

Decision Time for Kids



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The Gospel Presentation

The following is a simple and easy way to share the plan of salvation for kids in a large-group setting.

Decision Time

Items Needed

- The One Way Illusion
- Something to draw on such as a poster board or a marker board, etc. and something with which to write that can be seen from a distance.
- Practice drawing out the plan of salvation.
- 1 child who ready to share his or her salvation testimony. *(The resource kit contains a guide for teaching children how to share their salvation stories.)*
- Information about how to give an invitation for kids.

Total Time: About 10-15 minutes. This shouldn't take long. You're not having a church service but simply explaining the Gospel and then giving kids a chance to respond.

OUTLINE

As They Enter - As kids enter for this special time, just have some soft music playing. Tell your teachers beforehand that this is not going to be a hyped-up time.

Part 1 – Kid Testimony - Introduce the child you've been practicing with to share his or her salvation story. *(See the attached information for how to teach kids to share their salvation stories.)* After the testimony SAY: This is how [name] knows for sure that he is going to Heaven. Do you know that you know that you know for sure that you are going to Heaven?

Part 2 – The Drawing - Draw the Plan of Salvation. Practice this beforehand using the information that follows. When you draw the "Sin" that separates us from God, we will many times ask kids to raise their hands if they've ever done anything wrong—This gives us a feel for the group we're talking to. Explain that one bad thing is enough to keep a person out of Heaven.

Part 3 – One Way – Use the One Way illusion to show kids that there is only one way to go to Heaven and that's Jesus.

Invitation – Give your kids a chance to respond to the Gospel. See the enclosed information on giving an invitation for kids.

Teaching Kids to Share Their Salvation Stories

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.

Let's Begin

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.

The Plan of Salvation Drawing

The following is an easy and visual way to help kids understand the Gospel.

The Salvation Drawing - Part 1

GOD'S LOVE

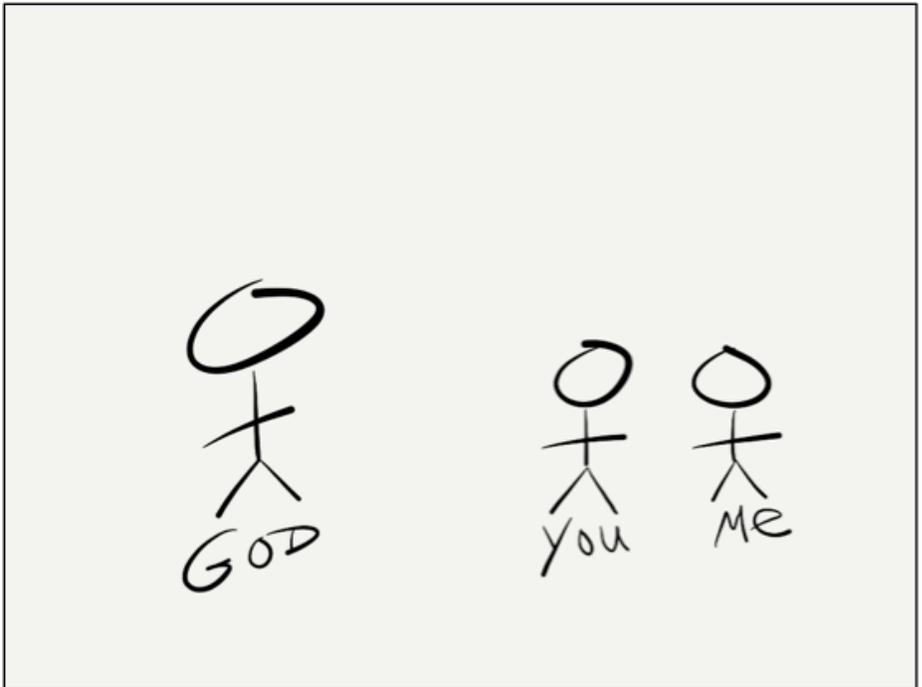
Draw three stick figures: "God" on the left-hand side and "You" and "Me" on the right-hand side.

Example of what to say:

God loves you and He created you to have a relationship with Him. Even before you were born He loved you and had great plans for your life.

The Bible says,

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



The Salvation Drawing - Part 2

OUR PROBLEM

Add a rectangular wall in the drawing between us and God. Label this block "Sin" to show how sin separates us from God.

