definition attributed to spirituality in this study which involves three factors, the regeneration of the person, the Holy Spirit as preeminent in producing spirituality, and finally, the process which takes time involving the believer's character, knowledge, attitudes, and conduct.

Some Christian's outlook on spiritual development is aligned more with religious spirituality than with a biblical spirituality as defined in this study. "In this broader sense,

to have spiritual experience does not mean one necessarily has salvation or a walk with God” (Ratcliff 2005, 16). Removal of God from the subject of spiritual formation denies the author and principle One who produces spirituality in an individual. In order for teachers to observe spiritual development in their students, defined as a lifelong process in which a believer in Christ grows more intimate with God resulting in a transformation of their character and behavior to become more Christ-like, they need more than a religious view of spirituality. Spiritual development from this biblical perspective requires a biblical view of spirituality. A religious view of spirituality may result in a religious experience but there is no assurance it will result in the defined outcomes of biblical spirituality.

Biblical View of Spirituality

In *Growing Toward Spiritual Maturity* the foundational principle is established that ultimately it is God who is responsible for all spiritual growth. Gary Newton explains,

There is a dangerous tendency within this sophisticated, technological culture to attribute spiritual “success stories” to clever human strategies, wise choices, or determined hard work. Without downplaying the importance of human responsibility in spiritual growth, God’s role must always be central.

This principle shines forth clearly in Isaiah 61:11, where the prophet Isaiah compares God’s role in dealing with His people to the role of garden soil in causing seeds to grow. God plays the role of a seasoned farmer carefully preparing the soil and maintaining the garden with the vision to see each seed grow into maturity.

This principle is also clearly illustrated in the New Testament. When Paul saw the early church members focusing too much on the role of human leaders, he reminded them that God is the person primarily responsible for growth. The picture in 1 Corinthians 3:7-9 is also of a garden. . . .

God is ultimately responsible for the growth process in our lives from beginning to end. He chose before the world was created to make us a part of His

garden where we could grow into the holy likeness of His Son, Jesus. (Newton 2003, 5-6)

The principle that God is essentially responsible for our spiritual development from its inception to its completion is confirmed by Paul when he said, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6 NIV). The writer to the Hebrews says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2 NIV). Jesus even says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit” (John 15:16 NIV). This concept is addressed by Paul as he said, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Eph. 1:4 NIV). This whole matter of spiritual growth is addressed by Paul saying, “Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it?” (Gal. 3:3 MSG).

Teachers must understand Biblical spirituality begins when the child responds to the call of God by placing their faith in Christ alone for salvation. That results in the spiritual birth of the child which then enables them to grow spiritually. The work of salvation is not begun by the teacher sharing the good news of Christ with a child nor by the child in receiving Christ as Savior. Scripture is clear that God begins the work of salvation. Teachers must recognize spiritual growth from a biblical perspective is a spiritual matter. Salvation does not come through wisdom and education but to those who simply believe God for what He has done. God will call everyone to salvation who is to be saved

according to 1 Corinthians 1:24. Once the person has been born spiritually into the family of God they have the capacity to grow and develop that spiritual life. The biblical perspective of spiritual birth being necessary for spiritual growth to occur is resonated throughout numerous biblical passages and will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven.

Spiritual growth develops as the believer learns and applies the Word of God in their life. McQuilkin deals with the prerequisites for interpreting scripture of which one is regeneration. Regarding that he says,

Initial faith is necessary, for the unbeliever cannot understand the things of the Spirit. Regeneration is essential. This is explicitly taught in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and 2 Corinthians 2:15-18. . . . The Holy Spirit is the great Interpreter (John 16:13). Without Him all our efforts at fully understanding His Word are doomed to failure. (McQuilkin 1992, 75-76)

There is a part in which the believer in Christ must put forth some effort for spiritual growth to occur as God does not simply pour out spiritual growth on some and not on others. The term “salvation” is spoken of in scripture in three distinct ways, past, present, and in the future tense. These areas have a bearing on the subject of spiritual development from a biblical perspective. In the past tense a person is saved from the penalty of sin when they place their faith in Christ. The present tense of the term relates to the aspect of spiritual growth as the time when the believer is being saved from the power of sin over their life. However, one day in the future the believer will ultimately be saved from the presence of sin when they reach their eternal reward of Heaven.

Teachers will find it easy to remember these aspects of salvation by the colors of the American flag, red, white, and blue. The colors of the flag are nearly always given in that

order as is the order of salvation past, present, and future. The red relates to the blood of Christ shed at Calvary for redemption of people. For a believer this is past tense. In the present tense the believer is seeking to maintain a clean life walking with Christ thus the white. The blue would relate to the future tense of salvation when the believer will reach heaven and then be totally free from the presence of sin.

The past tense aspect of salvation is referred to as justification or redemption. It is this aspect of salvation most commonly considered. Apart from the aspect of redemption when a person is saved from the penalty of sin no spiritual growth is possible. “There can be no spiritual formation where there has been no regeneration. Where there is no life there can be no growth; where there is no growth, there, no life exists” (Gangel and Wilhoit 1997, 47). In this aspect of salvation the believer is justified. Positionally the person is set apart for God and given eternal life. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer according to 2 Corinthians 5:21. This is a gift from God, given freely to all who place their faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). The purpose of salvation is not only to have sins forgiven, but that the individual will then grow spiritually and become productive which brings glory to God (Ephesians 2:10 and Titus 3:8 & 14).

People do not live up to their position in Christ immediately, they have to grow up spiritually. The second aspect of salvation is sanctification where the believer is being saved from the power of sin over their life. Progressive sanctification is the process of spiritual formation as seen in passages like Philippians 2:12 when Paul says, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12 NIV). In this aspect of salvation or sanctification the believer’s practice is becoming more like their position.

They are becoming more Christ-like in their daily walk. “Regeneration describes a work completely carried out by God whereas spiritual formation requires the believer’s cooperation with God” (Gangel and Wilhoit 1997, 41). While God produces the growth, it is in cooperation with the believer’s willingness to live in obedience and holiness. Spiritual growth occurs when the believer is walking in full obedience to the Holy Spirit. “If maturity is a key facet in spirituality, then the Holy Spirit must play a major role in producing it” (Ryrie 1999, 433). The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is observed throughout scripture. As the believer walks with God by the power of the Holy Spirit, they mature and become more like Christ.

Glorification or ultimate sanctification is when the believer will be ultimately set apart for God at which time they will be totally free from the presence of sin. This is the destination of the spiritual journey where the believer will one day be like Christ totally.

The conclusion is made that apart from spiritual birth, spiritual growth remains unattainable since it occurs through the comprehension and application of the Bible. At the time of salvation the individual receives a new nature making it now possible to see and understand spiritual things. Ryrie says this new nature might better be described as a new capacity with which a believer can serve God. Prior to salvation they are servants to sin but after salvation they have the capacity to serve God and righteousness. The unsaved have one capacity while the Christian has two (Ryrie 1969 35). The spiritual journey begins with redemption and continues by the power of the Holy Spirit moving ever closer in character and behavior to the image of Christ until one day the journey is complete in the presence of Christ in glory.

CHAPTER 5

ASSUMPTIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

Reality and Character of God

For the Christian teacher the reality of God is essential as a foundation for teaching that will produce spiritual development in students and as a source of strength for this spiritual endeavor. Teaching for spiritual development is spiritual work and requires spiritual power from God in order to succeed. In the great commission Jesus said, “and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20 NIV). Teachers are engaged in a spiritual ministry in which Christ promises to be with them. “The Bible never tries to prove there is a God. It assumes that man knows that there is a God, and states, ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God’ (Ps. 14:1)” (Cambron 1954, 21). Likewise it is assumed the teacher believes in the reality of God if the goal is teaching for spiritual maturity. The reality of God in the life of the teacher is crucial for the teacher to set the example for the student to know how to live spiritually mature. Teachers want to teach the reality of God to their students in daily life. Learning the character of God will help students not only learn about God but become more acquainted with Him personally so their lives can reflect the same character traits as God. The character of God becomes a guide for the student who is to become more Christ-like.

The Word of God Is the Final Authority for Teachers

“The Bible, and only the Bible, is the absolute authority for faith and life” (McQuilkin 1992, 69) is a primary premise of this study. Teacher’s need to believe in the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative word of Almighty God which guides their life. Without this foundation the teacher cannot be an effective role model for the children over which they have influence. This concept of the absolute truth of the Bible is critical in today’s society where many students are immersed in the postmodern worldview that “there is no overarching truth or ultimate ideal that explains and undergirds all of human existence. Postmoderns believe that reality or truth is always subjective” (Beckwith 2004, 22). A worldview that rejects absolute truth can be effectively countered by the life of a teacher living by the absolute standards of God’s Word.

Belief in the absolute truth and authority of the Bible enables a teacher who lives accordingly to declare the truth of the Bible authoritatively. Teachers today can declare the principles of the Bible with the same authority profits of old declared, “thus saith the Lord”. Teachers can speak with authority because they are sharing the infallible truths of God that have stood the test of time. In Matthew 7:28-29 Jesus taught as one with authority because He had authority as the Son of Man (Matt. 9:6 and Mark 1:22). In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (NIV), then He commissioned His followers to go and teach and promised to be with them intimating that they too would teach with authority because He promised to be with them. Titus was told to teach with authority (Tit. 2:15) setting the example that teachers today can teach with authority the authoritative Word of God.

Teachers who teach from the perspective of the Word of God as the standard for students to apply to life have the confidence that this unchanging message from God has the power to make a person a new creation in Christ and change their life in such a way as to bring glory to God. Belief in the trustworthiness of Scripture will enable a teacher to teach with confidence in the power of the Bible to bring about change and spiritual maturity.

Everything is Interpreted Through Scripture

Teachers have the distinct advantage today of availability to research on how people develop socially, psychologically, emotionally and mentally which can be a tremendous asset in guiding their spiritual development. “It is the responsibility of Christian educators to use the social sciences wisely, integrating psychology properly into their philosophy of Christian education” (Downs 1994, 70). Wilhoit and Dettoni concur saying, “We must learn from those who spend their lives studying human learning. But we must also not take everything they have to say as ‘gospel’” (Wilhoit and Dettoni 1995, 41). This correlates with the premise that “The Bible, and only the Bible, is the absolute authority for faith and life” (McQuilkin 1992, 69).

It seems practical and necessary to use what the Lord has allowed us to discover in the social science fields of education, psychology, and sociology. But when a conflict arises, we must err toward scriptural understandings. Fowler describes how we should be seeking to “remodel” our educational endeavors but not to “remodel the foundation.” How do we mold a children’s ministry that is centered and balanced? . . . Scripture must be the main focus, and then relevant application will follow. (Anthony 2006, 105-106)

In his book, *Understanding and applying the Bible*, McQuilkin makes a similar case that Scripture must be accepted as the absolute truth when it runs contrary to modern theories of the day.

Since God is the Author behind the authors – the ultimate source of revelation – Scripture must be interpreted as true in all its parts, and the unity of all its parts must be sought.

Since Scripture is true in all its parts, it will not do to distort one's interpretation of Scripture or to disallow a portion of Scripture because it might seem to be in conflict with a scientific theory, a historical source, or some contemporary psychological, sociological, or anthropological theory. (McQuilkin 1992, 68)

Apart from Faith God Cannot be Pleas ed or Experienced

Teachers must recognize the ministry of encouraging spiritual development of children is a spiritual ministry. As such the teacher needs to walk by faith in order that God can work through the teacher to the accomplishment of the goal. Spiritual ministry is not effective apart from God's power as expressed in John 15:4-5.

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5 NIV)

The personal walk and ministry of the teacher must be by faith if it is to be effective. The child must receive Christ by faith and then walk by faith to experience spiritual growth.

“So you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him” (Heb. 11:6 NLT).

The Bible Needs to be Interpreted Literally Within its Context

Literal interpretation means the words and sentences of Scripture are understood in their normal meaning – the ways that words are understood in normal communication. It is a literal or normal meaning of words that is the basis of communication. Biblically there is a precedence for interpreting the New Testament literally. Old Testament prophecies like Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2 have all been fulfilled literally. (Enns 1989, 176)

Apart from a literal interpretation of Scripture, the foundation for understanding spiritual life and maturity from the Bible, and the means whereby growth occurs, may differ producing different results. The common foundation of understanding Scripture in the way words are normally used is essential to work toward the same desired outcome.

Project Limitations

Dealing with human beings and spiritual development present certain inevitable limitations from which this project is not immune. The spiritual gifts of teachers will vary greatly allowing some to be more effective teachers than others. Every teacher is personally on a spiritual journey as they seek to guide the children assigned to them by God which will impact the influence they are able to exert over their students. Every child coming into a class or under the influence of a teacher will also be on a spiritual journey. Some of these children will be more advanced than others due to parental influence or input from others within their faith family or relatives. Extenuating religious influence on a child's life can have an enormous impact on the progress a teacher is able to make toward guiding a child in spiritual development. Each child encountering a teacher's influence is a human being with free-will, the ability to choose to obey and follow God or reject His will for their life. Teachers can be a tremendous asset in the spiritual

development of children and can do much to motivate them to walk obediently with the Lord but ultimately the child has to make the decision to follow God in order to grow spiritually.

CHAPTER 6

FACILITATING SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

Based upon the definition of spiritual development for this project teachers need to understand the spiritual nature of the subject in relation to the Word of God. This type of spiritual development relies on God working in the life of the teacher and the student. Spiritual development of the student involves the work of God in that person's life since He is the One who begins the spiritual journey. In order for this to transpire God uses teachers that are fully committed to Him to set an example and be role models. The need for this biblical perspective of spiritual development can be illustrated in what Lois E. LeBar wrote several decades ago, that the church is full of people who claim to be Christians but don't possess the reality of Christ and more of those are not needed. Therefore, children must fully understand what they are doing so Christ is real to them. If they make commitments to Christ that are not genuine it will be harder to reach them in the future so take care not to deal with children in the flesh but rather in the Spirit. Care needs to be exercised not to offend children from coming to Christ or to be content with mere outward form (LeBar 1952, 176).

Spiritual development must reach deeper than a mere outward form. It must begin internally with a spiritual birth and is followed by internal spiritual growth produced by God as the child progresses in their spiritual journey guided by a spiritually mature teacher being led by God. "As Christians we must not expect children who do not have this new

life in the Spirit to act as though they do. ‘Teaching them to be Christians’ is impossible without first having experienced the radical transformation of the Spirit of God” (Wilhoit and Dettoni 1995, 154).

Spiritual Nature of the Subject

Several aspects of spiritual development are addressed in John 15 which clarifies the spiritual nature of the subject of spiritual development as it relates to God, the teacher and the student.

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Jn. 15:1-8 NIV)

A couple observations regarding this passage relative to the subject of spiritual development and its application will be helpful. First, this metaphor is spoken to the disciples without unbelievers present. Second, the substance of the metaphor has to do with fellowship rather than relationship. The third significant observation is the small phrase in verse 2, “in me,” which can add significantly to the understanding of this passage. It is recognized that some scholars such as John MacArthur views the branches that are “cut off” as being people who are not true Christians. “It is reasonable to conclude

that the branches that bear fruit would be the eleven true disciples, and the branches that do not bear fruit refer to Judas and any others who were never true disciples” (MacArthur 1986, 7). Edwin Blum writing the section on John in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* shares a similar view. He says,

The phrase “in Me” does not mean the same things as Paul’s word “in Christ.” Here it is part of the metaphor of the Vine and seems to mean, “every person who professes to be My disciple (a ‘branch’) is not necessarily a true follower.” (Walvoord and Zuck 1983, 325)

The phrase “in Me” is used elsewhere in the gospel of John referring to the believer’s relationship with Christ. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (Jn. 6:56 NIV). Again the phrase is used by Jesus saying, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (Jn. 14:20 NIV). In this short passage, John 15:1-8, the phrase “in me” is used six times. It seems inconsistent to attribute just one of the phrases to non-believers and the others to those who are part of Christ’s body. With no unbelievers present when spoken by Christ, the emphasis on fellowship rather than relationship or salvation is logical. Attributing the term “in me” to believers in this entire passage seems to be a consistent interpretation. The passage clearly shows there is a severe consequence to being unfruitful.

The message of John 15 is clear. As teachers facilitate the spiritual development of their students in the classroom they will bring glory to God. Verse four speaks of remaining in Christ in order for teachers to produce meaningful spiritual fruit. Without that direct connection with Christ the teacher’s power source vanishes. Using the metaphor of the vine and branch brings clarity to the phrase in verse five, “apart from me you can do

nothing.” A branch severed from the vine cannot produce any fruit. Likewise, a teacher must remain directly connected with Christ by spending time with Him in the Word or God and allow God’s Word to remain in the teacher if God is going to be glorified by the teacher’s fruitfulness.

The concept can be translated into the lives of students. The metaphor relates to them in their spiritual journey. For a student to have a fruitful relationship with Christ they need to be encouraged to develop their fellowship with Christ where they spend time in the Bible and allow it to transform their life. God will continue to prune and nurture them to become the most fruitful person so their life will bring glory to God. Apart from God working in their life they will not become fully mature followers of Christ. In reality this is the spiritual nature of spiritual development. The closer students walk with God, the more like Christ they become, which in turn brings fulfillment to them and glory to God. The teacher is a key facilitator of this spiritual growth.

God Works In and Through the Teacher

As discussed in chapter two, the biblical model for teachers is to live the lesson prior to seeking to teach it regarding spiritual matters. The teacher under the influence of the Spirit of God will be directed to practice what they preach. The spiritual nature of what the teacher is doing is directly related to their spiritual walk with God. As they live under the influence of the Holy Spirit they will be able to minister to their students in a manner that will encourage spiritual development. The consistency of the spiritual walk and talk will create a spirit of believability in the reality of a relationship with God. Congruence

between life and lesson of the teacher provides credence in the mind of the student.

Postmodern students do not trust a hypocrite.

This generation is not quick to trust adults. Millennials have sensitive truth detectors and they can tell quickly if they are being conned. While they will give adults chances to prove themselves to be trustworthy; if they are let down by these adults they are unlikely to offer a second chance. They value integrity and honesty. They want people to be authentic with them. (Beckwith 2004, 31-32)

The spiritual aspect of leadership is pertinent to the concept of the teacher's congruence between life and lesson. If there is no harmony between the life-style of the teacher and the lesson being taught in the classroom there is no model to follow. God's standard for leadership in the church is not different from what He expects from all believers. The purpose of the standards for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy chapter three and Titus chapter one is they set the pace for others to follow. The leader goes ahead of the follower and sets the example for how they should live. Christ also spoke to this matter when he said, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:39-40 NIV). In the remaining verses of Luke 6:41-49, Jesus warns people not to be hypocritical trying to tell others what they are not willing to do. Students often emulate their teacher so teachers need to set the example on how to live a godly life for students to follow. The teacher is the leader in the classroom, setting the pace for godly living, showing students how they ought to walk with God. This does not mean they are perfect but they should be living in such a way as to say to their students as Paul said to the Corinthians, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV). With this mind set the teacher allows the Holy Spirit to work in their life and they

will also have the humility to allow Him to work through them. The more the teacher abides in Christ and allows the Word of God to remain in them the more they will recognize the futility of trying to teach alone. Apart from God they will not be able to accomplish the spiritual ministry they desire in the lives of their students.

“While the Old Testament clearly shows that parents have the primary role of instructing their children in faith. . . research has also shown that children need to have people other than their parents who can model and help to influence a child’s faith development” (Anthony 2006, 202). There is a precedent set forth in scripture for teachers to assist in the teaching of children as far back as the time of Moses.

Jethro told Moses to “teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform” (Ex. 18:20 NIV). Near the end of his life Moses called all of Israel together so he could teach them the laws of God (Deut. 4 and 5). Teaching was among the duties of the Levites. “And you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses” (Lev. 10:11 NIV). According to Samuel’s own words, he was a teacher in Israel. “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right” (1 Sam. 12:23 NIV). 2 Chronicles 17:7-9 records that Jehoshaphat sent teachers throughout Israel to teach them the laws of God. This was done not to supplant the work of parents but to supplement their teaching. In Proverbs 1, Solomon admonishes learning from the elders. Following the exile to Babylon, Ezra is described as being “devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel” (Ezra 7:11 NIV). Paul reminded Timothy of all he had been taught by Paul in

addition to what his mother and grandmother taught him. Then he told Timothy, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2 NIV). Teachers down through history have been used of God to supplement what parents teach their children. While scripture seems to place the responsibility for spiritual training with parents, it does not restrict parents from accepting help from others in this task.

God Works in the Student

Based on the model of spiritual development earlier defined, there is no spiritual reality or growth apart from the indwelling Holy Spirit. God uses the teacher to encourage the student to be born spiritually, thus receiving spiritual DNA, which enables them to navigate the spiritual world and grow more intimate with God, resulting in a transformation of their character and behavior to become more like Christ. Teachers need to recognize, as noted earlier, that this process is begun by God with the promise He will complete it. Teachers have the privilege of being used by God to fulfill His purpose in the life of their students. Paul confirmed to the Corinthians that God would not only begin the work of salvation in their lives but He would complete the work.

