

Parents Night Outline

Leader's Guide



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Effective Family Nights

Suggestions

- Send home flyers about Family Night from VBS for at least two days.
- Include information about Family on your VBS registration form.
- Send an email about Family Night to all the parents who registered their kids for VBS.
- Excite the kids about Family Night by telling them about it – i.e., “We’re going to have a great time with illusions, a video of pictures from the week, etc.”
- Have a drawing to giveaway prizes at the Family Night – i.e., gift baskets, gift cards, etc.
- Give something away to all the kids – “If you come to Family Night tonight, you’ll get...”
- Have several volunteers take pictures throughout the week to give you a great variety of photos. You can easily upload these pictures using a free account at Animoto.com to make a short but quality-looking video.
- If you have enough pictures, have a slideshow going as parents arrive so that they are engaged from even before the event begins.
- Choose several kids as volunteers to be at the doors as people arrive to greet them and to give out whatever is needed—i.e., give tickets out for prize giveaway, a schedule of the service, an invitation to something special that is happening the following Sunday, etc.
- Instead of having kids sit with their classes, tell your kids in advance that you want their families to sit together and that they’ll want to sit up close to have the best view for what will be happening.

Other Ideas

- **Ask the WHY?** Always ask yourself, “Why would kids and parents want to be a part of Family Night?” What is the draw? What is the hook? What makes the kids go home and say, “Mom, we can’t miss this.”
- **Walk the Plank** - This takes some time and expense but is a big hit. Buy a swimming pool that is at least 3-feet deep. Put air mattresses at the bottom, covered by hundred or thousands of foam-like balls or balloons. Randomly choose a student (or perhaps the boy and girl who brought the most friends) each day of VBS to jump *feet-first* into the pool and then to dive down and find a prize at the bottom. During Family Night, randomly choose two people (adults or kids) to jump in and dive for a prize. If you do this, you’ll want to include some great prizes at the bottom like a gift card for a family meal at a favorite restaurant, etc. You can even put the prizes inside balloons so they don’t know what they’re choosing until they get out and pop the balloon. (One church where we did this built a plank extending off their stage and their kids literally walked the plank!)

Parents Night Outline

The Ultimate Parent Night Pack

Items Needed

- You will only need items that you can find at most grocery stores such as a bottle of water, a dropper (like what is used to give medicine to children of young babies)
- 3 kids ready to share their salvation testimonies. *(See leader's information in this pack.)*
- Information about how to give an invitation for kids. *(See leader's information in this pack.)*

Songs

Usually two songs as people are still arriving. Let kids or volunteers help lead the songs. Use the songs you've been doing with the kids throughout the week.

Welcome

Keep this brief, fast-paced and to the point:

- Give a quick thank you to your volunteers
- Tell the parents how much you've enjoyed their kids
- Tell them that they are going to get a little taste of what their kids have been experiencing
- Introduce any Control Tools you've used throughout the week and let the kids show the parents how loud they can be. (Learn more about Control Tools at www.threethirtyministries.org/control-tools.)
- Include a brief explanation of any other aspect of VBS that you feel is necessary – i.e., “This year's VBS offering is going to...And right now the girls are winning the offering competition, etc.

Video of Pictures

We recommend that you only use one 3-4 minute song for this. Too many times, if you have a lot of pictures, you're tempted to use them all and end up with 10 minutes of pictures, which isn't fun for anyone. Use extra pictures to show as parents are arriving and leaving.

Songs

Usually one or two songs.

Lesson

The following includes several attention-getting, easy-to-use illusions that are a hit both with parents and kids and a great way to communicate the Gospel. Be sure to watch the videos of these illusions in action and to practice, practice, practice as well. You can find these videos www.330resources.org/vbs-parent-night-video

Kids Testimony – Have a pre-selected child share his salvation testimony. Practice with him beforehand to help him speak into the microphone and to keep his story under 90 seconds.

Explain that God loves everyone – You can have your kids say John 3:16 with you. However, if you do this, be sure to do this with your kids during VBS as well for practice.

Torn Balloon – As you blow up the balloon (a 260Q balloon animal balloon), explain that even though God loves us, we all have a problem and that's what the balloon is going to show us.

