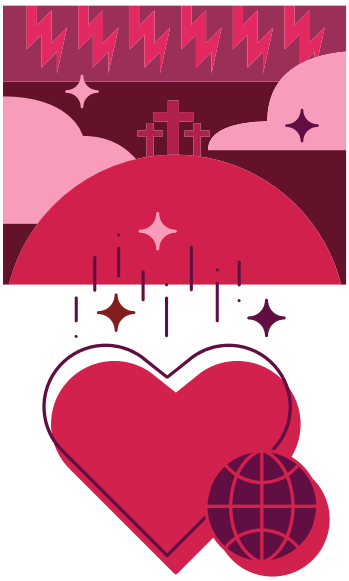
Sharing the Gospel: Lead With Relationship

THE GOSPEL TOOLKIT



Imagine you fall in love with a specific country or culture and want to learn more. So you dedicate your time to reading books, watching documentaries and learning everything you can. In fact, the more you research, you come to the realization that you want to save money and plan a trip to visit this magical place.

Your trip is everything you could have imagined and more. You taste the food, feel the dirt under your feet and experience the warm embrace of the people. You take plenty of pictures and videos on the trip, bringing back with you trinkets and souvenirs to remind you of this place you fell in love with. However, upon your return home, you share your trip with friends and family through the books, documentaries and websites you originally encountered. You stick with the facts, never sharing your own experience of the beauty, the food or the people in this culture you love.

You wouldn't do that, would you? Yet, that is often how we approach sharing the Gospel with kids. We get so much of it right. We use the Bible as our guide, and the truth of Scripture is illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit. We simplify our language and help answer questions kids may have. However, we leave out a foundational piece that has been used for centuries as a tool to share the work of God — our own transformational experience.

In the Bible, one of the primary ways we see the Holy Spirit work is by reading people's encounters with Jesus. Not only do these stories help us see the transforming power of God, but they also served as the fuel that lit the flame of the early church. How many times do we read in the New Testament that "the Word of God spread" or "and thousands of followers were added to their number that day"?

Acts 16:32-34 says: *And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*

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Entire *households* were coming to know Christ because of the testimony of Paul and Silas. This wasn't limited to just Paul's missionary journeys; the entirety of Scripture is routinely pointing to a personal encounter with God, sharing what He's done through hardship, joy and suffering.

These experiential moments bring the truth of God's Word to a vibrant place of clarity and connection in the life of a child. In other words, children learn about the truth of the Gospel lived out in a way that makes it tangible and easier to connect with on a personal level.

WHAT ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH KIDS?

1. The Bible is your guide, the source of truth and the documented story of God's never-ending, all-consuming love for us.
2. The truth of Scripture is illuminated by the Holy Spirit.
3. Leading with relationship allows kids to see your own personal transformation.

We communicate the truth of God's Word as people who have experienced the life-changing power of that truth. As you prepare yourself to share the Gospel with kids, don't forget to share how the Gospel has transformed and carried you through your own life. So, how can you share the Gospel through your own personal story of redemption?

HERE ARE FOUR PRACTICAL WAYS TO INCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY AS YOU SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH KIDS:

1. When did you first hear about Jesus? Who explained the Gospel story to you, and why did you want to follow Jesus?
2. How have you seen the love of God in your life? Pair your story with John 3:16 to give kids a concrete example of His love. Then, ask them the question in return!
3. Are there habits or sin God has redeemed you from? If appropriate, share one and give kids a child-friendly glimpse into the way God continues to renew and restore your life. Share Romans 3:23, helping children understand that absolutely everyone sins, except Jesus! (2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. Have you ever experienced hardship? A difficult move? The loss of a relative? Share with a child how the peace of God came and comforted you in the midst of that trial/tragedy. (Isaiah 41:10)

Just as you have a personal testimony of the Gospel transforming your life, so does each and every person who has chosen to accept God's gift of redemption through His Son, Jesus. In fact, each one of us uniquely reflects our Creator, bringing Him glory in a way that no one else can. Together, we show the true and holy nature of our God!

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