He will keep you strong right up to the end and he will keep you free from all blame on the great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will surely do this for you, for he always does just what he says and he is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Cor. 1:8-9 NLT)

The indwelling Holy Spirit is only the first step in what God wants to do in the life of a teacher’s student. In writing to the saints at Ephesus, which included the children who

were born again, Paul uses an analogy to help them understand how God wanted to fully control their life. A person drunk with alcohol rather than controlling their actions is controlled by the alcohol. This is the negative aspect of the analogy in Ephesians 5:18. “Conversely, the positive command is, Be filled with the Spirit. Thus a believer, rather than controlling himself, is controlled by the Holy Spirit” (Walvoord and Zuck 1983, 640). Being controlled or influenced by the Holy Spirit will enable the teacher’s students to grow more intimate with God resulting in a transformation of their character and behavior to become more like Christ, which is the goal of spiritual development.

Teachers need to return to the John 15 passage to see the student’s spiritual growth cannot exist apart from God. The child must be inexorably connected with Christ the true vine from which spiritual nourishment and strength flow. God gave birth to this branch and now wants it to develop to full maturity so it can produce much fruit which will ultimately bring glory to God. The teacher’s challenge is to nurture this birth and facilitate this development so fruit is produced by the student.

CHAPTER 7

NECESSITY OF NEW BIRTH

DNA Logic

The latter part of the definition of salvation for this project which reads, “At that point they are born by the Spirit of God into the family of God thereby receive new life and a capacity for spiritual development.” At the point of salvation a person is born spiritually. That spiritual birth is likened to physical birth in John chapter three. The conclusion can be drawn that there are similarities between physical and spiritual birth. One of those conclusions supported by other scripture is that new birth or spiritual birth is necessary for spiritual growth. 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 would be a good example of this principle:

12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:12-16 NIV)

Verse 14 speaks of the “man without the Spirit” which is translated in the KJV and NASB as the “natural man” or what might be called today as the non-believer. This is confirmed in Romans 8:9 which says, “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (NIV). This is the context of 1 Corinthians 2 contrasting the believer and the non-believer. Verse 14 says, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things

that come from the Spirit of God. . . because they are spiritually discerned.” The Word of God cannot be understood apart from the Spirit of God who lives in the believer. Until new birth occurs the individual, according to Ephesians 2:1 is dead spiritually. This is why John 3:3 says, “no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (Jn. 3:3 NIV). Apart from the new birth (spiritual birth) a person is dead spiritually. There is no capacity for spiritual understanding or comprehension just as there is not ability for a person physically dead to think, speak, hear or respond physically.

Teachers must understand the principle that birth precedes growth to succeed in helping their students grow spiritually. “To bring up a child in the Lord would certainly require that he be evangelized since the new birth is imperative before one can have a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures” (Overholtzer 1968, 8). Spiritual DNA is required before a child can begin to comprehend scripture and begin to apply its principles to life.

Referring to the 1 Corinthians 2 passage, Richards comments,

Paul claims that the spiritual man “makes judgements about all things.” The Greek verb here, *anakriō*, speaks of a capacity to discern. The believer, in virtue of his salvation and relationship with God, has the capacity for spiritual discernment of “all things.” He can look at life the way God does. He can see the implications of God’s truth for life situations and can respond in harmony with God’s will. (Richards and Bredfeldt 1998, 138)

Once the believer has spiritual DNA and this capacity for comprehending spiritual truth, spiritual growth is possible.

The concept of spiritual birth is referred to by Peter when he stated, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:3 NIV). Other passages of

scripture (Romans 8:16-17, Ephesians 5:1, Philippians 2:15, 1 John 3:1-2, 10 and 1 John 5:2 and 19) confirm this concept of spiritual birth into the family of God by calling believers children of God. John tells us, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (Jn. 1:12-13 NIV). This concept of spiritual birth is critical for teachers wanting to nurture their students into a close spiritual walk with God, for birth must precede growth.

The Priority of the Gospel

For a teacher to disciple children into a mature walk with the Lord it becomes paramount they become proficient in evangelism in order to bring children into a relationship with God where they can understand and apply spiritual truth. Sharing the gospel with students prepares the way for a child to clearly understand their need for Christ and why they need to place their faith in Him. “Sunday School used to be a place where many heard the gospel. But today, too few children come to the Lord through this ministry” (Carlson 2006, 25). This may reflect the lack of emphasis placed on evangelism or the theological perspective of evangelism by major publishers of Sunday school curriculum.

In Willow Creek’s Promiseland curriculum, the gospel messages are planned strategically throughout the year according to elementary age groupings. Due to developing cognitive abilities, the kindergarten/first-graders hear the gospel presented in the spring of each year. The philosophy applied here is that younger kindergarten and first-grade children still need time to develop a deeper understanding of who God is before they are able to respond in faith. In the other ages the gospel is presented three times during the school year. (Anthony 2006, 178)

How will students learn about God and gain a deeper understanding of Him if teachers fail to share His great love for students through providing salvation. This scant presentation negates the many opportune times throughout the year when children may be very receptive to the gospel. One or even three presentations of the gospel in a full year would not classify this as a major emphasis of spiritual development of children.

Nurturing is appropriate and necessary. It is comparable to the watering, fertilizing and weeding of a garden - critical to healthy vegetables! The importance of shepherding and nurturing cannot be diminished. But we musn't let it crowd out evangelism of children. (Fowler 2004, 123)

As noted, discipleship and nurturing cannot take hold until the child first is born spiritually. Teachers must keep a clear focus on evangelism and its priority.

A Sunday School devoid of evangelism is a broken index finger to the rest of the ministry of the church. It all starts with evangelism. No evangelism, no teaching, no discipleship, no involvement, no assimilation, no nothing! We must keep the main thing the main thing. As we plan and prioritize the work of the Sunday School, we must always keep evangelism on the front burner. (Taylor 2003, 30)

Evangelism must become an intentional part of a teacher's presentation or it will become lost in everything else the teacher wants to do. There is a spiritual battle going on for the souls of the children. If the teacher's attention can be diverted, even with good things like teaching the gospel, the enemy wins. It takes intentional effort to keep the main thing the main thing.

The children's club at our church usually ran like a fine-tuned machine. Yet at the end of the year, we realized that very few of our third-through sixth-grade students had responded to the message of the gospel. So, the next year, we intentionally had the ministry's group leaders emphasize the story of salvation to these students. As the ministry leaders taught with renewed purpose, many children began to trust in Christ and grow in their faith. (Carlson 2006, 17)

“How can people have faith in the Lord and ask him to save them, if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them” (Rom. 10:14 CEV). If the gospel is only shared once or even three times a year and the child misses those weeks how will they hear, or do they have to wait another whole year in which they will live apart from Christ, before they have opportunity again to hear the gospel? Intentional teaching of the gospel regularly is vital in the life of a child. The percentage of time a year holds in the life of a child is so much greater than that of an adult. While children are in the most receptive time of their life to respond spiritually, teachers need to make the most of every opportunity they have to share salvation with their students.

Jesus is the role model for teachers when it comes to teaching for spiritual development. During His years of ministry He constantly referred to salvation. If He had applied the priority of teaching salvation only a few times a year there would be little reference to salvation in the gospels. However, this was not the case, instead, He constantly talked about how people could have a relationship with God. He came for the purpose of bringing salvation to mankind. “The Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 Jn. 4:14 NIV). Other passages such as Matthew 1:21, Luke 19:10, John 3:16-17 and 1 Timothy 1:15 are but a few that summarize the purpose of Christ’s coming for the salvation of humanity. Evangelism is a major concern of God, so much so, that it became the marching orders of the church along with discipleship as seen in the great commission.

When sharing the gospel with children, build the foundation, and then reinforce it regularly. Rarely is there “single-contact evangelism.” The Holy Spirit generally uses many messages and many instances to begin to draw a person (even a child) to Himself. We must be more concerned about the process of preparing children to receive and understand the gospel than we are about the point of response. . . .

Keep it simple, keep it accurate, and include it regularly. Let the Holy Spirit use your words.

Encourage them to trust in Christ. Tell children you will be glad to help them understand more, and if they would like to talk to you, you are available. Say this regularly. (Fowler 2004, 112-113)

Teachers are encouraged to share the gospel message frequently with their students so God can use the teacher's words to bring conviction to the heart of students and help them come to understand the truths of the gospel in a personal way.

The Scriptural Basis for Evangelism of Children

Sparkling with controversy, the subject of child conversion prompts debate and discussion. The issue is one of theology as well as methodology. It is one of faith as well as feeling, dogmas as well as response, crisis as well as process. It is at the core of our faith and is the root of true Christian education. (Clark, Brubaker and Zuck 1975, 399)

Matthew 18:1-14

For teachers wanting to know the mind of God, the Bible speaks specifically to the matter that children can be saved and they should be evangelized. Evidence for the salvation of children other than through scripture will be discussed later, but teachers must first be convinced from the Bible that children can and should be saved. If child evangelism is contrary to scripture all other evidence must be reconciled to the Word of God. Scripture is absolute truth, therefore, anything contrary to it, no matter how convincing it may seem, must accede to the Bible.

Matthew 18:1-14 is probably the central passage of scripture regarding children and their relationship to God.

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! 8 If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. 10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. 12 "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (Mt. 18:1-14 NIV)

To answer the disciple's question about who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven Jesus called a small child to use as an object lesson. This is a little child not a pre-teen. "‘Little child’ is paidion in Greek. It means a child under the age of seven" (Child Evangelism Fellowship 2005, 13). MacArthur says, "Paidion identifies a very young child, sometimes even an infant. This particular child was perhaps a toddler, just old enough to run to Jesus when He called him to Himself" (MacArthur 1988, 95). The argument against children being saved at times hinges on the idea that children cannot really understand salvation. The premise of this argument is that children need to understand salvation as would an adult. Verse 3 presents a different paradigm regarding salvation. The biblical perspective is that adults must come to Christ as a child not the reverse. Children typically

are dependant and are creatures of faith. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone making it difficult for adults that live independent and want to see proof because they tend to be skeptical. Trusting someone else goes against the independent nature of an adult.

Verse six reveals some critical information regarding whether children can be saved or not when it says, “anyone causes one of these little ones **who believe in me**” (Mt. 18:6 NIV). According to Acts 16:31 “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (NIV), belief in Christ is what is necessary for salvation. That would clearly indicate these little children can indeed be saved. This verse is talking about offending children, who are believers, or causing them to sin . Verse 10 refers to “their angels” caring for them. Other passages identify who angels protect and care for as believers, which would again demonstrate that children can be saved. “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them” (Ps. 34:7 NIV). “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14 NIV)? If angels are watching over these little children and protecting them and angels serve those who will inherit salvation it would seem pretty logical to argue then children must be able to inherit salvation.

According to verse 18 it’s not God’s will for children to be lost. The word “lost” is the same word as found in John 3:16 “perish”. God does not want the children to be lost and perish for eternity but rather that they come to place their faith in Christ for salvation. Logic would again insist that verse 18 means children can be saved. How could it be God’s will for something to occur that could not happen such as the salvation of children?

There are theologians that would not agree that Matthew 18:1-14 is speaking about children. For example, John MacArthur says regarding the child in verse 5,

This can only mean the one who spiritually becomes a little child, as described in verses 3-4. Jesus was not speaking of the toddler himself but was using him to represent the children of God. That physical child symbolized the spiritual child of God, who becomes childlike in his faith and who humbly accepts the gospel and is converted (v. 3). Such converted people are the "little ones who believe in Me," Jesus explained (v. 6). (MacArthur 1988, 102)

MaClaren comments on this passage,

Verses 5 and 6 set forth antithetically our duties to His little ones. He is not now speaking of the child who served as a living parable to answer the question, but of men who have made themselves like the child, as is plain from the emphatic 'one such child,' and from verse 6 ('which believe on Me'). (MaClaren 1978, 4)

Earlier in the section entitled, *The Bible Needs to be Interpreted Literally Within its Context*, under Assumptions for this Project, it was stated,

Apart from a literal interpretation of Scripture, the foundation for understanding spiritual life and maturity from the Bible and the means whereby growth occurs may differ producing different results. The common foundation of understanding Scripture in the way words are normally used is essential to work toward the same desired outcome.

The literal interpretation of Matthew 18 can clearly be understood without trying to spiritualize the content to mean something different from what it actually states. Literal interpretation means "the teaching of the Bible is to be accepted as straightforward, human communication to be taken in its natural sense" (McQuilkin 1992, 23). It does no damage to the text to interpret it literally and it correlates with other passages of scripture as will be seen.

While some may prefer to see the “children” of Matthew 18 as representing all believers other theologians understand the passage to be speaking specifically about children.

He gave a stern warning concerning any who might place a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in Him. (Interestingly little children can - and do - believe in Jesus!). . . Children are important to God. It may be God has entrusted the care of little children to a specific group of His angelic beings (their angels) who are in constant touch with the heavenly Father. . . . In order to demonstrate the importance God attaches to little children, the Lord gave the disciple an illustration. Suppose a man who owns 100 sheep suddenly discovers only 99 are present. Will he not leave them and search for the one until he finds it? In the same way God (your Father in heaven; cf. Matt. 18:10) is concerned about these little ones (cf. vv. 6, 10) and does not want to lose any of them. Great care must be exercised to avoid all offense. (Walvoord and Zuck 1983, 61-62)

Another theologian responds to Matthew 18:5-6 saying,

It seems to me that what He is doing in this section is making the evangelism of children a divine imperative. He gives top priority to winning the children to Christ. I commend anyone who is working with children today. There is nothing as important as this. . . . In these verses the Lord is putting a great emphasis upon children. (McGee 1983, 99)

Carefully reading the passage seems to indicate a literal interpretation of these verses speaks of children and God’s great care and concern for them. This interest and concern is demonstrated during the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels as well as the evidence that children can be saved and were saved in the early church according to the apostle Paul in his writings.

Mark 10:13-31

Another major teaching about the importance of children from Jesus to His disciples which also specifies that they can be saved is found in the book of Mark chapter 10.

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. (Mk. 10:13-16 NIV)

Similar truths to Matthew 18 find their way to the surface again in this text. First children should not be stopped from coming to the Savior. Verses 14 -15 seem very clear that children can be saved and in fact will be in heaven. The truth is stated again that children do not come to Christ as an adult or with the comprehension of an adult but rather adults must come as a child by simple faith in Christ.

Perhaps "The disciples thought, 'The child cannot come to the Master because he isn't like a man.' The blessed Saviour thinks differently and says, 'Don't say that the child can't come until he is like a man, but know that you cannot come until you are like the child!' There is no difficulty in the child becoming like you; the difficulty is that you are not like the child". (Charles Spurgeon) (Child Evangelism Fellowship 2005, 13)

Evangelism is not a matter of head knowledge but faith from the heart. This is not to say children should not understand the truths of the gospel. They do need to understand they are separated from God due to sin and Christ has paid the price through His substitutionary death and resurrection. This is a free gift from God to be received by the child. Teachers are urged to make the gospel clear and understandable for the children they teach, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The biblical foundation needs to be established first so teachers are convinced beyond any doubt that children can be saved as demonstrated in these scriptures.

The major teaching by Jesus to His disciples could easily be missed in this chapter. The question needs to be asked, why was Jesus so indignant with His disciples (v. 14)? They turned away the parents and children that were coming to Jesus for a blessing. The text does not indicate malice in the disciple's heart. Jesus did not teach a 30 minute lesson in a classroom but through daily experiences. This lesson continues to verse 31. The next event (vv. 17 - 22) is of a wealthy man who came to Jesus and asked how he could inherit eternal life? Jesus seems to quiz the man and then proceeds to show him his sin, which is necessary for gaining eternal life. After telling Jesus he kept the law Christ gave him a test based on the first two commands and the man utterly fails. The man leaves dejected. The perplexed disciples question Jesus. It would appear they thought this man to be a perfect candidate for salvation. As Jesus tries to explain (vv. 23-27), Peter interrupts with a question or comment and Jesus responds (vv. 28-30). The verse that ties the whole lesson together is 31 "But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mk. 10:31 NIV). The children whom the disciples turned away, possibly thinking they were the last to be saved, were actually in God's view the most likely. That's why Jesus was so disturbed with them for turning away the children. The disciples seemed to consider the wealthy man who came to Christ to be a prime candidate for salvation, as revealed in their discussion, yet he would not admit his need for the Savior, making it impossible to be saved. Jesus really is interested in the salvation of the children.

Teachers need to be careful this truth is not lost. The salvation of children is of vital importance in their ministry. Who knows where the child in class will go or become. This truth is illustrated by J. Vernon McGee,

A pastor of a Scottish church turned in his resignation years ago, and as he did so, the elders asked him why. “Well,” he replied, “for this past year I’ve had but one convert, wee Bobby Moffat.” Bobby Moffat was the man who opened up Africa to missionary work. It was the biggest year that preacher ever had! (McGee 1983, 99)

New Testament

The great commission recorded in the four gospels and the book of Acts commands believers to go with the gospel to all creatures. It does not specify adults, youth, or children, but rather to all creation. This command would include evangelism of children for they too need to hear of Christ. Apart from Christ they are lost in sin but Christ gave His life to be a ransom for them. After His resurrection Jesus met some of His disciples on the Sea of Galilee shore where He asked Peter, “do you truly love me more than these?” ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs’” (Jn. 21:15 NIV). Is there significance to the specific word “lambs” rather than “sheep” as used by Jesus in response to the next two questions of do you love me? Understanding the value Jesus placed on children as seen in the gospels it would be fair to say He intended Peter to feed the children as well as the adults.

Insight to evangelism of children can be gleaned from the writings of the apostle Paul. The audience in Ephesus and Colosse are clearly stated for the letters Paul sent them. Ephesians 1:1 “Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus” (NIV). “To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse” (Colossians 1:2 NIV). Both epistles are written to the Christians in these communities. In both letters Paul specifically addresses the children. “Children obey your

parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1 NIV). “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord” (Colossians 3:20 NIV). These verses seem to indicate child evangelism was prevalent in the early church.

Paul wrote to fathers in Ephesus saying, “do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4 NIV). Reflecting on an earlier discussion of 1 Corinthians 2:14 “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (NIV) indicates the command of Ephesians 6:4 is impossible unless the child can be saved. Apart from the Spirit of God within, the child cannot understand spiritual instruction. Proverbs 22:6 “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (NIV) would likewise be impossible if the child cannot comprehend spiritual truth apart from the indwelling Spirit of God. Since the Bible is God’s Word and it does not contradict itself the conclusion must be drawn that if children are to be taught the Bible and it can only be understood by those who are believers, children must be capable of being saved. The picture in John 15, of Christ, the true vine, providing the source whereby Christians, the branches, are capable of producing spiritual fruit that brings glory to God. This also confirms that children can be saved because Christ commands their obedience. Apart from being in Christ they would not have the power source to carry out this command.

In Acts 2:38 Peter was preaching, “repent and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (NIV). In the next verse he says this “promise is for you and your children” (NIV). Rather than excluding children Peter

specifically includes them in the promise of salvation which would indicate child evangelism was practiced in the New Testament church from the very beginning.

The qualifications of an elder in the church as Paul gave them to Titus included “a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient” (Titus 1:6 NIV). This again would reinforce the truth that children were evangelized in the early church. The leaders were to be men whose children had been taught scripture and applied it to their own lives by receiving Christ as Savior. These leaders were demonstrating by example what other believers were to do. Evangelism of children was to be a practice in the early church. A good example of a young man that came to know Christ as Savior by being taught the Word of God from the time he was an infant was young Timothy. “The concept of teaching Scripture in order to lead to salvation from an early age is sealed by 2 Timothy 3:15” (Fowler 2004, 126).

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14-17 NIV)

Timothy is a great example of how a young person can place their faith in Christ when properly taught the Bible. As Charles Spurgeon said, “A child of five, if properly instructed, can as readily believe and be regenerated as anyone” (Rohrer 1970, 67). Teachers are one of the agents God uses to properly guide children into a growing relationship with God through salvation and a growing maturity in Christ.

Other Reasons for Evangelism of Children

While biblical support is overwhelming for the evangelism of children, teachers can also be encouraged to engage in evangelism through statistics, quotes, testimonies and other logical reasoning. The following reasons for evangelism of children by their teacher merely reinforce the scriptural conclusions already established.

Response of Children to the Gospel

Over many decades surveys have shown repeatedly that the vast majority of conversions to Christianity occur in childhood. The validity of a single survey could be questioned as to its veracity but numerous surveys from different sources over an extended period of time help to solidify the results when they continue to express similarities. According to Florence Kee, professor of Christian education at Detroit Bible College, “96 per cent of all conversions take place in childhood, which proves that we must reach the children in their childhood, or a big majority of them will grow to adulthood, die and go into eternity LOST” (Kee 1950, 11).