Say that a balloon can represent a lot of things – For example, (hold the balloon like a smile), if this was on a person's face, what could it be? A smile. (Hold it like a frown.) But if this was on a person's face, what could it be? A frown. Perhaps a uni-brow!

But this balloon is going to show us what SIN is like. God loves everyone but we have a problem—We've all done wrong things and those wrong things are called sin and sin is like this. (Tightly hold the balloon with both hands in the middle and tear the balloon into two pieces without letting go or letting the air out. This can take some practice and some hand-strength. If this is too hard, then choose a child to come up, give him scissors and have him cut the balloon in half while you pinch it on both sides so it doesn't deflate—"Be sure to cut it, not ME!")

Explain that sin cuts us off from God. Hold up one side of the torn balloon – ASK: Is God perfect? Yes. If they don't respond loudly, ask them again. Hold up the other side of the torn balloon – ASK: Are we perfect? No. God is perfect and we are not because we've all done wrong things and those wrong things, that sin, separates us and cuts us off from God. (As you talk, hold the balloon ends together and pull them apart, showing how they are separated.)

Change Bag – Choose a volunteer—A young girl usually works best for this. While she is coming up, explain that once the balloons was torn (or cut) it was ruined. You can fix it. You can't put it back together—That's impossible. And it's impossible for us to fix our sin problem too. We can't save ourselves. And that's why God sent Jesus.

Let go of the balloon pieces. (Or, you can have some fun with this if you hand one of the balloon pieces to your volunteer but let go before she grabs it. It will fly up in the air. Say, "That's okay. We'll just use this one." Then do it again.)

Show your volunteer the Change Bag and tell her that the bag represents a person's life. Ask her to reach in the bag and take out the stained hanky inside. Have her show both sides to everyone. Explain that the stains are like our sin—Is God perfect? Yes. Are we perfect. No. Our sin separates us from God and are like the stains. The hanky isn't perfect. It's messed up and the Bible tells us that sin messes up God's plan for our lives. Reach your hand in the bottom of the bag and turn it inside out. Say that we're just like the bag—When a person doesn't have Jesus as their Lord and Savior they'll be just as empty as the bag. Then have your volunteer put the stained hanky back in the bag.

SAY: But that's why God sent Jesus and Jesus came to earth, live a perfect life and then died on the cross for our sins. And when He died God punished Jesus for all the bad things you and I will ever do. Because Jesus died for our sins, He can forgive us and take them away if we're willing to receive Him as our Lord and Savior.

Let's pretend that this person (referring to the bag) hears about Jesus—Right now, he's empty and has sin in him but just hearing about Jesus doesn't change this. He has to be willing to give his life to Jesus, but if he comes to the Lord and says, "Dear Lord Jesus, I'm sorry for the wrong things I've done. I give you my life. Please take my sins away...", an incredible thing happens. Have your volunteer reach into the bag again and pull out the hanky, showing both sides, that all the stains are gone. SAY: Jesus can take your sins away. Is God perfect? Yes. Are we perfect. No. Our sin separates us from God but only Jesus can save us from our sins.

Kids Testimony – Have a pre-selected child share his salvation testimony. Practice with him beforehand to help him speak into the microphone and to keep his story under 90 seconds.

Colorbook & Vanishing Crayons – Show the coloring book to everyone. What does this say? This is the Bible Coloring Book and this book shows us about someone's life. Thumb through the coloring book, showing the blank pages. This is what a person's life is like if they don't know Jesus—They're empty.

But then let's say they go to church or VBS and they learn some about life and God. Now their life isn't totally empty – Thumb the books, showing the black and white pages. But something is missing. They have an outline for how to live – They know right and wrong but they're not complete.

Keep the coloring book in one hand and pick up the Vanishing Crayons. Picture that God is like these crayons right here—Do you see the crayons? The crayons represent God. He's way over here and we're way over there because our sin has separated us from God. Hold up the crayons – Is God perfect? Yes. Hold up the coloring book – Are we perfect? No, and our sin has separated us from God. And that's why God sent Jesus. Jesus is God's only Son who came to earth, lived a perfect life and died on the cross for our sins. And, because Jesus died and rose again, if this person (referring to the coloring book) is willing to receive Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior – Hold the crayons above the coloring book - if this person is willing to give his life to Christ, then an amazing thing happens. Move the crayons behind the book. Because God takes every wrong thing they've ever done and He forgives them. Pull the crayons out showing the empty box. Where are the crayons? They're gone. Why? Because this

person is no longer separated from God because he has accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

SAY: Instead God has taken the color of His life and has put it inside of your life. Thumb the book, showing that it is now full-color.