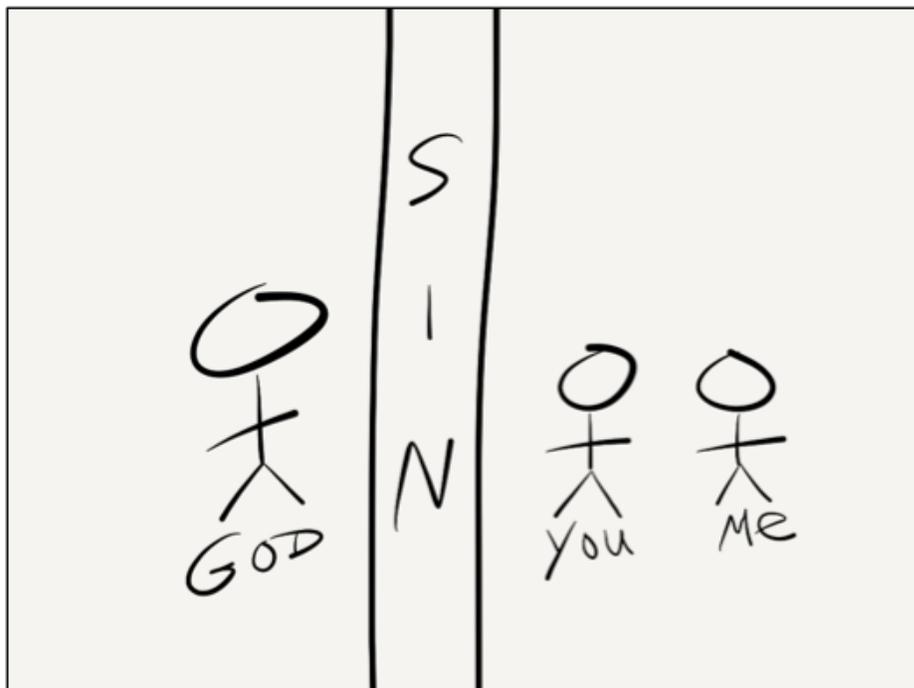
EXPLAIN that we have a problem. Our problem is sin and sin is anything we do that is wrong and our sins separate us from God.

Example of what to say:

But we have a problem called "sin." Sin is anything we do that is wrong..

Raise your hand if you've ever done something wrong?

That's right. We've all done wrong things...



The Bible says,

"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

We've all done wrong things and you can picture our sin like a great canyon or huge wall that separates us from God.

God is perfect. He's on this side. Are we perfect? No, because we've all done wrong things. And our sins, the wrong things we do, separate us from God.

Talking With Children

Be careful not to ask, "Have you ever sinned?" Many unchurched children aren't familiar with the term "sin." Ask, "Have you ever done anything wrong?" This is an easier question to understand.

The Salvation Drawing - Part 3

THE PUNISHMENT FOR SIN

*Add an image of flames to the drawing beneath "You" and "Me".
Label this image "Hell."*

EXPLAIN that there is a punishment for the wrong things we do. This punishment is eternal separation from God in a place called "hell." God didn't create hell for us, but for the devil and the other angels that rebelled against Him (Matt. 25:41). But when we sinned and rebelled against God, this became our just punishment too.

Example of what to say:

Sin has a punishment. It's a place called hell, but God doesn't want you to go there. The Bible says that God created hell as the punishment for the devil and the other angels that rebelled against Him, but when we did wrong things, hell became our punishment too.

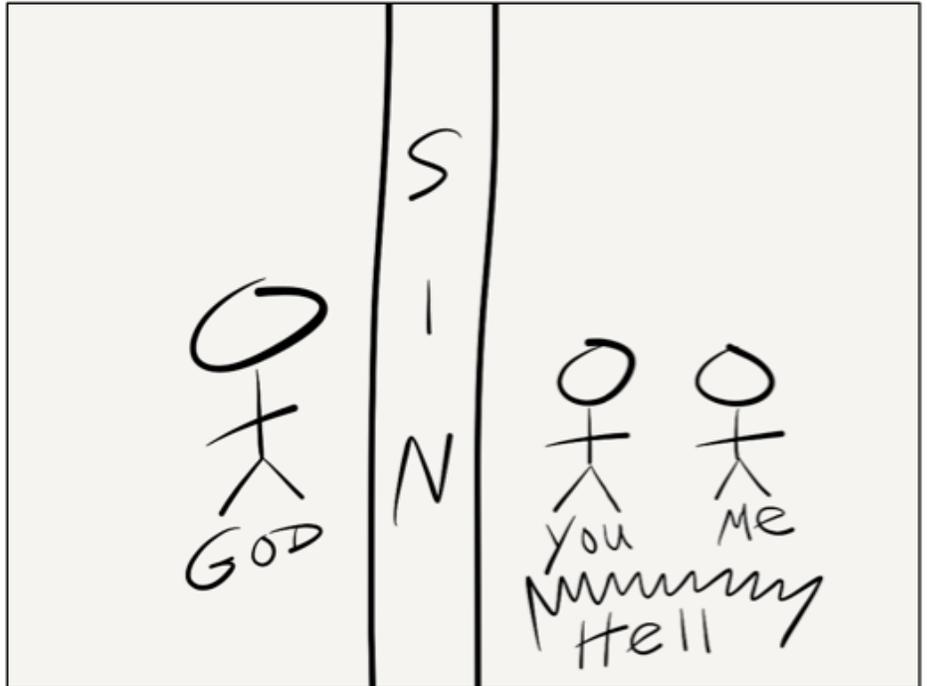
And hell isn't just the punishment for really bad things—One sin, no matter how small, even the littlest of lies, is enough to keep a person out of heaven.