George Eager quotes statistics from Lionel Hunt’s *Handbook of Children’s Evangelism* (Eager 1979, 3) saying 86 percent of people who place their faith in Christ for salvation, do so before reaching the age of fifteen and these statistics are confirmed in *Teaching Children Effectively, Level 1* (Child Evangelism Fellowship 2005, 16).

Researcher George Barna agrees “Evangelism is most effective among kids” he says, “current Barna study indicates that nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%) and two out of three born again

Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday” (Barna Oct 11, 2004). Following Barna’s research, mentioned earlier, where he found

based on a nationwide representative sampling of more than 4200 young people and adults, the survey data show that people from ages 5 through 13 have a 32% probability of accepting Christ as their savior. Young people from the ages of 14 through 18 have just a 4% likelihood of doing so, while adults (ages 19 through death) have only a 6% probability of making that choice. (Barna 1999)

Then Barna concludes by saying, “The study clearly notes, however, that the greatest evangelistic window currently available is among young children” (Barna 1999). Similar statistics are shared in *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Teaching* saying, I’ve read a statistic published by Campus Crusade for Christ which says that 85 percent of all believers trusted Jesus Christ before the age of 18” (Gangel and Hendricks 1988, 105).

Teachers willing to share the gospel with children will find them open to the gospel and willing to respond to the love of Christ. Children do not have the same built up resistance to the gospel many adults experience. “Educators agree . . . that most decisions for Christ are made in childhood rather than in the later teen and adult years” (Choun and Lawson 1998, 116). Therefore, strong effort needs to be focused on the evangelism of children by teachers. These statistical surveys merely reflect the reality of why Christ said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Lk. 18:16 NIV).

“The hard facts of research give resounding evidence; surveys concerning the age at which people become Christians are revealing and remarkably consistent” (Benke and Bryan 1977) with the statistics reported earlier by Lionel Hunt that 86 percent of all conversions to Christianity occur in childhood by age 14.

Dr Frank R. Mann, former Executive Director of Child Evangelism Fellowship, conducted surveys for over a two-year period encompassing Youth for Christ meetings, city revival meetings, church evangelistic meetings, and special ministries sponsored by CEF in which various age groups were counseled. The results strongly confirmed the distribution stated above.

Other surveys provide confirmation. In the *Child Evangelism Fellowship Chronicle*, in an article dated December 14, 1974, evangelist Harry Trover stated that he had polled literally hundreds of audiences over the previous 17 years of his ministry in all parts of the nation. The conclusion from his research was that the probability of becoming a Christian beyond the age of 21 is very slim. Typical poll results showed, on a scale of one to 100, that approximately 95% of first-time decisions for Christ are made before the age of 21. . . .

A census of over 1200 individuals by the well-known Baptist minister, George W. Truett, revealed that 96% were saved by the age of 21.

The Christian Education Research Division of Scripture Press Ministries provides some additional insight, indicating that most of those who receive Christ before 21 probably do so as children. (“Research Report on Sunday School Teachers,” 1971). Scripture Press surveyed 1,417 teachers from 116 churches. The survey revealed that more decisions were being made in elementary classes than in any other group. (Benke and Bryan)

The church thinking strategically about reaching the world for Christ will focus an emphasis on the evangelism of children. Teachers of children must intentionally concentrate on sharing the gospel with their students. This may be a new paradigm for some teachers, but essential if progress is to be made in evangelism of the world and students are to become mature spiritually. Frank Coleman shares how many still do not believe children can be saved or doubt the authenticity of their salvation. Then he comments, “Were we to see removed from the active membership of the Christian church those who so received Christ in childhood, we should soon see the closing of many a church door” (Coleman 1973, 9). Teachers of children need to be grateful for the fabulous opportunity God has given them to serve in the most fruitful mission field of the world.

Teachers need to look at the field around them in their class. Like Jesus said, “They are ripe for harvest” (Jn. 4:35 NIV). This is the golden age for evangelism.

Historical Response of Children to the Gospel

For a wise person, observing history teaches lessons that help avoid the mistakes others made and establishes convictions of what is true and effective. History speaks to the issue of children and their response to the gospel both through examples of Christians saved as children and statements made by respected leaders of the church. Beyond scripture one of the strongest evidence of the validity of childhood salvation would be the life testimony of Christian’s who were saved young and lived their life for God. The following list of Christian leaders and the age at which they were saved was compiled from the following sources (Kee 1950, 12), (Coleman 1973, 10), (Benke and Bryan 1977), (Eager 1979, 5) and (Doherty 1996, 23-29)

Polycarp - 9
 Matthew Henry - 11
 Jonathan Edwards - 7
 Isaac Watts - 9
 Richard Baxter - 6
 Count Zinzendorf - 4
 Charles H. Spurgeon - shortly after 12
 Henrietta Mears - 5
 Ruth Graham - 5
 Corrie ten Boom - 5
 Leighton Ford - 5
 Jim Elliot - 6
 Dr. Armin Mauerhofer - 10

Heaven will reveal scores of other leaders that made a great impact upon the world that were saved as children.

Many prominent Christian leaders have spoken strongly for the salvation of children, encouraging their generation to reach the children for Christ while urging them with the importance of the task.

Childhood is a precious, priceless time in the life of every person. These are the plastic years of one's life when, like clay in a potter's hand, a life can be molded and fashioned to become later a life of beauty and usefulness. - Clarence Benson (Kee 1950, 11)

Sometimes the conversion of an important worldly man in the community is thought of as a great proof of God's divine grace, but that worldly man, fettered by lifelong sinful habits, will probably do far less for Christ than a boy of twelve who is converted and consecrates his life to the Savior. . . . There is no good reason to doubt the fact of the importance of conversion in childhood. - Augustus Strong (Clark, Brubaker and Zuck 1986, 414)

Every child that is old enough to sin, is old enough to be conscious of sin; and the consciousness of sin always prepares the way for the Saviour. And when a Saviour is presented, the child seizes hold of the idea, just as the man does. A drowning child will struggle for life, will catch at straws even, just as the man will. It would be a strange thing if, when so large a proportion of children die in infancy or childhood, the plan of salvation were so beyond their apprehension that they could not lay hold of it. - Edward Payson Hammond (Anthony 2006, 26)

If Christendom is to be helped, one must begin with the children. - Martin Luther (Clark, Brubaker and Zuck 1986, 414)

It is almost the easiest thing in the world to lead a child from five to ten years of age to a definite acceptance of Christ. . . . The younger the children are when you seek to lead them to make an actual acceptance of Christ, the easier the work will be, and the more satisfactory. - R.A. Torrey (Eager 1973, 4)

If I deal with twenty adults, I am usually able to lead one to Christ. But if I deal with twenty children, nineteen of them will accept Christ. . . . If I had my life to live over, I would devote it to child evangelism. - Dr. Paul Rood (Eager 1973, 11)

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. Never go to your class with the thought that children cannot comprehend. . . . I hold that children are capable of salvation. - Charles H. Spurgeon (Spurgeon n.d., 100)

The research reinforces one simple but profound truth over and over again: If you want to have a lasting influence upon the world, you must invest in people's lives; and if you want to maximize that investment, then you must invest in those people while they are young. The research simply crystallizes lessons that we can observe through history and personal experience. In other words, if you connect with children today, effectively teaching them biblical principles and foundations from the start, then you will see the fruit of that effort blossom for decades to come. The more diligent we are in these efforts, the more prodigious a harvest we will reap. - George Barna (Barna 2003, 42)

I believe myself that if children are old enough to come to Sunday school, they are old enough to come to Calvary. Let us make up our minds, God helping us, to win children for Christ. - D.L. Moody (Benke and Bryan 1977)

D.L. Moody the famous American evangelist, . . . 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. (Doherty 1996, 56)

As teachers share the gospel with children and watch God work out His plan of salvation in their heart they will be able to share similar stories as a witness to what God can do in the life of a child. Testimonies of this generation of teachers will guide the next to faithfully share the gospel with the children of their generation. Depending on how God chooses to work in the nation, statistics may vary but they will more than likely continue to demonstrate the vast majority of conversions to Christianity are made in childhood.

Additional Reasons for Evangelism of Children

Glory goes to God for every person who responds to His call for salvation and the angels rejoice in heaven. Teachers bring glory to God through evangelism of children under their influence. These children have the potential of a life before them to serve the Lord and in turn bring glory to God for years to come. Normally a child is not just slipping into the gates of heaven moments following their conversion where they have no further opportunity to bear fruit for the glory of God. Gypsy Smith once said, “Save a man and you save a unit; save a boy and you save a multiplication table” (Doherty 1996, 54). The early years of life are the moments when the life is shaped for what it will be.

Research regarding all facets of moral and spiritual development - whether related to worldview, beliefs or behavior - shows that such development starts as early as age two. The process then progresses rather quickly. Social scientists have known for years that the moral foundations of children are generally determined by the time the individual reaches age nine. Our research confirms a parallel outcome in the spiritual dimension: By age nine, most children have their spiritual moorings in place. (Barna 2003, 47)

The statistics pertaining to the spiritual life and experience of children are rather alarming. Given the trends indicating that your spiritual condition by the age of 13 is a strong predictor of your spiritual profile as an adult, it seems clear that a deep and robust spiritual life demands intentional and strategic spiritual nurturing during the early childhood and adolescent years. (Barna 2003, 41)

These statistics should cause teachers to realize their ministry is of utmost importance in the life of each student. The church cannot wait until children are older to shape their lives around Christ and biblical principles. Teachers must not wait or it will be too late for the child’s destiny and fate will be set in concrete with little possibility of it changing. What Paul told the Corinthians is so true for children, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2 KJV). To reach a child while they are

young is to reach a life for Christ. Others have known this concept of the development and early formation of a person as illustrated in these two articles.

Communists have no misgivings about starting the training of their children too soon. The Reds are beginning the formal training of children at the age of two. The communists know that small children can be taught much earlier than we teach them here in the West. The Reds are seeking to insure that the coming generation of Chinese will know nothing but Communism. From the Broadcaster

A Red leader said, “We can mould a child of 5 or 6 into anything we wish; at the age of 8 or 9 we have to bend him; at the age of 16 or 17, we must break him, and thereafter one may say, ‘Only the grave can correct a hunchback.’” from Newsweek (*Child Evangelism Fellowship Chronicle* [Grand Rapids], December 1974)

An antidote from D.L. Moody illustrates his strong belief in the concept that reaching children while they are young is critical. These young lives have so much more to give in service to the Lord than one that is older.

The great evangelist, D.L. Moody, was returning from a meeting one day when someone asked, “How many souls were saved at the meeting?”

“Two and a half,” said Mr. Moody.

“Two adults and one child?” inquired the man.

“No,” replied Mr. Moody, “two children and one adult!”

This man of God, one of the greatest evangelists of all time, saw the importance of winning children to Christ. When a child is saved, not only is a soul saved, but a life as well. (Eager 1973, 3-4)

Children are impressionable and their lives are being shaped for what they will become which puts tremendous urgency upon believers to evangelize and develop the spiritual life of these young people. The opportunity will all too quickly vanish and the children will be

set in the path they will follow for life. Teachers of children must act or the opportunity will be lost forever.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6 NIV). Too often people want to focus on the later part of the verse as a promise. This is not a promise it’s a proverb or probability and the focus needs to be on the first half. How foolish for Christian teachers or leaders to express hesitancy to evangelize children when they are open to spiritual truth.

Some would say that early childhood conversion is not good, even dangerous. A Bible college youth ministry professor once said to me, “I instruct my students not to present the gospel to children. I think it’s wrong to force kids to accept Christ before the age of twelve or thirteen.” I thought he was kidding. But then the leading editor of a Christian publishing company chimed in, “Our research has discovered that many of the kids who accept Christ at a young age need to have a renewal or recommitment during their teen years.”

My response is to ask any group of Christians how many of them believed in Christ before the age ten. Usually, a majority of hands will go up. To take away this window of opportunity from a child seems unconscionable to me. (Anthony 2006, 133)

Not only is it unconscionable to fail to share the gospel with children, but it is believing a deception perpetrated by the devil. Christ said, “Let the little children come to me” (Matthew 19:14). The forces of evil would love to have Christians believe children should not be evangelized for then the influences of the world would have freedom to shape and mold little ones until they become hardened to spiritual truth. As the twig is bent so grows the tree. The direction of training in a child will largely determine the direction of their life.

Reflecting on John 9:4, “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (NIV), there seems to be two clear

applications for teachers of children. First, teachers must share the gospel and then nurture children until Christ returns, for then there will no longer be opportunity to reach and teach children for Christ. Second, teachers need to engage in this ministry while the child is still able to learn the truths of the Word of God. There is no guarantee of tomorrow even for a child. If death knocks on the door of a child they will no longer have opportunity to hear and respond to the claims of Christ. Before night falls and it is too late teachers need to make the most of the opportunities God provides.

Adults saved later in life have shared the common expression of wishing they had been saved as a child due to so many wasted years. A child that grows up apart from God grows up in sin. As sin takes hold of the life the bondage becomes stronger and harder to break free from in order to experience the liberty and freedom in Christ from sin. It is far better to be saved from sin than to be saved out of sin. A man saved as a child who never became addicted to drugs has freedom from the allure drugs often holds over a person who may not have used them for years but always lives with the internal yearning for them. A person saved as a child has a rich spiritual heritage for which to praise God. Teachers who introduce their students to Christ with a strong encouragement to receive Him as savior can be very instrumental in enabling them to mature to a level of spiritual development so much deeper and faster than a child without such a mentor. So many heart aches both for the student and their parents can be avoided when given proper guidance into a spiritual walk with Christ.

The ages of 4 to 14 are the golden hour of evangelism. Research, anecdotal evidence and even common sense all clearly identify the childhood years as a window of opportunity for the greatest life-saving impact for eternity. For a large

majority of people, if they do not respond to the gospel as a child, they likely will not do so later in life. (Fowler2004, 118)

Objections to Evangelism of Children

The objection of adults manipulating children needs to be considered from two perspectives. First, the ministry of evangelism must begin with God who is “the author, and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2 NIV). This is not a matter of manipulating children to earn points for the teacher. Lois LeBar quotes Amy Carmichael saying, “There is nothing more fatal than to hustle souls” (LeBar 1952, 164) There have been those working with children that have not made salvation clear and left the impression of manipulating children to make a profession of faith. This is wrong and dangerous. It is wrong in that evangelism is not of human effort. Philippians 1:6 says, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (NIV). God is the one who begins and carries out the work of salvation. If God is not the one drawing the child they will not be saved. “We cannot force children to accept Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can bring conviction” (McDaniel 1981, 48). Secondly, manipulating children to make a profession of faith is dangerous because they are responding to please the teacher or from emotional duress rather than responding due to conviction by the Holy Spirit. This wrong response will not produce genuine salvation. In such an incident a child may leave with a false sense of security thinking they are saved when in fact they are not. At times people tend to overreact and throw the baby out with the bath water. Overreacting regarding evangelism is to claim children should not be evangelized because someone engaged in inappropriate actions.

Another reason adult believers could object to the salvation of children may be due to ignorance regarding the teaching of scripture. Being too young or unable to understand salvation have been addressed in a previous section and will be addressed again in the discussion of what salvation really is all about. Also addressed earlier is the matter that since children are so open and impressionable, salvation should not be presented until they are older and more capable of making rational decisions. This may sound logical at first, but as expressed earlier this is a very devastating kind of logic, for the enemy will not wait to make his impressions upon their vulnerable souls.

If we have the opportunity to leave a lasting impression on children, because they are more open, then we must do all we can to reach them with the Gospel. The formative years pass very quickly. This consideration puts urgency into our child evangelism. If we wait, many of those who are children today will have left behind those impressionable years. (Haaijer 1987, 7)

Similarly Coleman notes that, “No child can grow up unbiased in our day. If children are not biased strongly for Christ, they will be biased as strongly against Him” (Coleman 1973, 9). The arguments of the world can sound persuasive but teachers must not be deceived by them.

At what age should a child be evangelized? The scriptural answer to that was, very young, for the word Jesus used in Matthew 18 was “paidion” a very young child as discussed earlier. It would be highly unlikely that Jesus took a ten or twelve year old up in his arms. Spurgeon is quoted saying, “When a child is old enough to sin knowingly, he is old enough to believe savingly” (Kee 1950, 11). The Bible does not place an age on when a person can believe in Christ and receive Him as their savior.

The age at which a declaration of faith is possible and to be expected is a relative matter. It is almost as difficult to assert that a given age is the proper one for a declaration of faith as it is to declare a particular age is the correct one at which to be married. (Clark, Brubaker and Zuck 1986, 405)

While the age really does vary a great deal on the child one truth can be counted on. “The best time to bring a child to the Lord is when he is prepared by the Holy Spirit and ready” (Townes 1978, 45). This is not skirting the issue. A teacher wanting to have spiritual influence on a child must be walking with the Spirit of God. This is spiritual ministry and it is not done in the flesh. That means the teacher is in direct connection with God praying for students and their salvation. Through His Holy Spirit, He will help the teacher to be sensitive to the need of the child and when the child is ready to respond to Christ. The background of the child will make a huge difference as to when they will be ready to receive Christ as savior. A child from a Christian home with parents praying for the child’s salvation and who teach the child at home as well as in church will more than likely be ready earlier than a child that does not have those spiritual advantages.

For a teacher with serious concern about the issue of age it could be that little has been written that would really help resolve the matter. It is important to remember the Bible does not put an age on when a person can be saved. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13 NIV) would be a good example of the all inclusive nature of the call of God to salvation. Ruth Beechick writing about Christian teachers of children in the first through third grade says they “have the privilege of being where most of the ‘births’ can happen. With good teaching, the general pattern is that a few children are saved at preschool ages, most during primary years, and a few in the junior years”

(Beechick 1980, 17-18). The reference to primary years would be grades one through three and junior years would encompass grades four through six. Regardless of the age, it is essential that the truths of the gospel be presented clearly and accurately.

When a child knows the difference between right and wrong and chooses to commit sin consciously and deliberately, he is responsible for it before God. Since this awareness in a child's life comes at a moment known only to God, we should present the simple Gospel message to even young children and invite them to come to Christ as the Holy Spirit leads. (Child Evangelism Fellowship 2005, 15)

All Christian teachers of elementary age children need to carefully and prayerfully share the gospel clearly and regularly to their students so at the opportune time the child can respond to God's gift of salvation.

The age of accountability often arises. This would be the age some would claim the child becomes responsible for his sin. The Bible does not mention the age of accountability directly or indirectly and the only basis for it is a logical inference. There is a danger in setting an arbitrary age, what if there is no age of accountability or if it is arbitrarily set at twelve and God sets it at six? Therefore, the subject must be dealt with care and openness to avoid the potential of error. It would be wise to err on the side of caution and evangelize as early as possible. Some churches look at the age of twelve to be the time when children become accountable for their actions toward God. However, 2 Chronicles 36: says, "Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the Lord" (NASB). This sounds like the child knew and was responsible for his actions at the age of eight.

From central texts like Romans 14:12, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" the emphasis falls more on accountability than a specific age. The basis of

the age of accountability derives its source in a fundamental belief of the Bible that children are born sinners and yet valued greatly by God.

If we accept the biblical teaching of original sin as related to an Adamic nature, we infer that the infant is born in sin, needs divine grace, and is ultimately accountable for that sin. The observation that men are sinners by nature as well as by choice throws a burden upon an early concern for infants. (Clark, Brubaker and Zuck 1986, 404)

This dilemma led advocates of infant baptism to pronounce the child safe due to a covenant relationship with parents. However, this again is an argument from silence with no scriptural support. Some would sight the high value Jesus placed on children as a logical argument for his protection of those not yet able to consciously place their faith in Christ. “Given the strong value that Jesus holds for children, one must conclude that infants and young children are not to be held accountable for their original sin until they are mentally capable of making a decision of faith in Jesus Christ” (Anthony 2006, 176). This is a logical inference but still does not give a specific biblical answer to the question.

While the Bible does not clearly address the issue of “age of accountability” it does give a glimpse into the heart of God. The value God places on children is seen in the Gospels and another passage in 2 Samuel 12. This later passage relates the story of David’s infant son who was deathly ill. David fasted and prayed for the child. When the baby died, David servants couldn’t understand why he no longer fasted and prayed but got up and ate. David responded, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:22-23 NIV). The last part of that answer relates to the matter of

“age of accountability.” Notice David said he would go to the child. That indicates the infant is in heaven. This biblical passage helps support the concept that there is validity to the concept that prior to a certain age of comprehension a child is cared for by God. The conclusion of this subject for teachers of elementary children, since the age of accountability is unknown, is to actively share the gospel carefully with students since there is no conclusive evidence of when a child is safe. When death occurs parents or teacher can rely on God to care for the child if they are young and have not received Christ as savior.