Kids Testimony – Have a pre-selected child share his salvation testimony. Practice with him beforehand to help him speak into the microphone and to keep his story under 90 seconds.

After the testimony, explain that everyone can know for sure that they're going to Heaven if they are willing to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Ending – At this point, you can either have an invitation as a way of giving people an opportunity to respond to the Gospel message that they've heard or point out people they can talk with or a place they can go if they have questions about why Jesus died and how they can receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

Teaching Kids to Share Their Salvation Stories

Sharing My Salvation Story

The following teaches kids how to share their salvation story not only in front of a group but as a way of creating one-on-one conversations for the purpose of sharing Christ.

Explain to your kids that their salvation testimony is simply their story about how they were saved.

Here are a few things to remember:

- Every story of salvation is a story of life-change and the greatest miracle of all. There is no such thing as a “boring” testimony.
- It also doesn’t have to be long. In fact, it shouldn’t be long. Try to keep your salvation testimony to a minute or less. Practice this.

Challenge your kids:

- When you get home, write down your salvation story but not to memorize it—just to practice telling it. This isn’t a presentation. It’s a story. Share it from your heart. Let God guide you, and listen to Him as you share it.
- Share your salvation story as often as you can. Try to share it every day. Practice on your family. Practice on your Christian friends. Practice in the mirror. Practice on your dog... he won’t get saved. Practice on your non-Christian friends...some of them might get saved. The more you share your story the more comfortable you will be in sharing your story and the more natural it will become.
- Finally, understand that your testimony is powerful. People can argue anything...but it’s hard to argue someone’s experience.

Part 1

What Started You Thinking About Giving Your Life To Jesus?

Were you in church and heard a preacher? Did something happen that made you think about death or heaven? Did a friend do or say something that put these thoughts in your mind?

It is amazing to hear the things that God uses to draw people to Him. As a child I stopped watching *Star Trek* after seeing a movie where Captain Kirk denied the existence of God. However, in college I met a young man training for ministry who came to Christ because of that same scene. As he watched it, he began to wonder, "Could there be a God?" The Lord used that *Star Trek* movie in the process of drawing him to Christ.

What stirred your heart? What started you thinking about giving your life to Jesus?

Write down your thoughts on a piece of paper.

Part 2

What Did You Do?

As you were thinking about Jesus and heaven, did you talk to someone? Did you talk to your parents? A minister? What did you learn? What did you do? Obviously, in some way, you learned about how Jesus died and rose again to make a way to forgive you, to save you, and to give you eternal life. Then you decided that you wanted Jesus to be the Lord of your life and you called on Him to save you.

Stop and think about it. Take some time to write down your experience.

Part 3

What Difference Did It Make?

So what's different now that you are a believer? What difference did it make in your life? What difference did it make in eternity? The best way to end your salvation story is by saying:

"Because of this I know for sure I'm going to heaven. How about you?"

This simple statement helps you to discover whether or not the person you are talking with knows Jesus also.

If they say, "Sure. I'm going to heaven," ask them how they know for sure. Are they right? Did they share a salvation experience or an answer that you know, according to the Bible, isn't right? Are they trusting something other than Christ for salvation (i.e., "I'm a good person." "I go to church." "I got baptized.")?

If they don't share a genuine salvation experience, then ask for the opportunity to share with them what the Bible says about how a person can know Jesus and spend eternity in heaven.

"Can I show you what the Bible says about how you can know for certain that you would spend eternity in heaven?"

If they say "yes," then share with them how God can save them just like He saved you. If they say "no" ask if there would be a better time and if not, try leave them with a tract or at least try to leave an open door for sharing with them in the future.

Take some time to write down your thoughts.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Pitfalls To Avoid When Sharing Your Salvation Story

(1) Stick To The Point

Don't share your life story: "I was born at a really young age and I was close to my mother when it happened..." Get to the point. This is the story of how you came to Christ. Cut out everything else. For example, you don't need to say, "So I talked to my pastor. His name was Bob and I had known Bob for twelve years. We used to play softball together. We had this cool nickname for him..." What does that have to do with your salvation experience? If nothing, then don't share it.