The Bible says,

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Talking With Children

When speaking with a child, do not omit mentioning hell - This is a part of the Gospel. However, do not focus on it either. Your aim is not to scare the child but to inform them that there is a punishment for sin and a gift that is eternal life. Also, you may need to distinguish with some children that "hell" is a "bad" word if you use it in a bad way, but it's also a place but not a place that God wants you to go.



The Salvation Drawing - Part 4

THE GIFT OF GOD

Add to the drawing an image of a cloud above "God." Label this image "Heaven."

EXPLAIN that just because God wants us to go to Heaven, doesn't mean that we automatically will.

Example of what to say:

But there's more...

ASK: Where does God want us to go? (To Heaven.)



God has a gift for you: Being able to know Him and to go to Heaven when you die. God wants you to go to Heaven. It doesn't matter what you've said or done—it doesn't matter how bad you've been, God still loves you. But just because He wants us to go to Heaven, doesn't mean that we automatically will.

We have to make a choice, but this is what God did...

The Salvation Drawing - Part 5

ONE WAY

Add a bridge to the drawing across "Sin." This will also reveal the image of a cross. Using the "S" in "Sin," label this bridge "Jesus."

EXPLAIN that Jesus was God and came to earth as a man. He lived a perfect life, and when He died, God punished Him for all the wrong things you and I would ever do. This is how much God loves you and this is the reason Jesus came, to make a way for you to go to heaven. (Refer to the sin block.) If this is the Grand Canyon of sin, Jesus built a bridge across it by dying and paying the price for your sins, but Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead and He's alive today.

That's why He's the only way to go to heaven.

Example of what to say:

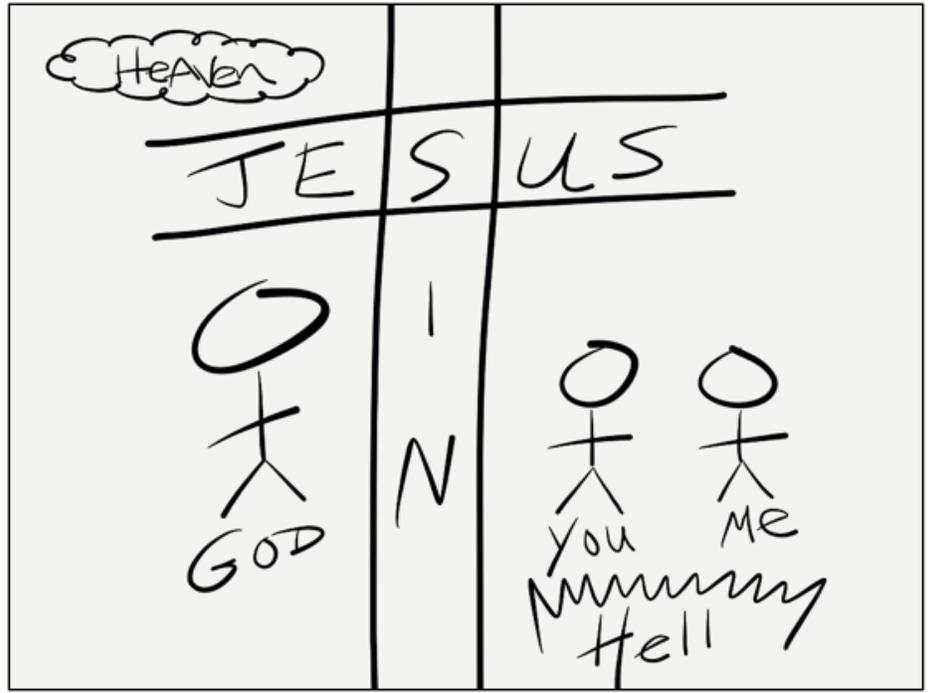
God sent Jesus. Jesus is God's only Son who and came to earth as a man. He lived a perfect life, and when He died on the cross, God punished Him for all the wrong things you and I would ever do.

This is how much God loves you and this is the reason Jesus came—to make a way for you to go to heaven. If sin separates us from God, Jesus built a bridge across it by dying and paying the price for your sins.

But Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later God raised Him from the dead and He's alive today. That's why He's the only way to go to heaven.

The Bible says,

"But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).



The Bible says,

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by me’ (John 14:6).