To counteract the pull of sin, children need their parents’ companionship during the crucial years of childhood. They need love and security. They need care and discipline. They need the influence of godly parents. But they often lack Christian conversation, Christian literature, and Christian teaching in their homes and so become dependent upon the church to tell them of Christ. (Towns 1978, 44)

CHAPTER 8

COMMUNICATING THE NEW BIRTH

The Essence of Salvation

The purpose of this section is not to delve into all the theological aspects of the doctrine of soteriology, but to provide Christian teachers a framework from which they can understand and communicate clearly and accurately the simple truths of God's plan of salvation to their students. Once the framework is completed teachers will see the overall scope which should enable them to communicate in ways children will comprehend and more rapidly respond with understanding. It is essential teachers clearly know the truths of salvation so they can accurately portray them to their class. Clear comprehension will enable teachers to share more readily and with confidence, resulting in more children being saved through their ministry.

The great command expressed in the great commission

The goal of believers is expressed in the great commandment which is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt. 22:37-40 NIV). In a practical sense these two commands are lived out through the great commission.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt. 28:19–20 NIV). This becomes the marching orders for teachers or the focus for them to use in teaching their class both evangelism and discipleship. Herein is the mandate to evangelize students and teach them to obey the Word of God. Focusing on evangelism, teachers are reminded God is the one who begins and completes the work of evangelism. This is not done via human effort but by the will of God. This truth has already been examined through Hebrews 12:2 and Philippians 1:6.

People created in God’s image

Prior to understanding the gospel, many children today may need teaching about God to understand who He is. American children are increasingly growing up in a more secular society than a Christian one compared to a couple generations ago. As a result many children do not know who God is so teachers need to begin at the very beginning. Some truths about God teachers may want to include are: He is creator of the universe, He loves them, and He is holy or without sin and perfect in every way. This God is a trinity, one God in three persons. In the beginning when He created the world, on the sixth day He made man. When God created Adam He then placed him in the Garden of Eden. Upon placing him and Eve in the garden God gave them one command. God gave them free-will the ability to choose. Apart from free-will they would have been no more than robots or machines. With free-will they could choose to love and obey God. The ability to choose good logically included the opposite, the ability to do evil. The command of God for

Adam was, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17 NASB). The consequence of disobedience was spelled out very clearly, “for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

God created people unique as it says in Genesis, “Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness. . . .So God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26-27). This was not a physical likeness but in another way. One way in which man was created in the image of God is that humans are created to be triune beings. While there are numerous ways in which humans could be divided, Paul speaks of the trinity of man saying, “May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless” (1 Thess. 5:23 NIV).

Death as separation

Death means “separation,” which was the consequence pronounced upon Adam if he disobeyed. Genesis 3 records that fateful event when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sin entered the human race. We know Adam did not die “that day” physically for Genesis 5:5 records that he lived 930 years and then died physically. The physical dying process may have started that day but did not consummate that day. If the soul describes the invisible entity of humans that enables them to relate horizontally, with the ability to feel emotions and the ability to reason and think, we know that aspect of Adam and Eve did not die the day they disobeyed. The record tells how they felt shame and hid from God. Their soul did not die that day. The spirit in this case is described as the ability to love and

worship God on a vertical level. The death that occurred that day in the Garden of Eden was spiritual death, which they passed on to their children and each successive generation since has been born spiritually dead. That death separated Adam and all future generations from a holy and perfect God. Humans are born with the potential of being a three sided triangle but one side is missing due to that spiritual death.

The greatest problem facing the human race is that everyone is born in the state of separation from God due to sin. Humans pass along the sin nature to their children so all are born sinners. This is confirmed by scriptures like Colossians 2:13, Romans 5:12 and Ephesians 2:1-3. The sin nature in people is obvious in that parents do not have to instruct their children how to lie, cheat, steal, be jealous or use foul language and yet all children know how to do these things like it is a natural part of life. It is part of the natural person who does not know Christ as savior. Not only do people inherit a sin nature but each one also willfully sins as evident in life and through scriptures like Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:10 or Ecclesiastes 7:20. Mankind faces a dilemma being separated from God by sin and no possible way to remove that sin. The consequence is reiterated in Romans 6:23 “The wages of sin is death” (NIV).

God’s solution – a gift

In His love and mercy God stepped into the picture and provided the solution for humanities sin. From the very beginning God promised a Messiah that would deliver people and solve their crisis of being separated from God by sin. Back in the Garden of Eden God promised a Messiah (Genesis 3:15). In Christ, the Son of God, that Messiah

came and brought the solution needed as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (NIV). 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 spells out the good news of salvation being in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This good news of salvation is described in Romans 6:23 as a free gift. Ephesians 2:8-9 speaks of this salvation as being something people cannot earn through good works but rather it is a free gift from God. A similar passage is found in Titus 3:5. Salvation is God’s wonderful gift to mankind. Christ died a substitutionary death taking all the sin of the world upon Himself so people could have their sins forgiven. Essentially salvation is a free gift.

Appropriation of the gift

People receive a gift offered to them by taking it. To work for something would make it no longer a gift but a reward they earned. The gift of salvation is available to all people but must be appropriated by the individual to be owned or possessed by that person. A Christmas present under the tree means it is intended for the individual whose name is on it and yet it has to be taken to become practically theirs. Understanding the gift belongs to the person whose name is on it is insufficient. Real belief that it belongs to the recipient means the recipient will receive it. Belief that Christ died for a persons sin is a mental assent to the fact but the demonstration of the belief is when they receive God’s gift of Jesus Christ as savior. To receive the gift is to appropriate it personally. John 1:12 describes this act in relation to salvation by saying, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (NIV). When a

person really believes what Christ did for them and is willing to trust Christ for salvation they will act on that belief by receiving Christ as their savior. A person is able to receive by faith the gift of salvation purely by the mercy and grace of God.

What a person receives not what they give

Being religious and attending church faithfully will not provide salvation or Nicodemus would not have been told to be born again by Jesus in John 3. Education, even having a seminary degree, is not sufficient for salvation, or Paul would certainly have been saved before meeting Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. Reformation or turning over a new leaf is not salvation nor is giving one's heart to Christ. Although the terminology "give your heart to Jesus" is frequently employed regarding salvation it has nothing to do with conversion. Salvation has nothing to do with a person giving anything, including control of their life, to Christ. Salvation has everything to do with God giving something to people. To be born again is to receive new life. When a person places their faith in Christ and receives His great gift of salvation they are born spiritually. They are born into the family of God. John 3:6 says, "Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (NIV). At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit creates new life, spiritual life within the individual. The new life will live eternally. This new life has power to create new life. Good works or anything else added to faith in Christ lacks power and it's that power that is essential for sins to be forgiven. Nothing but God has the power to create the new spiritual life that will live for eternity.

Birth is an event not a process

“The new birth - an instantaneous act of God - not a process” (Ohrstrom, Tipp and Cummins 1966, 134) is the sub-title given to a chapter in this book. Sometimes this approach to salvation is “referred to as ‘crisis’ evangelism due to its emphasis on pointing to a particular crisis in the life of children that precipitated a decision to give their life to Christ. This dramatic moment serves as a turning point from their life of waywardness to one of the regenerated renewal” (Anthony 2006, 27). This at least is the perspective from people that do not hold to the new birth experience as an event and evangelism of children as presented here. People actively involved in the evangelism of children rarely refer to this approach to salvation as a crisis experience. Salvation is a spiritual event, actually the first step in a life-long spiritual journey. The scriptural analogy of this spiritual birth to physical birth would indicate it is an event necessary for further growth to transpire.

Salvation is like a light bulb; it is either on or off. The lights may gradually become brighter or dimmer, but there is a point when they are turned on. So it is with salvation. Faith may gradually grow stronger, but the exercise of faith in which a person is saved is always instantaneous. (Towns 1993, 523)

Sola fide – faith alone

No good works are involved in God’s plan of salvation. His plan is to offer a free gift to all who will receive it. That gift is salvation through Christ which provides eternal life, the indwelling Holy Spirit, spiritual life which provides the capacity to understand spiritual truth, and adoption into the family of God. Some may question about baptism which is an outward expression of what God has done internally. Baptism is not required for salvation

but encouraged for obedience. A little more controversial aspect relates to repentance. Is it required for salvation?

Making this topic concise is difficult due to the nature of the subject but it needs to be expressed. It is widely accepted that repent means to change one's mind. Several theologians weigh in on the subject to bring clarification as to its connection with salvation.

Neither Calvin nor Luther treated repentance as a condition for eternal salvation. Both stood firmly for the great Reformation insight expressed in the words *sola fide* - "faith alone." No other position is biblical or truly evangelical. Faith alone (not repentance and faith) is the sole condition for justification and eternal life. . . . There can be no compromise on this point if we wish to preserve and to proclaim the biblical truth of *sola fide*. To make repentance a condition for eternal salvation is nothing less than a regression toward Roman Catholic dogma. . . . Simply put, we may say this: the call to faith represents the call to eternal salvation. The call to repentance is the call to enter into harmonious relations with God. (Hodges 1989, 144-145)

Hodges takes a pretty hard view that requiring repentance of sin is parallel to the doctrine of penance. His point of *sola fide* is critical in considering the whole doctrine of salvation. He does crack open a door to be explored more in his last sentence. Paul Enns in the *Moody Handbook of Theology* refers to numerous passages and suggests that the terms repentance toward God and faith in God are synonymous (Enns 1989, 96). Regarding repentance Cambron says, "To many people it means to turn away from their sins, but if that were so, this would be *reformation*. Repentance is not doing something, as an act, for no man is saved because he gives up something. A man can turn away from his sins and still not be a Christian" (Cambron 1954, 188).

Lewis Sperry Chafer discusses the one condition of salvation and lists numerous erroneous conditions people place on salvation. The sixth one is repentance of which he says, “It is an error to require repentance as a preliminary act preceding and separate from believing” (Chafer 1917, 48). He continues to name 115 passages where believe is the only condition of salvation where repentance is not mentioned. He goes on to say, “The good news of the Gospel does not invite men to any sorrow whatsoever, or to works of repentance alone: it invites them to find immediate ‘joy and peace in believing’” (Chafer 1917, 50).

While some see repentance as a change of mind regarding sin, Evans and Ryrie both see repentance as “to change their minds and the views regarding Christ” (Evans 1974, 140). This definition of repentance throws a different light on the subject of repentance. While it could seem to some teachers this is a matter of splitting hairs, the subject really does have significant impact. *Sola fide* is a critical concept to be guarded closely. Improper use of repentance leads to beliefs such as “lordship salvation” and before long all the security of the believer in Christ is based on his ability to continue in the faith. Salvation then is reduced to works orientation. One of the strongest arguments Ryrie uses to oppose requiring repentance of sin as a prerequisite for salvation is from the Gospel of John. He notes that there is no reference to repent in any form in this book and yet the whole book is written that people would know how to receive this great gift. He concludes a chapter on this subject saying, “Is repentance a condition for receiving eternal life? Yes, if it is repentance or changing one’s mind about Jesus Christ. No, if it means to

be sorry for sin or even to resolve to turn from sin, for these things will not save”

(Ryrie 1989, 99). Another author with a similar view says,

Repentance is not confessing a list of sins or merely feeling remorse over them. It is changing one's mind or direction - the literal meaning. In fact, we would understand Scripture more clearly if we would read “change your mind and direction” every time we read in the Scriptures the word “repent.” . . . Suppose someone said, “I believe in Jesus as my Savior, but I'll keep depending on my own way to get my sins forgiven and to get to heaven.” There is no repentance - no change of mind! How should we describe repentance? Repentance (and therefore saving faith) is a decision - a change of mind - to no longer trust in yourself for salvation but to trust solely in Christ's death on the cross. Saving faith involves a decision - repentance. You see, there is active trust. (Fowler 2004, 109)

Conclusion

Teachers need to be fully convinced that the only thing that has power to remove the sin, that separates a person from God, and give them new life, is to receive Christ as Savior. Giving God something is not salvation. Turning away from something is not salvation. The only thing that can save a person is receiving new life by placing one's faith in Christ and receiving His phenomenal gift of salvation.

Counseling for Salvation

Preliminary Considerations

No greater joy exists for a teacher than to sit with a child and point them to the savior. Watching God work in the life of a child and seeing them respond to His love by receiving the wonderful gift of salvation brings great joy to counselors. Teachers need to have a solid grip on the counseling procedure so they can flex with the situation in which they find themselves. Perfection is not required before starting. Teachers should present the

gospel and look for opportunities to evangelize their students. This is not physical work but spiritual ministry. God will be present and lead throughout the entire event. Teachers have the wonderful experience of observing God at work in the life of the child as well as provide all the insight the teacher needs for the occasion. The more a teacher uses the skills in leading a child to Christ the more proficient they will become. The inherent danger is to become self-reliant and forget this is spiritual ministry in which God must be central. Therefore, “at every step in leading a child to Christ, pray for, look for, and expect the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, reveal the truth of the Gospel, and to illumine the child’s mind so he can grasp the saving truth” (Overholtzer 1971, 16).

Flexibility will be helpful for teachers when presenting the gospel as circumstances will vary. Often teachers will present the gospel in a lesson with an invitation for children to respond who are ready to receive Christ as their savior. The presentation of the gospel when counseling a child, following a presentation of the plan of salvation in a lesson, would require less explanation over a circumstance where the teacher may be talking with a child in a less formal setting. A prepared teacher will be able to adapt appropriately. Depending on the individual and their background knowledge of the subject a teacher may be able to ask more questions drawing out answers from the student. This is beneficial because it enables the teacher to understand better of the child’s comprehension of the matter of salvation. While faith is the essential ingredient to salvation, it is not blind faith. The child should have a comprehension of what sin is and their need for a savior. The child needs to understand what Christ has done on their behalf, to pay for their sin, by

dying and coming back to life. The child needs to be ready by faith to trust Christ and Christ alone for their eternal salvation.

The Bible should always be used when presenting the gospel so the child unquestionably understands this is not just what the teacher says but indeed is what God says. It is helpful for the teacher to mark verses to be used so they can be located without delay. Highlighting the verse on the page of the Bible is very beneficial as well as marking the location of the page. Teachers will want to take caution to use an appropriate highlighter so as not to ruin an expensive Bible with a cheap pen. Careful planning prior to marking verses is helpful. Only a portion of some verses may be sufficient. A visual aid is often helpful when dealing with children. Teachers may want to use a wordless book to visualize the gospel as they share it with students. There are numerous objects using the same colors as the wordless book from bracelets to soccer balls and umbrellas. Many of these objects and wordless books can be secured through Child Evangelism Fellowship offices. Other tools such as flipper flappers and evangel cubes can also be used and often follow the same format only using simple pictures rather than just colors.

The following presentation of the gospel for children will use the wordless book colors in order to make it easier for a teacher to use with one of these tools. The presentation can easily be adapted to use with any of these visual aids or to be presented without the use of a visual. When dealing with the area of sin it is helpful to use the term “dark” rather than “black” as this may be less offensive to some people. Theologically it is more accurate to tell a child they live in the darkness of sin than their heart is black with sin. The colors of a wordless book are black (dark), red, white (clean), and gold with a green cover. In

keeping with accuracy it is helpful to form the habit of referring to the white page as the clean page. In this spiritual ministry teachers need to be bold for God by stepping out in faith and doing what God has commanded and yet teachers need to take these steps responsibly. There is great responsibility in being accurate because the teacher is standing before their student representing God. Teachers need to prepare well so they can accurately represent God.

In its essence, the response to the gospel is one of faith. In fact, if a child's response to the gospel is not faith, then the child is not yet saved! Children's ministry is full of formulas for the plan of salvation. Each of them is well intentioned. However, the Bible doesn't give us a formula. The Bible doesn't say there are four steps, or ABCs or any other recipe. Formulas are often helpful to the new presenter, but they can be dangerous to a child: They can lead to an intellectual response (going through the steps), not a heart response. Children, and everyone else, are saved by God's grace through faith. . . .As presenters we have a responsibility to be as clear and biblically accurate as possible. We will confuse and mislead far fewer children if we are. (Fowler2004, 106-107)

Practical Presentation

Prior to counseling, a wise teacher will inquire as to what the child wants to do. Asking why the child responded to an invitation or what the student wishes to talk about with the teacher will ensure the teacher is counseling for the proper reason. At times, even with an excellent invitation, children may respond for the wrong reason. Therefore, teachers will want to be certain the child is seeking to receive Christ as savior. The child may or may not be able to verbalize what they want to do. The teacher may need wisdom from God to determine how to explore the heart of the child. Care needs to be given to asking open ended questions with the intent of discovering why the child wants to speak with the teacher. If the counseling situation is not connected to a presentation of the

gospel in a lesson, this may or may not be as important. During a social event, the teacher could ask the student to share about when they became a Christian. If the child has never placed their faith in Christ, the door is wide open for the teacher to share the gospel. In such a situation the teacher would not need to inquire why the child wanted to talk with them or why they responded to an invitation.

The gold page

In order to begin on a positive note, the presentation can begin with the gold page. As an introduction the teacher may want to use the following sentence while showing the child the gold page. Gold is really special and this page reminds me of God who is very special to me. The child could be asked, what is so special about God? In the discussion about God, talk with the child about how God created the world. Show the immensity of God by pointing out something like the mountains or ocean that He created. Yet in all of His greatness, God loves the child. A Bible verse such as John 3:16 or Jeremiah 31:3 could be used to verify this fact. Point out to the child that one way in which God is different from people, and far greater, is that He is perfect or never did anything wrong. God does not allow anything in His home, up in heaven, that is not perfect. Then turning to the dark page share, but the Bible says we all live in the darkness of sin.

The dark page

Allow the child to read Romans 3:23 from the Bible. From this verse emphasize a couple things. First, sin needs to be defined in terms the child can relate to in their life. The teacher may want to ask the child to share some things boys or girls do that would be sin.

Be sure the events named are things children engage in so the child can recognize they have sinned. The verse says, “all have sinned,” which can be discussed next. How many would “all” be? Would that mean the teacher has sinned? As the teacher points to them self the comment may be appropriate to say something like, “I’m not proud of that but I have sinned.” This confession of the teacher may make it easier for the child to admit they have sinned. At this point the teacher will want to clarify that the child does recognize they have sinned. If the child refuses to admit they have sinned, they may not yet be ready to receive Christ as savior. If they do not recognize they have sinned, from what do they need a savior? If a child is not ready at this point, they could be sent back to class or wherever they need to go with the invitation open to come back and talk with the teacher in the future. After the child’s admission of sin, the teacher can show the child Romans 6:23, at least the first half of the verse which says, “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23 NIV). The term “wages” may need explanation. If the child’s parent goes to work and works all week, at the end of the week they get a pay check. That is their wages, what they earned for working all week. What we earn for our sin is death. But God loved us so much that He sent his son the Lord Jesus to take that punishment for our sin.

The red page

Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (NIV). Tell the child God loves them so much Jesus was willing to leave His beautiful home in heaven and come to this earth to die for their sin. Inquire how much of this event the child knows. The more they know, the less the teacher

needs to explain. Did Christ have to die for His sin? Refer the child back to the gold page where the teacher presented the perfection of God. Jesus is God, therefore, He is perfect. He did not die for His sin because He never sinned. Jesus died for the child's sin. Did Jesus stay dead? No, therefore, teachers need to be certain to share the resurrection. Jesus is not a dead God. Be sure the child understands He came back to life. This was God's gift to people, but for a gift to become theirs they have to receive it.

The clean page

According to John 1:12, receiving God's gift of Jesus Christ makes a person part of the family of God. "Yet to all who received him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (Jn. 1:12 NIV). The teacher will want to emphasize if the child really believes Jesus took their punishment for sin by dying on the cross they can receive God's gift of Jesus Christ. How can the child do this? While prayer does not save a child, it can become an act of faith and serve as a benchmark for their salvation. Explain that prayer is simply talking with God even though He cannot be seen. If the child really means what they say, God will hear their prayer. In order to help the child pray specifically, the teacher ought to review several times what the child could pray, turning to the appropriate page of the wordless book. Beginning with the dark page, the teacher can encourage the child to tell God they have done things wrong and ask His forgiveness. Turning to the red page, thank Jesus for dying on the cross to take their punishment for sin. On the clean page, invite Jesus to come into their life and be their savior. Review a few times so the child is confident in what to pray. Encourage the child

to put the prayer in their own words. The teacher could even review in similar words to what a child would say. Then have the child pray. If more than one is in the counseling session, the teacher will want to pick the child they think is most likely to pray and have them pray first. Give each child opportunity to pray expressing their faith in Christ and desire to receive Him as their savior. The teacher may want to share a brief prayer following.

The green page

Following the prayer time a critical time for follow-up presents itself. The child can be established in their faith as the teacher reinforces some important truths. The teacher could ask a child who just prayed, where is Jesus? The child may answer, “in heaven,” which is true, but the teacher wants the child to understand the truth that Christ now lives within the child. So the teacher may agree with the child but press, where else is Jesus? Or where did Jesus just enter? Hopefully such questions will help the child understand Christ indwells them. The teacher may need to explain, especially for younger children, that Jesus does not enter their little body with His big body but by His Spirit.