(2) Keep It Brief

You should be able to share your salvation testimony in a minute or less. Time yourself. Try to share as clearly and briefly as possible.

(3) Avoid Churchy Language

If someone hasn't grown up in church, they may not understand churchy language. If you say, "I walked down the aisle" referring to go forward during a church invitation, someone who hasn't been in church may associate it with their only experience of "walking down an aisle" which is probably the day they were married. With children I stopped using the phrase, "I asked Jesus into my heart," because there was a child who said, "I don't want Jesus in my heart!" Why not? "Because He's a big man and I'm just a little girl." She was being literal. Big man plus little heart equals big mess! She didn't understand the terminology.

When I have used the term "saved," a biblical term, I have had children ask, "What do you mean that you were 'saved'? Did you fall in a swimming pool and someone pull you out?"

Even, when I am speaking with a child, if I ask, "Have you ever sinned?" I always follow by saying, "Have you ever done anything wrong?" I started doing this after having several children tell me, "No. I've never sinned." Then I would ask, "Have you ever done anything

wrong?" and they would immediately say, "Oh yeah." It wasn't that they hadn't done wrong things. They just didn't understand my wording. As you are working on your salvation testimony, listen to it with the ears of someone who hasn't been in church. Listen also with the ears of a child. Do you hear anything confusing?

Creating Opportunities To Share Jesus With Others

If you have a friend that is lost, how do you bring it up without feeling awkward or off-the-wall. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask, "Can I tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?" If they say, "yes," then share your salvation testimony, the story of how you were saved. If they say "no," then it's probably a bad time and there will be a better time later.
- Look for situational opportunities: Is something going on in this person's life that might be making them think about spiritual matters? Did heaven, death, God or Jesus just come up in a conversation? Did someone just use God's name in vain and you can kindly explain to them how important that name is to you?
- Pray and ask God to open up doors for you to share His love with others. The single greatest thing that stops people for sharing Jesus is an unwilling heart.

Let's Review

The best way to create an opportunity to share your salvation story is by saying, "Can I tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?"

There are three basic parts to your salvation story:

- (1) What started you thinking about giving your life to Jesus?
- (2) What did you do?
- (3) What difference did it make?

The best way to end your story is by saying, "Because of this I know for sure I'm going to heaven. What about you?"

This question puts the "ball" in their court to help you find out whether or not they have had a genuine salvation experience and to help you know how to proceed in your conversation with them.

The First Week Sharing My Story

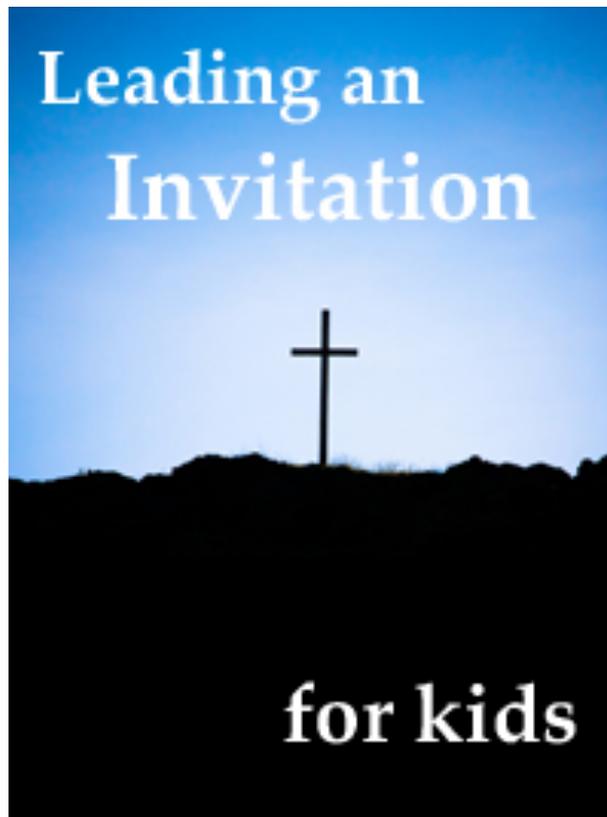
Share your salvation testimony every day this week and in the back of this book write down the names of the people with whom you share it. Also write down their responses and any thoughts or experiences you have.

