

Let The Little Children Come



Sharing the Gospel with Kids Without Confusing Jargon

Most church goers probably don't realize the amount of spiritual or church jargon that has crept into our language. When we ask children to **"open their hearts to Jesus"** or tell them that **"Jesus paid the price for your sins"**, we often leave them victims of confusion.

To effectively get the gospel message across to children, special care must be made to avoid the barriers and distractions that jargon often create. Here are some suggestions.

Jargon Used: Ask Jesus into your heart.

Child Thinks: How is he going to fit?

Clearer Alternative: Start a personal relationship with Jesus today.

Jargon Used: Jesus paid the price for your sins.

Child Thinks: How much does a lie cost? I should start saving my allowance so I can pay the price myself.

Clearer Alternative: Jesus allowed himself to be punished instead of you.

Jargon Used: Jesus is knocking on the door to come into your heart.

Child Thinks: What door? Is that the sound coming from my heart?

Clearer Alternative: Jesus wants to be your friend.

Jargon Used: Let Jesus be Lord of your life.

Child Thinks: Lord of the Rings?

Clearer Alternative: Follow what Jesus says and ask him to help you do the right thing.

Jargon Used: He rose again.

Child Thinks: In a fishing boat... gently down the stream. (rows)

Clearer Alternative: Jesus became alive again.

Jargon Used: God is a Holy god.

Child Thinks: Must be the nails.

Clearer Alternative: God is good and perfect.

Jargon Used: Man has sinned.

Child Thinks: I'm not a man. I'm a girl.

Clearer Alternative: We all have done wrong things.

Jargon Used: So that you can have eternal life.

Child Thinks: And never, ever, ever die?

Clearer Alternative: So that you can be with God forever, and when you die you will go to heaven.

Jargon Used: The grace of God...

Child Thinks: That's the color of heaven before it rains, right? (grays)

Clearer Alternative: God is very loving, kind and generous.

Bear in mind that kids go through various developmental stages of thought and logical reasoning. Psychologist Jean Piaget identified that we start life by exploring the world through our senses (seeing, touching, hearing, etc). Gradually, as a child's thoughts begin to operate independently of his or her senses, imagination takes reign; ideas are based on unlimited possibilities, and thinking is sometimes inaccurate. (For instance, a six-year old believes that it is possible to fix anything and everything with sticky tape.) **And when it comes to abstract concepts like 'sin', 'repentance' and 'faith', most children require special explanation.**

By five or even four, kids may begin to speak fluently in complex sentences. **This sometimes misleads adults into assuming that these intelligent children are able to grasp most of what the adult says.** Yet at this stage, a child's thoughts and language use are still largely confined to literal ideas. It is usually only from age nine onwards that children begin to actively use figurative language, e.g. 'pay for your mistakes'.

"Listening looks easy, but it's not that simple. Every head is a world." This Cuban proverb rightly reminds that children are famed for being in a world of their own. We have to realize that what we say is not necessarily the same as what the child hears. Removing spiritual or church jargon from your gospel presentation is one step you can take to improve clarity and understanding.

The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.
– Mark Twain