With the next question the goal is to help the child base their salvation on the Word of God, not just feelings. The question to ask would be, how do you know He is in you? Go back to John 1:12 and have the child read it again. Did they just receive Jesus? Did they mean what they prayed? If yes, then Christ lives within them. Note the verse says the student will become a child of God. This is a truth worthy of reinforcing. Help the child understand they have been born into the family of God. They now belong to God’s family.

Many children repeat the experience of receiving Christ as savior because they lack effective teaching at this point. The teacher may want to ask, how long will Jesus be with you or in you? Turn to Hebrews 13:5 and show the child the last portion of the verse, “Never will I leave you” (NIV). Holding up a hand and using one finger for each word, beginning with the little finger, say the verse several times with the child. Replace the last word on the thumb with “you” and let the child use it to point to them self. The teacher that emphasizes this concept with children will not have as many repeaters to deal with.

It would be beneficial for the child to understand what to do regarding sin. Doubt can flood the child’s heart and mind regarding their salvation when they sin. Therefore, teachers can take the lead by sharing 1 John 1:9. Tell the child when they do things wrong, and they will, they should stop and ask Christ to forgive them and help them not do it again. A Christian cannot live victoriously and live in sin at the same time. The opposite of victory is defeat and that’s where the child will be spiritually if they do not learn how to confess their sin.

The Repeater

Any teacher working with children for awhile, who presents students with the opportunity to receive Christ as savior, will come across the repeater. These would be children who respond over and over to the gospel invitation. What is a teacher to do? There are some steps to help resolve this situation and prevent it from occurring. An ounce of prevention certainly would be worth a pound of cure in this matter.

The first step is to accurately and clearly teach the simple plan of salvation while teaching the lesson. When giving an invitation the teacher can prevent some repetition by making the invitation clear and repeating with emphasis, “if you never before asked Jesus to be your savior.” Similar statements will encourage children not to repeat the experience.

At the time of counseling, the teacher needs to be careful and deliberate to share the gospel clearly with the children wanting to be saved. Help the child understand, when they place their faith in Christ they are born into the family of God. They do not need to be born over and over, once is sufficient. The biblical support for their salvation and the teaching on Hebrews 13:5, explained under the green page, will help build assurance of their salvation.

If a child repeats, carefully go through the plan of salvation. It has happened where a child responds to the invitation a second time because they were not truly saved the first time. There are times when children go through the motions of receiving Christ as savior but really are not saved because their heart was not right. Teachers need to patiently explain the plan of salvation again.

A repeater may need verses that give them assurance of their salvation. A teacher could share John 1:12 again with the child or another verse like Romans 10:13, Acts 16:31 or Revelation 3:20 emphasizing the promise of God in the verse. Another appropriate passage would be 1 John 5:11-13. The teacher can point out the past tense of the verse and word “know”. The teacher walking with God will be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in these cases as God gives direction how to handle them.

It can occur that a child intentionally responds to an invitation each time it is given simply to gain attention from the teacher. In such a case as this the teacher does not want to enable the child to act inappropriately. The wise teacher will help the child seeking attention to find legitimate ways of gaining attention. The child may be encouraged to arrive early or find ways to allow the child to serve.

Things to Avoid

Effective teachers will avoid long emotional appeals for salvation. These are counterproductive in children's ministry. It is the task of the Holy Spirit to convict the child of sin. Emotional duress is inappropriate and the wrong motivation for children to respond to the gospel. Avoid discounting small children. There may be times when a relatively small child will express interest in being saved. God may be working in that child's life at that point and teachers need to be sensitive the potential of little ones being saved. Children who are obviously not under conviction should not be pushed to receive Christ as savior. God will work in their life for He is the one who must draw them to Himself. Going through the motions externally will not save a child internally where it really counts for eternity.

Teachers must avoid delay until they are more proficient. They must strike while the iron is hot. Now is the time, do not delay. A teacher waiting for the perfect opportunity will miss all the special opportunities God presents because they did not recognize them. The teacher waiting to become perfect or at least proficient will allow pride to hinder all that God wants to do through them. God works through weak imperfect vessels but

vessels willing to be used. Teachers willing to be used of God will reap rewards others only dream of because they were not willing to step out in faith and allow God to use them.

The Invitation for Salvation

Mrs. Shirley Wisner, one of the pioneers in the ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship, often referred to the invitation as drawing the net. The basis for that phrase came from the following story.

Major Smith told of the many times he had stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee watching the fishermen. He said the fishermen know how to give their nets a skillful throw, landing them almost silently upon the water, from whence the nets sank beneath the surface of the sea.

But that was not the end! That would not have been fishing! It took one more movement to land the fish - a skillful tug - drawing in the net. Fishermen must bring in the catch! . . .

It is with the final tug - the actual bringing in of the net - that we are concerned. After the Gospel has been plainly given - woven into the story, if at all possible - and personal application has been made, the invitation should follow naturally almost as a part of the story. In fact it is good if the children do not sense where the story ends and the invitation begins. (Child Evangelism Fellowship 1974, iii)

How foolish it would be to go fishing and throw the bait over the side of the boat without a hook or some means whereby the fish could be caught. Teaching the gospel without an invitation would make no more sense.

Regarding the matter of giving an invitation for salvation Sam Doherty says,

It is not enough just to present, and teach, facts and truths - important and vital though they are. You need to challenge the children to ACT on the basis of these truths. You need to show the children what RESPONSE God expects from them, because of the facts and truths which they have heard and learned. (Doherty 2003b, 53)

The gospel invitation is simply calling students to respond to the teaching of the gospel. Teachers must avoid easy believism or putting stumbling blocks in the way of the child coming to Christ. Teachers must maintain a balance not enticing children to make a profession of faith that is not genuine nor restricting access to the savior through unnecessary requirements. God did not make salvation difficult neither should teachers. “Here is the tension that we feel; not rushing, not slacking, but ready when the child is ready” (Anthony 2006, 122).

Hearing the gospel without an opportunity to apply it can be devastating as the person may grow up immune to the gospel.

A vaccine is a fascinating thing. It actually contains some of the dreaded disease microorganisms that are either weakened or dead. But rather than getting sick, our bodies react by producing antibodies, thereby creating immunity. An infection with a disease is bad - but infection with God’s Word is good. Immunity to a disease is good – but immunity to God’s Word is bad. However, all around us are people that have been immunized to the gospel as children – because they got just a little bit that was either weak or dead – and there was no real “infection” at all. They never came back. (Fowler 2004, 72)

This would be one way to hinder children from coming to the savior or putting stumbling blocks between them and the savior for which He had rather stern warnings. Teachers need to give the invitation frequently and carefully allowing children to come to Christ as the Holy Spirit draws them to the Lord.

Guidelines for Giving Effective Invitations

Pray for fruit. While it may seem obvious, teachers are encouraged to pray, because there are times the obvious is overlooked.

Expect response: This is faith in action. Expecting response will in fact change the way in which teachers give invitations. The invitation will be given more deliberate and carefully because the teacher anticipates someone will respond.

Present the gospel clearly prior to giving the invitation within the lesson.

Visualize the gospel since visuals aid retention and improve learning.

Insist on quietness during the invitation. Students will hear God speak in the quietness of their heart more effectively than in the confusion of the classroom.

Present the invitation for one thing at a time. Do not mix a challenge for the Christian child and the invitation for the unsaved in the same call. Keep it simple to avoid confusion for the student who needs to respond.

Tie the invitation into the lesson so it becomes part of the lesson.

Be confident in giving the invitation. When God calls a teacher to teach, He also calls the teacher to apply the lesson, which is the invitation to receive Christ as savior, for the unsaved student.

Never pressure children to respond to the invitation. Let the Holy Spirit bring conviction regarding sin.

Have the children close their eyes during the invitation. This is an effective way to prevent a follow the leader movement where a child responds simply because someone else did. The students should respond because God is leading them to do so.

Children should understand the basics of the gospel before the invitation is given.

Be personal. Use personal pronouns and speak as if speaking to an individual.

Be clear in the presentation. Know exactly what is expected and clearly present those instructions. Practice prior to the giving of an invitation so it can be clearly verbalized.

Be simple. Give simple directions. Complex instructions will cause students to hesitate for fear of making a mistake. For example, invite the children to meet someone in back of the class rather than spelling out directions where to go.

Be consistent in the terminology used. Don't use different terms which may have similar or synonymous meaning to the teacher. Terminology used in the lesson and explained should be used in the invitation. Many religious terms can mean much the same thing for a Christian, but the invitation is not for the Christian, but the unsaved child.

Be precise in direction and explanations.

Plan ahead all the details of the invitation so at the time of giving it there is no confusion.

Know where counseling will be done and who will do it. Have available tracts or other literature needed to share with respondents. The counselor should have a Bible, and any other material needed ready such as wordless book, pencil and paper.

Practice giving the invitation. Having heard someone else share an invitation previously is not sufficient preparation. Verbally practice the invitation until it becomes a natural part of the teacher's teaching repertoire.

Teachers who give close attention to this aspect of teaching will be fruitful teachers.

Teachers who present the invitation weekly or at least very frequently will be blessed to see more fruit from their teaching ministry than those who fail to do so. The invitation is not a time to manipulate children. The spiritual nature of salvation must be recognized by teachers and applied when giving an invitation. Teachers must present an invitation in a way that demonstrates they believe God is in control of bringing children to Himself. The invitation is the opportunity for God to speak to students causing them to place their trust in Him for salvation.

Wording for an Effective Invitation

Teachers can memorize the following invitation and use it when teaching a lesson.

After a little experience, the teacher will gain enough confidence to personalize the invitation. There is nothing mystical or magical about the stated invitation, but it has been used and proven to be effective. Present the invitation carefully and deliberately, that is why it is written phrase by phrase.

1. Please close your eyes.
2. If you have never before received Jesus as your savior and you would like to today,

3. would you please raise your hand right now?
4. Keep your hand up.
5. Now, I want those who have their hands up to stand up.
6. The ones standing may open their eyes and
7. go out with (name). She will show you how to receive Jesus as your savior.

OR

7. follow me and I will show you how to receive Jesus as your savior while (your partner's name) prays with the rest of the class.

OR if you do not have a helper:

5. You may put your hand down now.
6. Those who raised their hand, please come and see me after class so I can show you how to receive Jesus as your savior.

If the child does not come after class, be sure to seek them out and give them an opportunity to receive Christ. Teachers need to be sure they are available to counsel a child or someone else is available to speak with the respondents. Some churches provide trained counselors available in the hall for any child interested in talking with them.

Teachers that are not team teaching and where counselors are not available may need to have the child remain after class to talk with them.

Teaching for Salvation

Teaching salvation does not happen automatically so it must be intentionally done to ensure it is accomplished. Goals not intentionally planned and executed never become reality. More detail will be presented in the next chapter related to application which the

teaching of salvation is for the unsaved child. If the individual cannot understand spiritual truth apart from the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14), then the application for the unsaved child must be the gospel. Teaching the gospel must precede other biblical truth. The teacher interested in the spiritual development of the child must begin at the beginning, which is salvation. After the student is born spiritually they can begin to grow spiritually.

The plan of salvation attached to the end of a lesson as application, would be better than not sharing it at all. A more effective paradigm would be to weave the various points of the gospel into the lesson where they appropriately fit. The teacher can use the same basic points of the gospel that were shared earlier under the Practical Presentation of the Counseling for Salvation. Often teachers use Bible stories to relate practical truth to the child. The following will rely on that scenario although the same principles could be applied to a lesson that was not based on a story. Teachers will find making application in the story will transform the story into a practical lesson that will help the child come to know Christ as their personal savior. Each application needs to be done as naturally and with as much enthusiasm as any other part of the lesson. The application should be visualized and planned as carefully as every other aspect of the lesson.

The Gold Page

The gold page presented some teaching about the character of God and that He loves the child. In a single teaching session the teacher may want to use the same basic concepts described earlier. For a class the teacher is working with on a regular basis the explanation

of the character or attributes of God could vary depending on the predominant attribute of God demonstrated in the lesson. This teaching also provides solid instruction for the Christian child in understanding more thoroughly the nature of God.

In the lesson the teacher wants to find a natural place to make this application. For example, in the story of Adam and Eve being sent out of the Garden of Eden, God demonstrated love for them in not letting them eat from the tree of life and live forever in sin. Another place where the love of God is demonstrated in that lesson is when God provided clothes for them. At that point in the lesson the teacher designs a connecting link between the story and the application. This would be a simple sentence that connects the two. For example, after talking about how God showed His love for Adam and Eve, the teacher could say, “Not only did God care for Adam and Eve, but He cares deeply for you because that is His character.” That would take the class from the story of Adam and Eve into the application where the teacher can share an attribute of, God is love, and what that means to us.

In this application it would be good for the teacher to include a scripture verse showing this attribute. Appendix A provides a lists of some attributes of God the teacher may refer to when planning a lesson. The appendix also provides related scripture verses the teacher will be able to use. This is an appropriate place to ensure the student knows God loves them individually. After teaching this application the teacher will use another connecting link sentence designed to return to the story at the point the teacher left. This application could also be inserted at the first mention of God or another appropriate time.

The Dark Page

The matter of sin needs to be taught and personally applied to students in the class. Teachers will need to look for an appropriate place to place this application. The location could be at a point when a character in the Bible story sins or sin is mentioned. This should be as obvious as possible so children can connect with the illustration. For example, in the story of the battle at Ai, it would be much harder to illustrate sin from the fact that Joshua did not seek the Lord before going into battle, than Achan stealing what did not belong to him. In a situation where someone sins in the story, that can be linked to the fact the students also sin.

Another place in which the teacher can make application to sin would be where something in the lesson makes a natural link to sin. An example to illustrate such a point would occur in the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 in the gospels. That event in scripture does not specifically name someone committing an obvious sin. It could be said the disciples didn't trust Jesus enough because He told them to feed the 5000. That would not be a very obvious illustration of sin with which children could relate. The account says Jesus healed many that were sick that day. Jesus wants to heal us from a sickness we all have, the sickness of sin. This is not a physical sickness but a spiritual sickness. A connection like this might be easier for teachers to relate to children.

A third way teachers can apply sin would be to connect the basic problem people have of being separated from God by our sin to a problem the major character in the story faces. Blind Bartimaeus was in physical darkness because he could not see, but we live in spiritual darkness. This would open a natural door to talk about sin in the lives of the

students. This would be a problem solution scenario which can often be used. When the solution is offered to the main character, the connection is God offers people a solution to their sin in Christ.

Once the teacher makes the connecting link from the story into the application there are several details that need to be taught. The acrostic YES will outline the details to be taught. YES stands for You, Examples, and Scripture. YOU – keep it personal. The teacher will want to use personal pronouns so the students relate sin with their own life. EXAMPLES – should illustrate sin in a way the student will understand what sin is and the fact they have sinned. The teacher will want to use a couple examples that would be typical of things children do wrong. If the illustrations are beyond the students experience they will not make the connection that they have sinned. For example, adultery would be beyond the experience of most children, so while it is sin, children would have difficulty relating to it as an illustration that they have sinned. The teacher is challenged to define sin and help their students understand they have sinned. SCRIPTURE – is the final part of the application of sin. Teachers want to use scripture to show that God says people are sinners. The use of scripture is important for it is the power of God unto salvation. To help teachers use a variety and appropriate scriptures, appendix B has been included that provides numerous scriptures for each application point.

The Red Page

The application of the death and resurrection of Christ as the student's solution for their problem of sin is the next event in the lesson for the unsaved child. Once the problem

is presented the solution can be offered. This means the application of sin should be presented first and early in the lesson which allows more time for the Holy Spirit to convict the student. Logically the solution should be presented after the problem is stated.

The teacher will look for a logical place to insert this application. If using the problem solution method, the teacher will need to determine the place where the main character in the story has a solution offered for their problem and then use that as a point to launch into the application. Where God is mentioned can provide opportunity to share the solution He offers for sin. Often sacrifices are pointing to the coming of Christ. These situations provide opportunity to open up the application. Other times there are some natural places in which the application of Christ's death and resurrection can be connected. In the lesson of Jonah, when the event of the great fish appears to swallow Jonah, that was a consequence of his sin. The consequence of sin according to Romans 6:23 is death and Christ took that punishment for people. From that point the application could be developed.

Teachers will again use a connecting link to move out of the story into application and then back into the story. In the application, the teacher should carefully teach what Christ did on the cross, dying a substitutionary death. Students need to understand what Christ did for them so they will have ample reason to place their faith in Christ. Any time the teacher teaches about the death of Christ they ought to be sure to follow-up teaching about the resurrection. Plenty scriptures are available for the teacher to use a variety of scriptures in different lessons showing what Christ did for mankind.

The Clean Page

Frequently this application comes at the time of the invitation. Again, the teacher will want to use scripture. The passage of scripture used should be a condition promise verse. This type of verse states a condition a person should do and links a promise of God as a result. For example, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31 NIV). The person who believes in Jesus, God says, He will save. The emphasis on this application is, believing in Jesus as savior. The child must place their faith in Christ. At this application the teacher should review the gospel quickly before actually entering into the invitation. Often the invitation comes at the end of the lesson, but there are times when the teacher may find another point in which the invitation fits better and should be at liberty to place it at that point in the lesson.

Teaching Reminders

Preparation and planning when and how to insert the application will enable the teacher to smoothly and effectively apply the lesson to the life of their students. With continued practice the teacher will be able to place a symbol in their outline to remind them when to insert the application. An “A” for admit you sinned or a dark heart may provide a uniform symbol the teacher can use in every lesson as a reminder when to make the application regarding sin. A “B” for believe Jesus died or a cross could be the standard symbol to remind the teacher when to insert the teaching on the death and resurrection of Christ. If needed, the teacher could use a “C” for choose Jesus as savior. Since this usually comes at the time of the invitation it may not be necessary. The gold page, where

the teacher teaches an attribute of God, a “ ” could be used as a reminder that God is eternal like a circle. The teacher needs to develop a system they can use regularly to help them remember where they planned to put the application. These symbols can be inserted in the left margin of their outline.

Teachers interested in facilitating the spiritual development of children they teach have the tools to begin the process because it starts with spiritual birth. Children are eager to trust Christ when someone shows them the way. Children are like a vast resource of potential converts to Christianity that the church has barely tapped. It is time to make a strong effort on every front to reach children for Christ. The “5 – 12 Window” has been described as “the time of opportunity with significantly higher probabilities of conversion between the ages of five and twelve years old” (Anthony 2006, 221). Christian teachers need to take advantage of the short time this window is open to influence the world for Christ. There are children all around who are cute and full of fun. They also represent the next generation. If they are not evangelized and taught the Word of God, the message of salvation will not reach succeeding generations. “How can people have faith in the Lord and ask him to save them, if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them” (Rom. 10:14 CEV)? The answer lies in the Christian teacher who is willing to take the message of salvation to the children today.

CHAPTER 9

TEACHING FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Teacher Responsibility and Reward

Once a child is a believer, a whole new vista opens up for the teacher in guiding the student into a close relationship with God and seeing their life take on characteristics of Christ-like behavior and attitudes as well as Christ-like thinking. The role of a teacher can be extremely rewarding but filled with many challenges and responsibilities. “Like anything else in life, little is accomplished if we don’t get intentional about it” (Taylor 2003, 39). Teacher’s must be intentional about the spiritual development of students if they want to see advances made on that front. “Ultimately, our task is to help kids enter into a growing relationship with Jesus” (Anthony 2006, 163). Many dissenting opinions exist regarding how to define biblical spirituality and spiritual development. The following definitions, stated earlier, provide the premise upon which the remainder of this chapter is developed. “Ryrie ‘lists three factors involved in genuine spirituality, first regeneration, second the Holy Spirit is preeminent in producing spirituality and third it takes time. He then shares four areas in which spirituality will be evident in a believer: in his character, in his knowledge, in his attitudes, and finally in his conduct’” (Ryrie 1969, 12-20). Regarding spiritual development it was defined as, “The lifelong process in which a believer in Christ grows more intimate with God resulting in a transformation of their character and behavior to become more like Christ.”

This transformation implies Christ is living out His life through the child. It is a process or journey in which the child engages. The teacher becomes instrumental in getting the student started, through the new birth experience, and then encourages progress along the path. “Just as the new Christian is not born into the family full-grown, but grows in godliness for a lifetime, so growth in understanding and applying the Bible continues throughout the Christian’s pilgrimage” (McQuilkin 1992, 54). This places a lot of responsibility on the Christian teacher to prepare well under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and carefully present lessons that facilitate spiritual growth. James 3:1 states, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (NIV). Teaching carries tremendous responsibility because the teacher is representing God to their class. “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Pet. 4:11 NIV).

