

# Talking to Kids about What it Means to Follow Jesus

(by Pastor Katie Sawade Hall)

Some things to keep in mind before talking to your kids:

Make sure the way you speak about salvation is Biblical. Avoid using the phrases “ask Jesus into your heart” or “pray the sinner’s prayer.” Many of us grew up hearing and using this language, but it’s not used in the Bible. Help kids understand that there is no magic formula to pray that “saves” them.

Scripture talks about salvation as **repentance** and **belief**. This isn’t something that we check off a list once and then forget about. Repentance and belief is an **ongoing posture** that we have toward God. We are believing that God is who he says he is and we act on that belief by confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness when we sin.<sup>[1]</sup> As Free Methodists, we believe that God *has* saved us and *is* saving us! He is transforming us into the image of Christ. This is what we call sanctification.

Salvation is so much more than just our personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus came to save all of creation. (**Romans 8:18-23**: creation groans as it waits for redemption, **John 3:16**: The Greek word for “world” used here is cosmos—For God so loved the cosmos!) Following Jesus isn’t about saving our souls so we can escape this earth and go to heaven one day. Salvation is about God redeeming his creation, about God’s kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven. We are saved to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves—God’s work to make ALL things new. (**Revelation 21:1-5**)

Be careful with your use of altar calls. It’s really easy to manipulate kids and their emotions without meaning to. How many kids do you know who go forward to “ask Jesus into their heart” again and again, every year at camp/VBS? These kids often don’t understand the significance of what they are doing; they are caught up in the emotion of the moment and the fact that their friends are going forward. If you want to give kids a chance to make a commitment, I’d encourage you to do it in a small group setting. This would allow adults to talk to kids on a more individual basis to see where they are at spiritually and make sure they understand what it means to follow Jesus (maybe even letting kids respond on a piece of paper if they would like to make a commitment). You could also discuss salvation as a group and then send home discussion handouts for their parents to follow-up with, allowing their parents to guide them if they are ready to make a commitment at that point.

## Small Group Discussion Guide with Kids

1. Jesus has come to save us, and to save all of creation. Read these Scriptures together. (Revelation 21:5, John 3:16, Romans 8:21-22)
2. When we follow Jesus, Jesus calls us to do 2 things:
  - a. **Repent**: Acts 2:37-38
  - b. **Believe**: Romans 10:9, Acts 16:30-31.
3. What does it mean to **repent** of our sins?
4. What does it mean to call Jesus **Lord** and **Savior**?
5. What does it mean to **believe**, or to **trust**, in Jesus?

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[1] See JD Greear’s article: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/julyweb-only/greear-ask-jesus-into-your-heart.html>