At this point the drawing part is finished. The drawing shows a person what God did to make a way for us to go to Heaven. Now it’s time to explain how people can accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

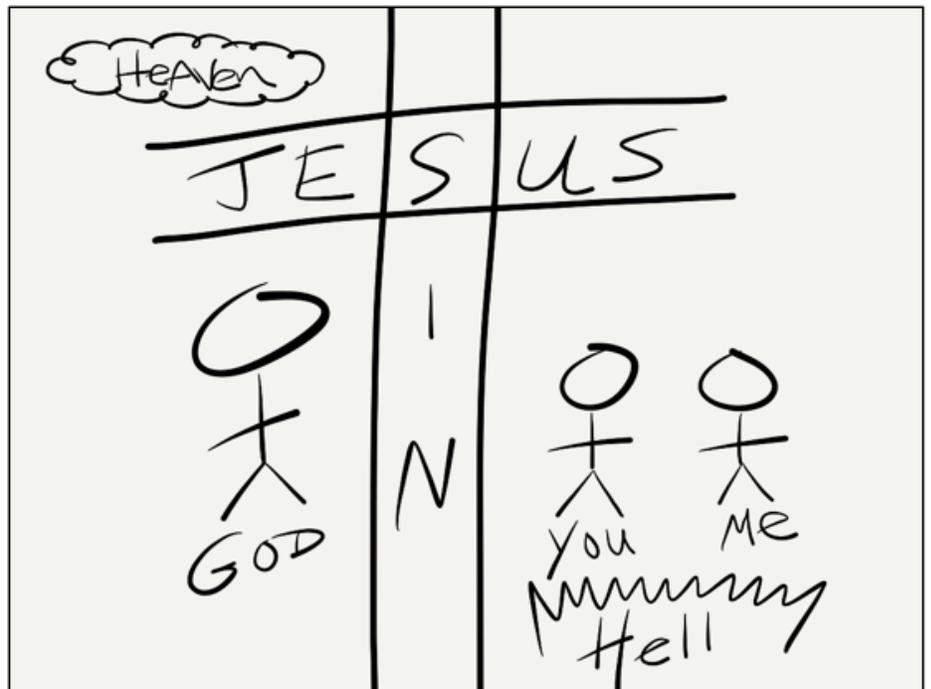
The Salvation Drawing - Part 6

HOW A PERSON IS SAVED

Add nothing to the drawing.

Jesus has already paid the price for your sins, but for you to give your life to Him, you have to:

1. - Admit that you have sinned and be willing to turn from your sin.
2. - Believe that Jesus is God’s Son who died and was raised from the dead. This isn’t just believing with your head, but trusting with your heart.
- 3.- Call on the Lord, confess your sins, and commit your life to Him. This is the willingness to turn from your sins and to turn to Christ as you Savior.



The Bible says, *“That if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).*

The Bible also says, *“For, “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).*

EXPLAIN that for a person to receive Christ, they must come to God on His terms and His terms are everything or nothing. To give your life to Jesus means that you are willing to surrender everything you are and everything that you have to Him. It’s not enough to just turn from your sins. Many people turn over a “new leaf,” but this is a step more because you are turning from your sins and turning to Christ as Lord and Boss of your life.

The Salvation Drawing - ONE WAY

THE ONE WAY ILLUSION

Use the **One Way illusion** included in your Resource Kit to refocus kids and to emphasize the importance of being saved.

Show the arrow pointing to the left or right. Move it back and forth as you say, “Everyone is searching for something in life. Some people go this way and some people go that way. But everything you’re looking for is only found (move the arrow to point up) in Jesus Christ.

Now we’ve been talking a lot about going to Heaven. When I go somewhere, I use a map. (Open the illusion to reveal a map.) Has God given us a map to life? A map to Heaven? Absolutely. (Turn the arrow and open it again to reveal John 14:6.)

“Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

Spin the illusion once more until the arrow points up. “If you want to go this way, there’s only one way.”

Open it a third time to show a ONE WAY sign. “And the only way you can go to Heaven is by giving your life to Jesus Christ.”

Watch a video of this illusion at: www.330resources.org/one-way.

The Salvation Drawing - Part 6

ASKING FOR A RESPONSE

Have kids close their eyes.

ASK: Do you know for sure that you’re going to Heaven?

ASK: Would you like to know more about how you can give your life to Christ?

SAY: If you’re not sure or if you have questions about how you can know for sure, in a moment we’re going to give you a chance to talk with someone.

Lead directly in to an invitation for kids...

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 more information about 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 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.

Stories of Kids Getting Saved

As you share the Gospel, we'd love to hear stories of how God is impacting lives. Always feel free to send us a report or story of how God is moving. You can email us at resources@threethirtyministries.org.

Follow-Up

Follow-up and discipleship begin the moment a person accepts Christ. Learn more about following up on kid decisions at www.330resources.org/children.