Along with responsibility God also promises reward. 1 Peter 5 speaks of rewards for elders or leaders in the church, which would include teachers. Teachers will reap what they have sown according to Galatians 6:9, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, and Luke 6:38. God established the principle that, “those who work deserve to be fed” (Matt. 10:10 NLT). Jesus said, “but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19 NIV). John Libkie, who worked tirelessly as a volunteer teacher of children, often said to his wife, pointing to the sky, “pay day some day, dear, pay day some day.” Rewards await the faithful teacher.

Tremendous opportunities are available for the teacher willing to help children progress along the journey of spiritual development. It is not an exact science, with

guaranteed predictable results, for teachers are working with human beings that have a free-will which enables them to choose to love and obey God or go their own rebellious way. “Christians who work with children need to challenge children to the edge of their capacities in the world of spiritual development” (Wilhoit 1995, 143). Children will not soar spiritually if tethered by teachers unwilling to recognize the tremendous potential they possess to walk with God.

The Focus of Teaching

Effective Teaching Produces Spiritual Fruit

John 15, as noted earlier, conveys the teaching that an unfruitful life in a Christian is an unhealthy life. Fortunately, for all people, God is patient and longsuffering. God’s design is not to immediately punish those who are unfruitful. He will prune and nurture trying to bring about fruit in the life of a believer who wanders away from being productive. A child who does not grow physically from the time of birth is unhealthy and abnormal. Likewise a child born spiritually ought to demonstrate signs of spiritual growth if the child is being fed and is normal. Children can be productive and bring glory to God through their lives. “Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right” (Prov. 20:11 NIV). The children at the triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem praised God. The boy Samuel served the Lord faithfully while still a child. Ministry to children is not just for the future when they grow up physically. If they are being spiritually nurtured by their teacher evidence of growth should occur presently.

The rationale in teaching the Bible to children is not just to instill ideas they will need to know someday. The Bible holds truths children can hold on to today to

develop a vital relationship with God. It is important in leading children to understand the crucial issues in their own lives and how the Bible relates to those issues. In order to do this, children must be given opportunities to respond to God and to think about ways his Word can be applied to real-life situations they are currently facing. (Anthony 2006, 204)

Effective Teaching is Biblical

The great commission found in Matthew 28:19-20 provides clear focus for the ministry of Christian education or teaching. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV). The later part states teachers are to teach their students to obey everything He commanded. This goes beyond simple cognitive comprehension. God wants teachers to teach obedience to His commands or His Word. This is the teaching that results in spiritual development.

There are forces being exercised upon Christian education today to provide a fun environment equated with entertainment, that will be discussed later, that puts a lot of pressure on teachers to miss the primary purpose of their calling and source from which spiritual nurture comes. “Evangelical Christian churches are noted for being ‘people of the Book’. . . . For evangelicals it is at the core of who we are and what we do” (Anthony 2006, 117). Larry Fowler suggests,

Children’s ministry is being pushed and pulled by educational models, statistical analysis, growth techniques, cultural change and technological advancements. But with the weight of all these influences, little attention is given to what ought to be the most important influence in molding the shape of children’s ministry — the Word of God. All these other influences can be very helpful, but they should build upon scriptural truths, not the other way around. (Fowler 2004, 9-10)

For centuries God has used His Word to bring about spiritual growth in His people. It is the Word of God that has the power to change lives making them productive so they can bring glory to Him. The history of the modern missionary movement has demonstrated the importance of reading and translation of the Bible so people could read the Bible and grow spiritually. The Bible is the standard by which Christian education is aligned. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. . . . I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. . . . Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart” (Ps. 119: 9, 11, 34 NIV). The Bible is foundational in all of Christian education, but apart from it the teacher cannot expect to facilitate spiritual development of their students. Theologian Gaebelein says,

Is there, then, a watershed, a continental divide, as it were, that separates a consistent Christian philosophy of education from all forms of eclecticism? The answer is a clear affirmative. The great divide is nothing less than the authority of the Bible and its acceptance as normative. . . . a thoroughly Christian view of education must not only be based upon Scripture; it must also stand under it. (Graendorf 1981, 15)

Anyone can confess a high view of the nature of the Scripture, but ultimately the real test is whether or not it is read, taught, studied, and lived in the life and community of faith. . . . The direction of our educational stance is plain. It lies in a return to a central principle of education — namely, that of going to original sources. We must teach the Bible itself. We must return to the Bible. (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 33)

The challenge for teachers is to teach the Word of God and through its pages find relevant application to help their students grow closer to God and become spiritually productive.

Teachers need to read it, study it, teach it, and live it in their own lives. As they become more conformed to the image of Christ, they will be able to lead their students on the same incredible journey.

Effective Teaching Focuses on Spiritual Development

The purpose of Christian teachers, for the spiritual development of children, as found in Colossians 1:24-29, could be summed up in verse 28 which says, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28 TNIV). In the Old Testament we read, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6 NIV). A similar admonition in the New Testament found in Ephesians 6:4 says, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (NIV). Peter in speaking to believers said, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2 NIV). Teachers must engage their students in a study of the Word of God to see them grow spiritually. The study of the Word of God, if applied by the student, will enable them to spiritually mature in their walk with the Lord.

Effective Teaching Applies the Bible

Spiritual growth will not occur simply from hearing the Bible. The student needs to be encouraged to apply the Bible for growth to transpire. Bruce Wilkinson states his first maxim under the law of the learner that, “teachers are responsible to cause students to learn” (Wilkinson 1992, 29). At times teachers may have students unwilling to learn. In such a case it becomes the challenge for the teacher to figure out how to motivate the student to want to learn the subject. Wilkinson demonstrates the close connection between teaching and learning in the Old Testament and how they really are inseparable. “What

does it mean to *teach*? How are these two concepts — learning and teaching —related? Are they as divorced from each other as we have come to believe” (Wilkinson 1992, 26)? He shows how when the suffix and prefix are taken off the Hebrew word for learn and teach all that remains is the same Hebrew word. He goes on to say,

Can you believe that? It’s the same word! That’s right, the same Hebrew word means to learn and to teach. Do you realize the significance of that? We can’t separate teaching from learning. They are married, they are one. Somehow and in some way what the teacher does and what the student does must be inextricably related.

There is a further insight into this Hebrew word for teach and learn. The root means “learn,” but when you alter it and put it into another stem called the Piel, it changes the meaning to “teach.”

According to Hebrew grammar, the fundamental idea of the Piel is to “busy oneself eagerly with the action indicated by the stem.” What’s the stem? “To learn.” To teach, therefore, means to busy oneself eagerly with the student’s learning. It also means “to urge,” “to cause others to do,” and “an eager pursuit of an action.” . . . No longer can you or I consider teaching merely as something the teacher does in the front of the class. Teaching is what the teacher does in the student. How do you know if you are a great teacher? By what your students learn. (Wilkinson 1992, 26-27)

Elsiebeth McDaniel put it succinctly when she said, “keep in mind that you have not taught till children have learned” (1981, 26). This is a valuable lesson for teachers which will encourage careful deliberate communication. The teacher’s responsibility runs much deeper than simply telling what they think students need to know. When teaching is so closely connected to learning it changes the perspective considerably for a teacher who is serious about encouraging the spiritual development of their students. For some teachers this may be a new paradigm, but one that is essential for teachers of excellence, seeking to reach this generation for Christ.

The Bible is not an end in itself but a means to an end. God provided His Word so believers learn it and His will which would impact their hearts motivating them to seek lifestyle changes that would ultimately bring glory to Him. “Effective Christian education leads people into Bible study as a means of growth, not as an end in itself. Faithful study of the Bible must be a means of learning to know and obey God” (Downs 1994, 41)

Teachers are reminded that the object of their teaching, while seeking to be as accurate as possible, is not the content of the Bible but what the content will do in the life of the student. In no way does this diminish the need for accuracy of the Word of God, simply to demonstrate the purpose of the Word is to change lives. “So learning, far from being knowledge gained, consists in something done to the learner. What the individual learns in terms of knowledge is of secondary importance; he himself and what happens to him is what is of major concern” (Eavey, 1940, 141).

Effective Teaching Aims for Transformation

Teaching for spiritual growth involves more than simply communicating Bible stories. Teachers want to “teach to effect change in lives, not to build storehouses of Bible facts” (McDaniel 1981, 31). When spiritual growth is the objective, teachers want to teach for change or transformation. The students need to be challenged to allow Christ to transform their lives, conforming them to the image of Christ as portrayed in scripture. “Your job is not to fatten geese but to train athletes” (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 157). Teachers are preparing students to engage in the battle of life, as a Christian, not simply stuff their

little craniums with knowledge that may be useful someday. They are preparing to run a spiritual race which they can win if properly trained.

Growth will not occur without change. Therefore, students must be challenged to live according to the Word of God. It is not change simply for the sake of change, it is change to become more like Christ or to come into conformity with the will of God. Spiritual maturity increases as the student continually applies the teaching of the Bible to their life. In conclusion to the sermon on the mount, Jesus gave the illustration of the wise man and the foolish man who built a house. The point was, the people that applied what He taught were like a wise man and the ones who heard the message, but did not apply it were like the foolish man. James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (NIV).

The challenge for the teachers is to teach so students will want to become more Christlike in their character, knowledge, attitudes, and their conduct. These changes will result in spiritual growth. “A learning of the Word of God can be validated only by a transformed life. . . . The only teaching that can rightly be called ‘Bible teaching’ focuses, not on processing information, but on hearing and responding to God’s own loving voice” (McQuilkin 1992, 70).

Effective Teaching is Relevant

A basic rule of teaching is to go from the known to the unknown. In doing so the student is able to connect with the new concept. By starting with what is already known the student has a place within the mind to catalog the information. Teachers want to teach

what is going to be relevant for the student. If the subject matter is not relevant, the student will not be able to associate it with anything and will probably forget the subject. Retention will increase dramatically when the subject is relevant.

Teachers need to work at keeping illustrations, methods and content of the scripture relevant to the life of the students they teach. Telling children not to steal cookies from the cookie jar when they are involved in much more serious crime and never saw a cookie jar is being out of touch. Such illustrations will not connect with students. Conversely, teaching first graders about the sin of abortion or adultery would likewise be out of touch for many children this age.

When culture runs contrary to scripture the teacher must be willing to confront it scripturally and not allow the culture to dictate one's theology.

Many children's ministry professionals believe that biblical teaching must have relevancy in order for transformation to occur. . . . While relevancy is important, the caution for anyone who values relevancy would be not to remain so focused on making our ministries culturally relevant that the Word of God could become inferior to the relevancy factor. (Anthony 2006, 272-273)

"In fact, it is not too much to say that Scripture was given precisely to change human culture and create a divine way of thinking and behaving" (McQuilkin 1992, 33). Teachers should keep their teaching relevant to the student while keeping the culture relevant and balanced with the Word of God.

Effective Teaching is Internalized

While subject matter needs to be transformational, applicable, and relevant it also needs to take place internally not just externally. The Pharisees exhibited an external

righteousness that Jesus condemned. If students simply adhere to the Bible because they are told to or they think this is what they are expected to do, but have no inner conviction, the application won't stick. The shallowness of external compliance will be revealed as soon as something challenges the conviction or principle. Teachers have to take their teaching to a deeper level where the student becomes internally motivated. A student who wants to become proficient on a skateboard will practice faithfully if the desire to become skillful is intrinsic. If the same student is challenged to have a daily quiet time because he should, but has no intrinsic motivation, may do so occasionally but not as faithfully or with the intensity as practicing skateboard for which there is a deeper motivation. Therefore, the teachers task is to discover ways to motivate students internally to grow spiritual.

Scripture refers to this concept saying, “it is your life” as illustrated in the following two passages.

Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you — they are your life. (Deut. 32:46-47 NIV)

My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them. (Prov. 4:20-22 NIV)

Larry Fowler gives the following three explanation for the phrase “it is your life” which relate so well to the concept of internalizing the Word of God for students. First, it would be like a child of whom it is said “baseball is his life,” meaning that is the main focus of his life, his number one priority, or something of great value to the child. The second view would be of something that takes up most of ones time. Someone might complain, “My work is my life” because it fills their schedule and they have no time for other things. The

third illustration is of something essential for life like a medication necessary for life or air to breath (Fowler 2004, 49). In a similar fashion the Bible should become a top priority or necessity for life. When the Bible is internalized, it's application will be the student's life.

Teachers are a Living Model

“Said Archbishop Tillotson, ‘To give children good instruction and a bad example is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell’” (LeBar 1952, 34). Modeling becomes pivotal when seeking transformation of students into godly people. The lesson takes on flesh and blood and becomes reality when students see their teacher living out the lessons being taught in the classroom.

Modeling is Biblical

Riddled throughout scripture is the concept of modeling. A very prominent example of modeling would be when Moses addressed the Israelites early in the book of Deuteronomy prior to reiterating the law. No less than a dozen times Moses commands the people to live obediently to the law in Deuteronomy 4 and 5 before he reminds the people of the ten commandments from God. Prior to the command, to diligently teach their children God's laws, Moses reminds the adults to live obediently to the commands of God. By living according the commands of God first, their words would have validity when spoken to their children. Jesus established the principle of modeling for teachers by saying,

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one

who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:15-17 NIV).

Paul provides another example in saying, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Teachers are leaders who set the pace for their students to follow. As a leader, they demonstrate through their life how the student should live. The teacher leads the way. The qualifications for elders and deacons as leaders in 1 Timothy and Titus is not that they have a different standard. God’s standard is the same for all believers but the leaders are showing those who follow how they should live. They are leading the way by example in their life. Elders are given the same admonition in 1 Peter 5 to be leaders by example.

The difficulty is not in finding biblical examples as much as it is in finding teachers willing to set the example. Teachers interested in being effective in discipling children to become mature followers of Christ have to allow their life to stand out as a living example so their students will be able to see how to walk that way.

Teachers Influence through Modeling

To effectively impact the lives of children, their primary influencers, parents and teachers, must become serious about modeling a godly lifestyle for children to follow. Cliff Schimmels encourages teachers to remember their life is an extension of their lesson and students will not distinguish between them (Schimmels 1997, 14). If teachers want to see their students become people of the Word, they must set the example by being people of the Word themselves, both in studying it and living by it.

So many athletic, political and entertainment role models for our youth have left a legacy of corruption that it becomes imperative teachers set positive godly examples for their students. “Modeling is the construction of interpretive schemes through which one engages reality” (Cully and Cully 1990, 424). Among children, especially older children who tend to be hero worshipers, it is imperative for a teacher to provide the visual reality of the lesson being taught through their life.

“There is probably nothing we can do that will have any greater effect on children than the example we live before them. What we are is far more significant than what we say or do” (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 245). Who the teacher is, will to a large measure determine what they do, which has been the focus of modeling. Ultimately, it does come down to who the person is since that will determine what they do. The point is “for children, the spiritual dimension is often caught more than taught” (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 245).

Modeling in Teaching

Modeling is not only done through observation by students of the teacher’s actions and life-style. A powerful tool in teaching is using personal life illustrations. These illustrations must be real or students will read through them. Often in teaching biblical principles, teachers will find God leading them through life situations where they can personally engage in the lesson. These life experiences provide powerful stories to encourage students to live the lesson being taught as they hear how the teacher applied the lesson in life.

The teacher who has a daily quiet time with God, though not engaging in a quiet time for the purpose of finding illustrations, will come across truths they can share with the class regarding what they discovered during the week. This testimony not only serves to reinforce the truth being taught, but also relays the value the teacher places on having a daily quiet time which can encourage the child to do the same. “We can deliberately and purposefully teach people how to study the Bible, but when it’s all over, they will probably copy us. Don’t be reluctant to tell your students how you study” (Schimmels 1997, 28).

Credence through Congruence

Not only is congruence between one’s life and lesson a biblical quality, it lends credence to the lessons taught by the teacher. An obese person would find it a hard-sell to preach the value of a weight loss program. Several common cliches such as, “practice what you preach” or “walk the talk” illustrate the truth that people don’t believe rhetoric that is not confirmed in the life of the speaker. When a student sees a life that supports the lesson being taught by the teacher, they are much more prone to ascribe validity to what was said.

“Communication travels on the modeling you provide. Truth is transferred by example” (Taylor 2003, 84). It would seem rather foolish for a teacher to spend time preparing a lesson and teaching it to students that refuse to believe it because the teacher’s life does not support what is said in the classroom. Jesus spoke with unusual authority and people believed Him because His life lent credibility to His message. “We will be great

proclaimers of God's principles only when we become great practitioners of God's principles" (Taylor 2003, 92).

Teachers model crucial messages other than supporting the lesson taught in class. A vibrant relationship with Christ speaks volumes to students the teacher want to encourage in a maturing walk with God. The value of the Word of God will be demonstrated in the value the teacher places on the Word. Preparation not only makes a class more interesting and filled with less distractions, it also demonstrates the value the teacher places on the Bible and it's instruction. The teacher's appearance, as well as the appeal of the classroom environment, reflects the value the teacher places on what they are doing and ultimately on how they value the Bible and Christian life. A commitment to excellence in teaching reveals the heart of the teacher toward God. A teacher committed to continuing education and improving their teaching skills underscores the importance of the student continuing to learn in the classroom. Teachers who model a godly life, validate through their life that God is still working to bring willing believers into their full potential.

Continuing Education for Teachers

Called of God

Recruiters for children's teachers who value the spiritual development of students will set up teachers for success by preparing them for the task they should be doing. Teachers should be placed in classes because God has called them to teach, not simply because they are a warm body willing to do what needs to be done.

No church is too small to seek godly qualified teachers that want to influence children to mature spiritually. God will provide all the people necessary to carry out the program He wants accomplished in any church. Recruits ought to be given opportunity to pray and seek God's direction before accepting a position. Knowing God has called the individual will enhance longevity and commitment to the task of spiritual development of the students. The church with specific goals for the spiritual development of children will find teachers called of God to join in the effort of attaining those goals and objectives. These drafted teachers probably will not have the essential training needed to succeed, nor will they have the desire to acquire it. Motivation to adequately prepare lessons could easily pervade their thinking regarding teaching.

The Bar of Excellence

Standards of excellence will be set by the church that values excellent results in the lives of students. Once the standard for teachers is set, the result of students achieving spiritual maturity can be realized. A church has to be intentional about setting standards for excellence if it wants to achieve the goal of spiritual maturity with its students. When the standard is set teachers will need to be equipped for success.

Training before teachers begin teaching will set them up to succeed as teachers and for the goal of spiritual maturity to be realized in the life of students. Goals for the student will not be realized if the standards for teachers are not established to enable the teachers to achieve the student goals. This presupposes goals and objectives are established for the spiritual development of students. A teacher needs goals and objectives in order to know

where they are leading their class. These also provide a way to measure success or failure. Improvement cannot be made when things are done the same way. If a teacher knows they are falling short of the goal, change can be implemented to gain improvement. Objectives may need to be analyzed and changed to reach the ultimate goals set. If no goals exist there is no way to know if the teacher is succeeding or student is growing spiritually as they ought. Goals and objectives not only provide direction for teaching and a standard to measure success, they also give the teacher a sense of accomplishment knowing they are doing what they are suppose to do.

Need for Continuing Education

The field of raising up spiritually mature Christian children is a very specialized field. Being a professional educator does not qualify a person to be a Christian teacher who can effectively facilitate spiritual development in children any more than being a psychologist qualifies a person to be a heart surgeon. Academic educators are required to attain a level of training and internship in order to be qualified to teach children. Their training helps insure their success in the classroom for their sake as well as for the children they are teaching. Christian teachers who are teaching eternal truths and representing God to their students ought to be required to attain a certain level of training and internship prior to teaching children the Bible to insure their success and for the benefit of the children they teach in their class.

Encouragement and Equipping

Regular equipping sessions provide encouragement for teachers so they can be more effective. It does take time but it is time well spent. Regular equipping sessions encourage teachers to keep the main thing the main thing in their teaching. It will help them stay focused on the task and the goals set before them. Equipping sessions provide opportunity for teachers to interact with others performing a similar ministry. Support is gained from peers as well as those in authority over the teacher plus the teacher gains an opportunity for feedback. Specialized training can provide on going education for the teacher to improve. Teachers need to be stretched with new opportunities and training that will help them achieve their goals. Reminders of things learned and forgotten can be achieved in the equipping sessions as well. Seasoned teachers can be a tremendous source of encouragement for newer teachers as they share from their years of experience and knowledge.

Learners are Teachers

Worship teams or choirs cannot expect quality unless the members practice together and improve their skills. Teachers need time to meet together to grow in their skills to carry on one of the most important tasks of the church, the education of the next generation. A teacher who is not growing becomes stale. They must keep learning and growing. Paul told Timothy, “fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you” (2 Tim. 1:6 NLT). The equipping sessions are a way for teachers to fan this gift into flame or to develop the full potential of their spiritual gift in teaching.