Sharing Your Salvation Story in Front of a Group

- Help your kids by practicing in front of a group - This can be in front of the group you're training, another group of children, an adult Sunday School class, etc.
- Encourage kids that the more they practice, the more comfortable they'll be.
- Encourage them to speak clearly and to talk directly into the microphone. Give them an opportunity to practice this.
- Pray with and for them and help them to see that sharing their salvation story in front of a group is not about them or "how well they do," but it's about an opportunity to share Jesus with people who may not know him.
- Finally, never "make" a student share his story in front of a group and never make a student feel "guilty" for not sharing. Be patient, kind and encouraging. Discipleship and training is a process.

Leading an Invitation for Kids

Anyone can get kids to raise their hands or repeat some words but how do you give an invitation that is effective and appropriate?



The following was written to help you develop an effective plan for giving kids the opportunity to respond to the Gospel.

It also addresses two extremes that we see growing inside our churches:

- Because we're afraid that kids will make salvation decisions when they're not ready and without a full understanding, some churches have moved to a position of presenting the Gospel but not giving kids a chance to respond.
- Other churches have adopted a position of inviting children with the idea that "God will eventually sort it out" without the resource and training to help kids truly understand the decision they are making.

Suggestions

Consider the ages of the kids in the room - We will often dismiss 1st grade or kindergarten-aged kids and younger after sharing the Gospel but before giving an invitation. We want them to hear the Gospel but we can easily leave them with the idea: If you have questions and want to talk with someone about why Jesus died for you and how you can give your life to Christ, then you can talk to (and specifically point out the people with whom they can talk).

Point out leaders - Throughout your VBS or event, point out the leaders that students can talk with about salvation. We will many times have them wear a badge or a T-shirt, something that sets them apart from the other leaders, to make sure that the kids approach leaders who are trained and know when a child is ready to accept Christ and how to lead a child to Christ. (Please go to www.330resources.org/children for information for training these leaders and leading kids to Christ.)

Give a clear presentation of the Gospel - Be clear. A great way is simply to walk them through the drawing for the plan of salvation. This is a short and simple explanation of how Jesus made a way to save us and how we receive Him. (Learn more about this drawing and leading kids to Christ at www.330resources.org/children.)

Don't take long - Don't turn this into a church service. Remember that a seven-year old under the conviction of the Holy Spirit is still a seven-year old and will still have the attention span of a seven-year old.

If you give kids a chance to respond as a group...

Be clear - Explain what you are doing - i.e., "If you're not sure you're going to Heaven or you have questions about how Jesus can save you from your sins, in a moment we are going to close our eyes and when I tell you to, I want you to go..." (Tell them where to go - To the back of the room and stand next to a certain person. Point this person out to them. Or, have them come up front and tell them where to stand and then they are going to follow a certain person out to talk, etc.)

Be short - Tell them that you're not going to wait long, probably only a minute or two. If God is dealing in their hearts, they don't need long to know that He is "tugging" for them to come.

Try to avoid "flocking" - Tell the kids that you only want them to come if they want to know more about receiving Jesus, not to come just because a friend comes, etc. We call this "flocking," when one kid comes and a few more come behind him simply because he came.

Be silent - We usually don't play music during an invitation with kids because we want the control to cut it off if we see "flocking." We also usually leave them sitting down and just tell them to close their eyes and to make room for anyone that might need to move past them.

Don't push - You've shared the truth. Now let the Lord move in their hearts.

Be prayerful - Let the Holy Spirit guide you as you lead the invitation.

Be prepared - Have enough trained leaders ready to talk with kids as one-on-one as possible when they come. Remind these leaders that just because a child comes to talk doesn't mean that they came for the right reasons. Have them always ask why the person came and how they can help them but also keeping in mind that some kids might not be able to verbalize well the reasons why they wanted to come. It's okay to ask questions, etc.

Leave the door open - After the invitation, tell the kids that it's okay if they want to talk or have any questions. Point out the people they need to talk to. During VBS we usually give an invitation toward the beginning so that kids have the opportunity to approach leaders through the day if they have questions. This also allows enough time for us to begin following up on kids before they even go home.