I would rather sit under a teacher who is 'green' but growing than to sit under one who is mature but stagnant. I don't want a teacher who always relies on yesterday's knowledge. I want one who is sprouting, growing, maturing and becoming. . . . The issue at stake is not how well educated you are but are you still learning. Simply put, learners are teachers. If content knowledge is the base of all teaching, then teachers need to be the best and most progressive learners in the class. It is not good enough to survive on yesterday's knowledge. Do not feed your class stale bread left over from days gone by; bake them fresh, hot bread. When you feed fresh bread, people will show up at meal time. (Taylor 2003, 63, 83)

Longevity

Longevity appeals to most recruiters for it lightens their work load but there are far greater benefits available from this characteristic. The call of God to teach helps produce longevity but with it come other assets. The longer a teacher teaches the more knowledge and experience they bring into the classroom. If the teacher has engaged in regular training, the experience of those years of equipping provide a valuable resource for the Christian education ministry of the church. The experienced teacher will bring additional resources of materials and equipment used in the past. If a church invests in the training of teachers, that investment pays big dividends in the lives of students that a new teacher simply has not yet acquired. Ministries ought to consider teachers with longevity as a valuable resource from God.

Resources

Training sessions become a resource center for teachers. Not only do they gain new knowledge and skills for teaching, they also receive resources which enable them to effectively do their task. Materials and methods can be shared with teachers to help them

teach more effectively. Prayer support by other teachers, who understand the challenges teachers face, is a valuable resource. The teachers attending the equipping sessions become a support group for each other. This also becomes a place of accountability. Most people find accountability improves their potential and they become much more productive.

The Prerequisite of Preparation

There are times when fast foods are enjoyable and even necessary. However, a regular diet of fast food would not be nutritious. A carefully prepared banquet with all the trimmings takes time to produce but offers the diners a wholesome well balanced meal. Teachers can offer students a fast food meal occasionally but if the teacher resorts to such a menu for class every week the students will be malnourished spiritually. “If I am a member of your class, I want to know you have put forth your best effort to feed me that day. I don’t want a ‘Saturday night special’” (Taylor 2003, 110). Benjamin Franklin once quipped, “By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail” (Zuck n.d., 1). Often trouble in the classroom can be traced to the lack of preparation during the week.

Allan Taylor draws an appropriate analogy of lesson preparation to the preparation of a football team. He says, “the will to practice is greater than the will to win” (Taylor 2003, 95). The team that really wants to win must have even a greater will to practice. When the practice is completed the game will take care of itself. “Nothing absolutely nothing, can replace your personal preparation time. Every one is interested in winning. However, not every one is committed to do what it takes to win” (Taylor 2003, 96). Good teachers want

to be effective in bringing their students to maturity in Christ, but not all of them are committed to do what it takes with preparation to deliver an effective lesson. There is no mystery about what makes a good teacher. Teachers are not born great they develop greatness through preparation.

Preparation involves more than being prepared to share a lesson in a classroom. Make no mistake, it is key to the presentation of the lesson, but it also has to do with heart preparation of the teacher. A slow steady rain can be much more beneficial than a drenching rain that runs off rather than soaking in the ground. While studying of the lesson, the teacher wants to be sensitive to hear the voice of God. The teacher who listens for God to speak will have gained insight unknown to the teacher preparing a Saturday night quickie. Meditation involves time for God to speak. Robert Frost is quoted saying, “No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.” How can a teacher expect God to touch the heart of students with a lesson when the lesson has not touched the teacher’s heart? “Teaching that impacts is not head to head, but heart to heart” Hendricks 1987, 119). Teachers unable or unwilling to take time for the lesson to touch their heart teach from the head not the heart.

Hollywood is willing to spend millions of dollars and countless hours creating a one or two hour movie simply, for the purpose of entertaining people. Musicians spend hours in preparation for a concert, again for simple entertainment. Teachers handling the Word of God, representing the creator of the universe, need to responsibly use time wisely by investing in preparation for teaching eternal truths.

Preparing for Results

There is a direct correlation between the amount of time spent in preparation and the results achieved in teaching. Results cannot be simply measured in the short term. The change in lives, causing the student to become more like Christ in their character and behavior, is what counts for eternity. Transformed lives that bring glory to God are the measure of success. Architects have to spend time drawing up plans before construction on a building begins. “Lesson preparation is so important because the impact of your teaching is in direct proportion to your preparation and the change in the lives of your class members is in direct proportion to your teaching” (Taylor 2003, 96). The same principle applies as when working with a computer, “garbage in, garbage out.” The results, transformed lives of students, directly relates to what the teacher puts into preparation for the lesson.

Time and Place for Preparation

A wise teacher will establish preparation habits to allow for adequate preparation. Teaching is only a small percentage of the time investment required to be successful. Without a disciplined routine the teacher may find Saturday night preparation prior to a Sunday class become normal. Cramming to get the lesson ready crowds out time to meditate and reflect on the lesson.

“The discipline to break free of the world and its cares in order to study is the first major hurdle one must clear to be a good teacher. . . . My rule of thumb is a minimum of two hours of study for every ten minutes I must teach ” (Taylor 2003, 108). There will be

spiritual forces trying to prevent the teacher from spending time in the Bible preparing for class. If the enemy can win on this front he has won a major battle for the soul of the child.

In the fast pace of modern life, the argument may be made that people simply don't have enough time for this much preparation. In response to the time issue Fowler says, "Put teaching God's Word first! It is never an issue of time. It is always an issue of value. . . . God's Word must receive the highest value of all. If you put teaching God's Word first, you will find that there will be time left for other things" (2003, 51). People always find time for that which carries the highest priority. It comes back to the question, are teachers willing to commit to what it takes to win the spiritual battle. Everyone has 24 hours per day. The choice is how a person decides to use their allotment. Teachers need to begin early. Procrastination leads to the tyranny of the urgent. Setting aside a small amount of time daily allows the teacher time to reflect on the lesson throughout the week and time for God to reveal lessons to the teacher.

Teachers may want to select a place where they can study without unnecessary interruptions. A study place where the teachers tools are close at hand and the teacher can concentrate will enhance the study time and make it more profitable.

Preparation for Communication

Preparation is necessary for every aspect of the event in which the teacher will be involved with their class. From the pre-class activities through the dismissal of the children the teacher needs careful preparation. The focus of the entire class time should be used to reenforce the aim of the lesson. Using multiple activities will help the teacher communicate

the aim more effectively. The teacher will want to take into account the various learning styles of students within the class to capitalize on their learning strengths.

A major portion of preparation will focus on the content of the Bible lesson so it can be clearly and accurately presented. In addition to the preparation of content, which will be dealt with in more detail later, the teacher needs to investigate the creative side of the lesson which will enable many of the students to grasp the content. There is little value in sharing great content if the student does not connect with it well enough to retain and apply it to life.

The brain has two parts: the left side and the right side. The left side is the logical, analytical side of the brain. It judges, selects, applies logic, and puts things in proper sequences and categories. The right side is the creative side. It explores, entertains, fantasizes, provokes and generates.

Both sides are needed for a good lesson. The left side give substance, content, and continuity to the lesson. The right side give excitement and energy to the lesson. Each side complements the other. As the wings of an airplane are both needed to complement the other, a good lesson will incorporate both sides of the brain and will involve and stimulate the various people who learn differently. . . .

If you expound great truths but it connects with no one, then the question must be asked: "Have you really taught?" Can we honestly say teaching has taken place if learning has not occurred? The opposite is certainly true: having wonderful style and interesting methods but little substance is to abort the teaching/learning process. (Taylor 2003, 98-100)

Preparation involves all the creative things that make the class effective as well as the content. This would include visual aids that promote retention and learning as well as other methods used to connect with students. Preparation of the heart as mentioned earlier will take place as well. During preparation the teacher will engage in intercessory prayer, not only for God to speak to their heart, but for the students in the class.

“Jesus taught with authority and impact. . . . Jesus got their attention as He taught with authority, and they listened to Him in amazement” (Carlson 2006, 32). Teachers can teach with the same authority for Christ goes with the teacher to assist in every classroom. What is called authority might be referred to as passion. What makes the difference when one teacher teaches with passion and another may just be boring? Where does this passion come from? Is it a matter of personality? The answer is passion comes from God through prayer and preparation. When teachers spend time in preparation their heart is prepared as God speaks to them. Then they can speak with passion because the lesson becomes first hand. They are not relating subject matter with which they are not personally acquainted. Some people are more charismatic than others and may be able to communicate more smoothly due to their personality. But in teaching, passion comes from God and is transmitted through a spiritual gift in a supernatural way. This is not reliant on personality but on God. Teachers must step into the role of teacher when they stand before their class. Regardless of ones personality the teacher must assume the role of a teacher. Then the prepared teacher who is well connected with God through preparation will be able to speak with authority and passion.

Teaching Models - Methods

It is beyond the scope of this project to examine various teaching models available today and methods for helping teachers transform students into fully obedient followers of Christ. Materials are available to explore teaching models and methods of teaching. A teacher must keep the focus for teaching in mind when selecting a model or method. What

model best accomplishes the major goals of developing spiritual maturity in the children must be a guiding factor in the selection process. The method used within the model is selected based on what will most effectively communicate the aim of the lesson.

“More and more churches are realizing that a major factor in church growth is a well-staffed and trained children’s ministry team” (Anthony 2006, 1). This sounds like an exciting turn of events in children’s ministry. However, as models of education are examined the primary purpose must be studied. Is the basic reason for this interest in children’s ministry focused on the spiritual development of children or as a means to grow a larger church? Critique of one model stated, “To please everyone in everything we do does not mean giving kids what they want regardless of its affects. Rather we do it with a view of giving them what they need, what is helpful, and what will build them up” (Anthony 2006, 237).

“A teacher is not an entertainer – or someone to ‘keep the kids quiet.’ You are an ‘under shepherd’ . . . interested in the spiritual growth of a group of kids” (McDaniel 1981, 6). This brings the emphasis back to why teachers teach. In the technological age students are being raised, teachers must be creative so the students connect with the content. Teachers must exercised care to focus on education not entertainment. Teachers must focus on the spiritual development of their students not the superficial entertainment of the world that only satisfies temporarily.

There has never been a time when American society was in more dire need of the Christian Church to provide a pathway to a better future. Given the voluminous stream of moral challenges, and the rampant spiritual hunger that defines our culture today, this should be the heyday for biblical ministry. As things stand now,

we have become content with placating sinners and filling auditoriums as the marks of spiritual health. (Barna 2006).

Steps in Lesson Preparation

Following a set pattern for the preparation of a lesson will facilitate the process for a teacher and enable them to accomplish the task more efficiently and effectively. The following steps are suggested as a potential method for developing a lesson for children particularly, but not exclusively, with the method of story telling. An effective means of communicating biblical truth for spiritual development is the use of a Bible story through which truths are illustrated and conveyed to the student.

Step One - The Teacher's Spiritual Walk

The place to begin is not something the teacher needs to do so much as it is in who the teacher is. Discussed earlier has been the need for the teacher to be walking with the Lord before teaching students to walk with the Lord. Teaching on this level is spiritual ministry and requires a person be spiritually in tune with God. The connection with God as the power source, is as essential to produce spiritual fruit, as it is for a branch to be connected to the vine to produce natural fruit. Assuming the teacher is walking in close fellowship with God, the next steps map out an order for putting the lesson together to achieve spiritual results in the lives of students.

Step Two - Read and Study

Prior to reading the lesson from a lesson book, the teacher should read it from the Word of God, so the Bible is the foundation upon which the lesson is built. Initially the

teacher needs to read the passage of scripture to gain an overview of the lesson. This first reading will be followed by a thorough study of the scripture portion. In this study the teacher will search the text to comprehend the intent of the passage to its original audience. This examination will take some time and research. Moving through the passage verse by verse the teacher should ask questions for the purpose of discovery. A list of journalist questions would be helpful such as; who, what, where, when, why, and how. The teacher should be observant of natural divisions, predominant themes, and significant relationships. This systematic study of the scripture will reveal a full understanding of the passage to the best of the teachers ability.

Not only is the systematic study of Scripture valid, it is necessary. . . . Thus the theologian's systematic work is not only valid and necessary but of great importance for understanding the meaning of Scripture. Efforts to harmonize or find the underlying unity of various passages dealing with a particular theme are valid for the teacher and preacher as well as for the theologian. (McQuilkin 1992, 57)

Teachers are not totally on their own to understand the scripture facing them to be taught. The best teacher with them to guide in this discovery is the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come and be in all believers forever. Not only does He indwell the teacher but Jesus promised, "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26 NIV). Not only does He reveal, or open up the scripture to our understanding, He has led many previously to understand scripture and record their knowledge for the teacher to use in the form of books.

Most professionals have tools to assist them. The tools of a teacher are books. These tools would include various translations of the Bible that help bring to light the Word of God. Study Bibles are very common and provide commentary on the scripture though usually very brief. Commentaries, especially one volume (and occasionally two volume) provide an excellent resource for learning what is meant in various passages of scripture. Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, concordances, and topical Bibles also provide valuable information to assist the teacher in understanding a passage of scripture. An atlas of Bible lands will help with questions on geography (the where question) and a harmony of the gospels provide direction about parallel passages in the gospels as well as when things occurred in the life of Christ. Computer programs often provide these study tools and others at a substantial reduction in price over hard copies. Teachers normally will not have a full library of resources when they start teaching but over time can accumulate a number of helpful books.

The lesson text should not be overlooked as a source of helpful information both in understanding the meaning and application of the lesson. The lesson text will assist the teacher in ways of relating the scripture to the students. Following the study of the Bible passage would be a good time to read the lesson text. With the foundation of the Bible the teacher may be more aware of discrepancies that may exist. In the pressure to put a lesson together last minute, the overwhelming tendency is to skip the study portion and go straight to the lesson text. Nothing is more devastating to the development of a good lesson, that will nurture students in spiritual growth, than the lack of study. The teacher that skips the study portion robs them self of the blessing God has in store for them. All of

a sudden, teaching becomes a head to head event rather than a heart to heart ministry. To skip the study portion eliminates the time for God to speak to the teacher. The teacher loses the blessings God has in store and the students lose the blessing of a teacher's personal encounter with God. Procrastination is deadly for a teacher. The last minute teacher will miss so much as will their students. Teachers become discouraged with all the study when they just prepare lessons week after week and miss the encouraging encounters with God.

After all the study is completed the teacher may want to go back and reread the passage of scripture one more time to gain a fresh perspective on the order of events. In a sense the teacher has a mass of jigsaw puzzle pieces of information scattered across the table of the mind after studying the lesson. The rereading of the scripture enables the teacher to put the pieces back together so the whole picture can again be viewed and appreciated.

Step Three – Prayer

The teacher should pause a moment to pray regarding certain areas before proceeding. This does not mean the teacher is not praying and seeking the Lord during the study portion. There are three specific areas of prayer at this time. First, pray for God to reveal Himself and His Word. Second, the teacher should pray for students. Prayer for students should be personal, by name, and specific for needs they have. As the teacher interacts with students, an attentive teacher will become aware of specific prayer requests or needs. Prayer requests may be shared in class as well and it would be wise for the teacher to write

these items in a prayer journal. It can be very encouraging for a student to know their teacher is praying regularly for them outside of class. This is just another way the teacher can build rapport with students. As rapport develops, the student is more likely to listen to the teacher. The final area for prayer is for the writing of the lesson plan. This is when the lesson takes on its final shape and that needs to be directed by God so it will be what He can most effectively use to bring the student into a closer relationship with Him. A wise teacher is alert and sensitive to the leading of God at this point.

Step Four – Writing

The aim

Where is this lesson going? That's what the aim is all about. The aim gives direction to the lesson. The aim spells out what is going to happen as a result of the lesson. It also gives direction for what should be left in and what should not be in the lesson. The teacher will have accumulated more information in the study time than time will allow to be put into the lesson, not that everything should be in the lesson anyway. If the material helps the teacher communicate the aim of the lesson to the student, then it stays and if it does not help get the aim across then leave it out.

Specifically, the aim is the major truth from this passage of scripture of which the teacher wants the Christian children to respond. Notice it is the major truth from the lesson. Focus on one truth and it should be a primary truth the lesson teaches. The story should be an illustration of this truth or principle. The aim is specifically for the Christian child. The aim for the unsaved child is always going to be the gospel. Before the unsaved

are able to apply other biblical truth they need to be born into the family of God. After their spiritual birth the child has the capacity to comprehend other spiritual truth and the power source within to respond to it. The aim is not merely cognitive. The aim focuses on the response of the child to the truth taught from the Bible.

D.L. Moody had it right when he said, “The Bible wasn’t given for our information but for our transformation.” God did not give us the Bible to tell us what happened in the past but to equip us to live in the present in light of the future. . . . There is an indescribable difference between teaching the facts and teaching lives to change on the basis of the facts. Knowing the stories doesn’t change anyone – just visit a secular college class on the “Bible as Literature” and see for yourself. (Wilkinson 1992, 126)

The writer of Hebrews addressed believers that were immature at the end of chapter 5. Verse 14 says, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:14 NIV). It’s through the constant use of the Word of God people become mature in their walk with the Lord. It’s not a matter of how much Bible a person knows, but what they do with what they know, that develops spiritual maturity.

This is the educational significance of Hebrews 5:14. Growth comes by experience, by using our capacity to understand and to respond. . . . One of the basic weaknesses in our Sunday schools and churches today is that believers are not being taught the Word for growth. Most Sunday school teachers hope for spiritual growth, but teach only information. If growth toward maturity is our first purpose, teaching with content aims will not achieve it. To teach for growth we must teach for response. . . .

For spiritual growth toward maturity, the teaching aim will be framed in terms of response. When the teacher builds his lesson, he must think in terms of the learner response he hopes to achieve. (Richards 1970, 102-103)

The teacher wanting to help students in spiritual development will go beyond cognitive aims. Students need to know the Word before they can apply it, but knowing the

information is the beginning not the end. The teacher must plan what the students are suppose to do with the information of the lesson. Visualize the expected response from the student. The aim can be written in the following way to keep it student oriented and response oriented. The student will _____, and in the blank fill in an action verb. For example: The student will obey their parents, the student will witness to a friend this week, or the student will show kindness to someone this week. All of these require a response from the student. Appendix C provides a list of verbs under the column “Doing” that may prove helpful for teachers in writing response aims.

There are four rules governing the writing of aims that tend to help keep teachers on track and make the aims effective. Applying these guidelines to an aim can help make the aim one that will help focus a student on what will develop maturity.

- Brief enough to be remembered
- Clear enough to be written
- Specific enough to be done
- Simple enough to be achieved

The aim must be brief enough for the teacher to remember so it can be taught. More importantly it has to be brief enough for the student to remember long enough to put it into practice. Sometimes the aim can be worded for the students in a catchy phrase they will remember. For example if the aim is, “the student will pray when they face a difficult situation this week,” it could be reduced to, “got trouble – PRAY.” It must be clear enough to be written. If it is too nebulous to write, it can’t be taught. The aim can be put in a written visual so the class can see it. This will aid retention. If the teacher cannot visualize the student doing the aim it may need to be reworded. “The student will trust

God,” sounds good but may be difficult to actually do unless there are some clear examples of how the student would do it. The aim can be specific enough to be done like, “the student will read their Bible for an hour daily.” While specific enough to be done it is not simple enough to be achieved by an elementary age child. Teachers need to be realistic and yet push the children to achieve without putting burdens on them that would discourage them from walking with the Lord.

Dr. C. B. Eavey says, “an aim implies action directed in an orderly manner toward the accomplishment of some end” (1940, 45). The action is the application of the lesson which will help the child grow in character and behavior to become more like Christ. After the aim is written and the teacher knows what direction the lesson is going they can move to the next task of choosing a method.

The method

Selecting the method at this point will help the teacher write a lesson plan accordingly. The choice of method should be governed by what method will most effectively help the students grasp the aim of the lesson. As stated earlier, the basic method used in this model will be that of storytelling, which happens to be a very effective method of communicating. Jesus used storytelling extensively. It seems most people like a good story.

Whatever method is selected it is critical that students become actively involved in the learning process. The more actively involved students are the greater potential there is of the lesson being learned. Activities with no relevance to the aim of the lesson should be

avoided. It is common for people to say the worst method of teaching is lecture, however, that is a myth. The truth is, lecture is a great way to communicate a lot of information in a limited amount of time. With lectures it is difficult to fully engage students in the learning process. Without motivation to engage the student, their mind can easily wander during a lecture as they sit passively in the class. Passive students tend to disengage and learn nothing. “There are many kinds of involvement, but various kinds of involvement are not necessarily equal. Some kinds of engagement seem to facilitate growth and development more than others” (Anthony 2006, 264). Howard Hendricks is an avid advocate of active learning who says, “activity in learning is never an end in itself; it’s always a means to an end” (1987, 78). Teachers need to get students actively engaged in the learning process if they want to see progress in spiritual development. “Children will not actively apply what they have been passively taught” (Choun and Lawson 1998, 56).

The climax

Knowing the climax at the beginning helps the teacher know what to keep a secret until the appropriate time. The teacher who gives away the climax in the introduction gives the students nothing to anticipate. It is the climax that keep people engrossed in a movie to the end because they want to know, “who did it.” Knowing the climax at the beginning will help the teacher know what to built toward to develop suspense. For example in the story where Jesus fed the 5000, if the climax is everyone got to eat, subtle things can be included in the story to develop the suspense. In the introduction the teacher could ask the class if they every felt so hungry they thought they would starve to death. As

the crowd is described, help the students visualize how large the group was. The lunch was really very insignificant relative to the crowd. It is not a matter of embellishing the story with erroneous facts, but rather helping the students fully grasp the truth that is difficult when the students are so far removed from the situation. Keep the climax under wraps until the time it is to be revealed.

The body of the lesson

Developing a list of the events that occurred in the lesson as they will be taught is the next step. The initial outline may be rather long but should be cut down to a short manageable list by the time the final outline is written. Only put into the outline what is actually needed. If a single word or two is sufficient to remind the teacher what comes next that is all that is needed. Long sentences should be avoided because every time the teacher has to focus on the outline they lose eye contact with the students. A single page, no larger than the page of the teacher's Bible, should make a sufficient outline. The outline can be placed in the Bible at the appropriate scripture for the lesson. During the lesson, if necessary, the teacher can glance at the outline, be reminded of what comes next, and continue. Appendix D provides an example for teachers to view as a sample.

The application

Simultaneously while writing the body of the lesson, the teacher will want to be thinking about the application. The teacher will look for appropriate places to put the application, both for the unsaved (gospel) and for the Christian (aim). The placement of the gospel was discussed in detail previously. If the aim is the major truth of the lesson,

the teacher should be able to locate at least three places to teach it. At least one of the places the aim is taught, it should be amplified and taught in more detail. The acrostic YES could be used again, meaning You personal, Example, and Scripture. Make the application as personal as possible. Use personal pronouns and share in a way the children understand it relates to them personally. A strong key is giving pertinent examples children can see how to apply the aim to their life. Good relevant examples are helpful for children to see how to put the aim into practical application in life. A scripture that supports the aim is a way of reinforcing the aim as God's desire. The teacher should use a transitional sentence to step out of the story, make the application, and then another transitional sentence to return to the story.

The ending of the lesson

The progression of the outline comes to the end at which time four things will be included. First, there will be the conclusion of the Bible story. There may be parts of the story that cannot be told before the climax. For example, in the story of feeding the 5000, it would be inappropriate to share there were twelve baskets of food left over before telling the climax that everyone had plenty of food to eat. The concluding portions need to be kept to a minimum as attention will wane quickly.

The invitation is part of the ending of the lesson when the unsaved child is encouraged to respond to the teaching of the gospel. The invitation should be given for salvation alone. Whether the invitation is given first or after the challenge for the Christian child,

will be determined by the flow of the lesson and other circumstances such as the availability of counselors.

The aim is directed to the Christian child. The child is encouraged to respond to the teaching of the aim during the challenge. It is the call for a response to what the teacher has shared in the lesson for the Christian.

The final aspect of the ending usually follows the other parts of the ending. This part is called carry over. The difference between a lesson that ends in talk and one that leads to action is carry over according to Findley Edge (1959, 43). In this section the teacher will discuss with the class how the students will apply the aim during the week ahead. The younger the group, the more guidance the teacher will need to offer. The teacher needs to be ready to suggest ways the students can apply the aim. The broader the aim the more options will be available for students to choose how they will respond. Sometimes the teacher may give students assignments to work on at home to determine their response regarding the aim.

The challenge some teachers may face is how to get the students to do what is required. Part of that has to do with motivation. Teachers need to plan on how they are going to motivate students to apply the aim. The second part is accountability. Each week the teacher should follow up on the carry over project from the previous week. If the students know the teacher is going to check up on what they did, they will be more apt to do the project than if no one follows up on it. If it is important enough for the student to do, it should be important enough for the teacher to follow up. In this way the teacher demonstrates a loving, caring attitude toward their students.

The introduction

The final part of the lesson plan to prepare is the introduction. Once the lesson is planned the teacher can reflect on the best way to introduce the lesson to the class which will grasp their attention and draw them into the lesson. The introduction should move from the known to the unknown. The introduction must relate to the lesson and tie into it smoothly. It needs to be short and reach out to pull the attention of the student into the lesson. There are several options the teacher can employ for an introduction. A question can be used to peak the interest of the students that connects to the lesson. At times an illustration or human interest story may connect with the students and the lesson as an introduction. The use of an object lesson could connect well as an introduction. Occasionally a lesson will lend its self to a direct approach where the story opens with an exciting event. Another introduction some lessons can use is called a back flash. In this situation the introduction would highlight a dramatic portion of the story and then go back to relate how it came to be or what led up to that event. Door-to-door salesmen used to be accused of sticking their toe in the door so the occupant had to listen to the sales pitch. In a way, that is what the introduction does, hopefully, without the negative connotation.

Step Five – Visualize

Visual aids are a tremendous asset to the teaching/learning process. The visuals provide a means of helping the teacher communicate the lessons that will help children grow in their relationship with Christ. Retention is critical for lasting results and visuals

are a proven means of increasing retention. This has been proven in various surveys that demonstrate visuals increase the retention of students.

Our students, conditioned by television, are visually literate. In fifty-five secular experiments using pictures and performed by different educators, test results showed that when picture and text went together learning was higher and what was learned was remembered longer. . . . There is overwhelming evidence that we should be using pictures with every lesson we teach. In no test was text without pictures better in terms of the grades students got or what they remembered. (Clark, Johnson and Sloat 1991, 344)

Knowing the value of visuals, teachers need to use them extensively. Not only should the historical Bible story be visualized, but the application also needs to be visualized because that is key for the students to take home with them. Teachers need to be conscious of the quality of visuals being used. The visuals teachers use need to relate to technologically savvy kids. Visualizing lessons can be time consuming. Teachers need to be careful their time is not consumed visualizing lessons to the neglect of study or relationships. “Special care must be taken to ensure that the technology or other mediums being used enhance the biblical content rather than detract from Bible learning” (Anthony 2006, 273).

Step Six – Practice the Presentation

Practice makes for improvement. The newer the teacher is to teaching the more important it becomes to practice. Teachers should practice the presentation of the lesson out loud. This will give confidence and reveal areas that need improvement. Practicing with the visual aids helps improve confidence in using the visuals and helps the teacher know if something is not working correctly. Use of any visual aid that the teacher is not

accustomed to makes practice that much more important. If the teacher is fumbling with visuals, they become visual distractions rather than visual aids.

If using any type of flannel graph, the teacher needs to practice placing the figures on the board and observe it from the students view position. Perspective can be altered dramatically when standing next to a flannel board. Learning the placement of figures and correct order before class will greatly enhance the presentation. If using a computer with PowerPoint or similar visual presentation, practice will ensure the slides turn properly and the teacher knows how to use the equipment. Turning flash cards is not purely automatic without revealing future pictures, especially when bound in a book. A little practice can make the lesson less prone to distractions. Giving an invitation may seem so simple and yet when doing it at first the teacher may stumble considerably if it is not practiced ahead of time. The more familiar a teacher becomes with various aspects of teaching the less critical practice becomes. Experienced teachers need to be careful not to rely too much on previous experience and fail to ensure the smooth operation of equipment or visuals. Things such as stepping back a distance and viewing flannel figures always helps. Practicing the placement of figures on a board needs to be done with every lesson regardless how experienced the teacher is. Being sure PowerPoint slides are in order and turn correctly must be done every week if using that media.

Step Seven - Commit it to the Lord

Finally, all the preparation in the world will be of no value in teaching spiritual truth if God is not in it. The teacher needs to commit all their preparation to God. God does use

prepared teachers but its not the preparation that makes or breaks the class. God's power is the all important factor. The heart of the teacher should be, "commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this" (Ps. 37:5 NIV). It is too easy for a well prepared teacher to begin thinking it's all about how well they are prepared. The well prepared teacher can trust in all their preparation and hard work, rather than trusting in God. This leaves no room for teachers to be sloppy and ill prepared. God requires teachers to be diligent and faithful in preparing the best they can and then leave the results up to Him.

Relationships Involved

The teaching learning process involves several relationships upon which success will hinge. The relationship between the teacher and God and His Word have already been discussed, as has the relationship between the teacher and the lesson content. The relationship between the teacher and their style or delivery will strongly impact the potential of the student learning. The number one worldwide hindrance to learning is boredom according to Bruce Wilkinson (Wilkinson 1994, vii). The cause of boredom is directly related to the teachers style or delivery, of which the teacher has full control. Boring teachers do not motivate students to grow spiritually. Therefore, teachers who want to encourage spiritual development must develop an effective teaching style so they can attract students to the Lord.

A teacher reading a story out of a lesson text to a class is boring and not engaging. That is why earlier it is suggested teachers outline a lesson from which they teach. Learning the lesson well enough to teach from an outline allows the lesson to come from

the heart which can be taught with personal passion and conviction. The teacher's voice, body language and eyes can be used effectively to communicate the teacher's passion and concern for the students. The teacher can put energy, transparency, and emotion into the lesson which all communicate to the student. All teachers are capable of becoming excellent teachers or communicators of God's truth if they have the desire to do so. Resources such as, *Teaching with Style*, are available to help teachers become more proficient in their delivery.

The relationship between the teacher and the student is pivotal to success. If the messenger does not connect neither will the message. Personality will cause some teachers to naturally connect well with students. These teachers will have to focus more on the relationship with the content. Other teachers personality will cause them to be more inclined to develop content and they will have to intentionally work harder at developing relationships with students. Teachers who take a personal interest in their students, and the things that are important to the students, will grow the relationship that will give them a hearing in class. Teachers may have to reach out beyond class to develop relationships so they can connect in class. Students will respond to involvement in the class. When they have opportunity to express them self in class they become more actively involved in the learning process making the desired outcome of spiritual development more likely.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Children who are vibrant and alive with energy are being shaped today for the future whether deliberately or without intentional direction. Their future lies in the decisions of many adults all around them. Their moral and spiritual values are forming which will define the rest of their life. All children are in a spiritual journey and lay teachers have the unique opportunity to influence the direction that journey will take in a very positive direction. Children with Christian parents concerned for their spiritual development will highly value teachers who come alongside them and assist in giving their child spiritual direction. As observed above, many Christian parents are fairly clueless on how to nurture their child spiritually and are hungry for someone to provide assistance or direction they seem unable to give their child. Children without Christian parents will flounder spiritually for the lack of biblical direction at home. These children are at great risk without a teacher equipped to give direction for their spiritual formation. Children will be shaped spiritually but without positive guidance they will follow a natural path that will lead them away from God rather than closer to Him. There is a spiritual warfare going on for the souls of children. Christians face the urgent demand to exert a positive influence upon children to direct them toward Christ while they are impressionable and their lives are being shaped. Once they are beyond childhood the probability of salvation and walking with Christ are very slim.

Biblical examples have been presented to demonstrate God's heart for the salvation of children. Scriptures abound with instruction to reach and teach the children for Christ. Volunteer Christian teachers fill a vital role in giving spiritual direction to children especially in a society where God is not valued and nowhere else except a few Christian homes are spiritual principles being taught. Teachers are standing in a critical spiritual gap providing an awesome service for parents, the church, the community, and the nation. Evangelical teachers are entrusted with the powerful Word of God to help children in their spiritual journey. The teacher has the assistance of the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling and His promise to give power and direction.

Spiritual DNA is necessary for a child to be able to comprehend spiritual truth, so teachers need to prioritize the gospel in their teaching. Scripture provides ample proof that children can and should be evangelized. Historically child evangelism has been practiced in the church and many of its leaders have advocated emphasis on the evangelism of children. Statistically it has been shown that childhood is the most receptive time for the gospel. The data clearly points to the remote possibility of anyone being saved after childhood which dramatically illustrates that if any impact for Christ is to be made upon the world, the church must focus on reaching children.

The presentation of the gospel has been demonstrated including how to share the gospel in a lesson. Once a child has been born spiritually they possess a new life which gives them a spiritual capacity to grasp spiritual truth. After salvation the teacher can teach the student on a new level because they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who has promised to guide believers into all spiritual truth. Not only does the child have the

indwelling Holy Spirit as a teacher but they now have the power source to live out the Christian life. Once the child has been born spiritually they are on the road to take a spiritual journey that will last a lifetime.

Spiritual development does not happen apart from God working in the student's life. As the student lives obedient to the Word of God, they can begin the process of spiritual development, whereby they become more like Christ in their character and behavior which will ultimately bring glory to God. Teachers have been shown how to apply the Bible lesson to the life of students so spiritual maturity can occur. Students will grow as they learn the Bible and live obediently to it. The application of the Bible is critical for students to become spiritual champions.

Bryan Clay became the world's greatest athlete winning the gold medal as the Olympic Decathlete in Beijing 2008. His success did not happen overnight but with years of preparation and training. Teachers are not born but made through preparation and training. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals to become the grandest of champions in Beijing in 2008 and that achievement only came by perseverance and hours upon hours of practice. Teachers can achieve great things for God if they are willing to place a high value on preparation and training. Longevity helps as years of experience add to the teachers ability to minister to children and continue their walk with the Lord. Teachers are leaders setting the example for the students to follow. Teaching out of the overflow enables teachers to be relevant and inspiring. To teach with excellence, teachers must spend the time to prepare well which includes their own heart preparation. The relationship of the teacher with God, the subject to be taught, the style or method of teaching, and the

students will wield a lot of influence on the outcome of the class. The growth of students will hinge largely on what the teacher is willing to put into the process.

A wise teacher will communicate the lesson with students in a way they can connect and apply to life. To be effective, teachers will involve students in the learning process, so the lesson does not end in the head, but will lead to transformation of the child. As children live out the Word of God, they will progress in their spiritual journey toward the goal of becoming conformed to the image of Christ. The wise teacher will continue to pursue this endeavor making learning an exciting experience for their students. “A wise teacher makes learning a joy” (Prov. 15:2 LB)

APPENDIX A

GLIMPSE AT GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

Adapted from Barth & Sally Middleton

Jeremiah 24:7 Colossians 1:10 Job 22:21 Romans 11:33
God does not reveal everything about Himself — Deut. 29:29; Is. 55:8-9
An attribute of God is something that God has shown us to be true about Himself.

ATTRIBUTE	SCRIPTURES	THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER
1. WISDOM	Prov 3:19; Rom 11:33 Dan 2:20	God knows how to do everything. He has perfect plans and does things in the best possible way.
2. ETERNAL	Is 43:13; Deut 33:27; Ps 90:2	God has no beginning and no ending, He is not affected by time, nor bound by it. God knows all of your tomorrows.
3. LOVE	1 Jn 4:16; Jer 31:3; Rom 5:8	Love is what causes God to communicate Himself with man. His love desires your good and never desires harm or evil.
4. SOVEREIGN	1 Chron 28:11; Ps 22:28; Dan 2:21	God made all things; therefore, He has the right to rule them. He has all freedom because no one nor anything can hinder Him.
5. JUST	Deut 32:3-4; Zeph 3:5 1 Jn 1:9	God is always fair. He always makes the right decisions. There is nothing in His justice which forbids the exercise of His mercy.
6. IMMUTABLE	Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8; Jam 1:17	God has never changed and He never will change. He cannot get any better because He is perfect.
7. OMNIPOTENT	Ps 115:3; Job 42:2; Rev 19:6	God has enough power to do anything He wants to do. There is not one thing that God cannot do through you. Because God is all powerful, He can change even you!

8. GRACE	Jn 1:17; 2 Cor 8:9; Eph 2:8	Grace goes beyond mercy. It is more than unmerited favor. It involves the reconciliation of God's holiness and love through the death and resurrection of the God-man, Jesus Christ.
9. OMNISCIENT	Job 37:16; Jn 21:17; 1 Jn 3:20	God knows everything. He never has learned and never will need to learn. He knows all things that are to come as though they were already here. Nothing is hidden from Him.
10. GOOD	Ps 145:9; Ps 34:8; Zech 9:17	God has always been good. He did not become good, and He will not cease to be good. All that God does is good.
11. MERCIFUL	Num 14:18; Ex 34:6; Eph 2:4	God's mercy is free and undeserved. No human deed can earn it. He gives and forgives within limits set by Himself.
12. HOLY	Is 6:3; Rev 4:8; Ps 99:9	God is completely pure and perfect. Because God is holy He hates sin and loves righteousness.
13. FAITHFUL	Deut 7:9; 1 Thess 5:24; 1 Jn 1:9	God's very name is faithful (Rev 19:11). He always does what He says He will do. He is absolutely firm in keeping His promises.
14. OMNIPRESENT	Ps 139:7-12; Jer 23:23-24; Prov 15:3	God is present everywhere. Therefore, He can always be with and in every believer. He is close enough to hear, protect, know your needs and sin. "God is never so far off, as to be near."
15. TRUTH	Ps 31:5; Ps 117:2; Jn 14:6	God cannot lie; therefore, He can be trusted to always keep His promises and His advise in the Bible is trustworthy.

APPENDIX B

SALVATION VERSES

(New International Version)

ADMIT YOUR SIN:

NUM 32:23 be sure that your sin will find you out.

1KI 8:46--for there is no one who does not sin--...

PSA 14:3 All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

PROV 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

ECC 7:20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

ISA 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

ISA 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you,

JER 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

ROM 3:10-12 "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

ROM 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

ROM 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--

ROM 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

JAM 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

JAM 4:17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

1JO 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

BELIEVE CHRIST DIED FOR YOU -

Took your punishment:

ISA 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

JOH 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

ROM 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1CO 15:3-4 Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

2CO 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

HEB 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

1PE 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

1JO 1:7 the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

RECEIVE CHRIST AS SAVIOR:

PSA 51:7 wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

JOH 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--

JOH 3:3 "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

ACT 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

ACT 16:31 "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-

ROM 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

ROM 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

REV 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

GROW IN CHRIST:

ROM 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1TH 5:16-18 Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

HEB 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1PE 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

2PE 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

1JO 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

GOD LOVES YOU:

JER 31:3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

ROM 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

IJO 4:8-10 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

IJO 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

OUR HEAVENLY HOME:

PSA 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

JOH 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

REV 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

REV 21:21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

REV 21:24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

REV 22:3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

APPENDIX C
VERBS FOR AIMS

A list of possible verbs to be used in writing Aims in the following areas:

KNOWING	FEELING	DOING
To know	To develop an appreciation	To present
To recall	To develop an awareness of	To demonstrate
To recognize	To enjoy	To use
To distinguish	To value	To study
To analyze	To accept	To practice
To comprehend	To marvel	To serve
To understand	To admire	To prepare
To acquire info about	To become interested in	To guide
To become familiar with	To develop sensitivity for	To plan
To identify	To be sensitive to	To write
To describe	To desire	To organize
	To be willing to	To lead
	To appreciate	To explain
	To reject	To testify
		To obey

Benjamin Bloom, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Longman NY & London: 1956, 1981

APPENDIX D

Bible Lesson Outline Sample

Feeding the 5000

AIM = The student will serve God

INTRO: ever been so hungry-thought you would starve?

- A. Disc. had been teaching about Jesus
Returned to report - No time to even eat
 - B. Jesus and Disc. go across lake - privately
 - C. Crowd meet Jesus on other side
 - D. Jesus concerned for the people
Many were sick (Rom. 3:10)
 - E. Jesus taught all day - (Kndm of God)
 - F. People bec. very hungry
 - G. Disc. told Jesus - "Send them away"
 - H. Jesus replied "You give them something to eat"
What food is available? (5000+)
 - I. Andrew brought boy w/5 bread 2 fish (so small)
 - J. He gave it to Jesus - what can you give Him?
1 Cor 12:7
 - K. What could Jesus do with one small lunch?
How many people were there?
 - L. Jesus prayed - have people sit in 50/100
- CLIMAX: Everyone was fed
All were filled - 12 baskets left over
Jesus wants to use you...Will you let Him?
Invitation

Aim or Main Thrust

Sin

Death & Resurrection of Jesus

Choose to receive Christ

Attribute of God/Who Christ is

Jesus Walks on Water Outline

The gospel points could be placed as shown on the left side of the outline.

An alternative using the problem solution method is shown with the symbols on the right side.

Jesus Walks on Water

Got trouble - Pray (Mt 14:22-33)

Elections - Jesus to be king

Force to be king

Sent Disc. away

Prays

Disc. rowed 3 miles

Storm

Scary - death (3-4 am)

didn't pray

Ghost appeared - terrified

Jesus "don't be afraid"

Peter (v.28)

Storm - waves

SINK - TROUBLE

Pray - Lord save me!

Immediately Jesus did

Boat - storm stopped - land

When trouble - PRAY (challenge)

1st ABC (invitation)

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