

**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES TRAINING
SYLLABUS**

CRE104

CHILD EVANGELISM

by

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General Conference

COURSE OBJECTIVES

It is the purpose of this course to help you learn:

1. How to lead children to Jesus and help them develop a loving, serving relationship with Him.
2. Effective strategies to help children develop a meaningful study and prayer life.
3. A variety of ideas to reach out to non-churched children.
4. How to organize outreach programs for children.

TEXTBOOKS

Schultz, Thom and Joani. *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church; and How to Fit it.* Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1996. (A video is also available)

Barna, George. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions.* Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003.

SUGGESTED STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

1. Faithfully attend class and participate in discussions.
2. Read textbooks.
3. Help to organize and participate in a children's outreach program or make a presentation at a Children's Ministries or Sabbath School training seminar.

OUTLINE

- I. Child Evangelism: Leading Children to Jesus
- II. How to Organize a Children's Outreach Program

SECTION I

CHILD EVANGELISM: LEADING CHILDREN TO JESUS

All Christian parents want to lead their children to Jesus. Children are our future. They are the Church's future. However, we need to recognize that changes within our contemporary culture have shaped a new generation of children today which present greater challenges for leaders and teachers to introduce them to spiritual things.

Today's children have an appetite for anything fast: fast food, fast actions, fast gratification, and fast growth. But they are also masters of the electronic world from computers to the internet, CD-Rom, DVDs and PlayStations. They are able to process lots of information even at a very young age.

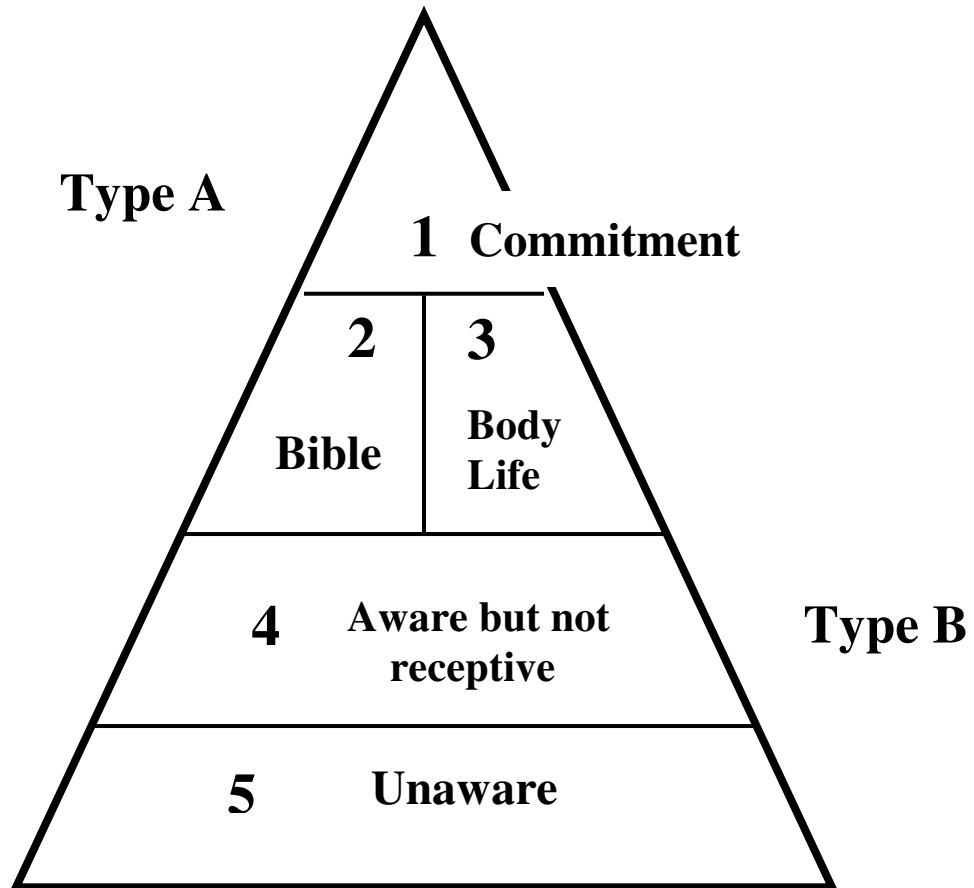
Unfortunately, today's children have also picked up a confused code of ethics. What applies to one situation may not apply to another. This new generation has images of brutal wrestlers, rock singers and movie stars as their role models. In their place we need to present Jesus as their model.

Nevertheless, children are still loved and valued by Jesus, and, if led early in their lives by loving adults, will respond to His call to salvation. Ellen G. White sheds additional light on the importance of children in God's kingdom: "In the children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer

far more readily than would grown-up people...”¹ Yes, parents, teachers and all those who work with children, it is imperative that the Church learn to understand their needs and seek to find ways to reach our children both within and without the church.

NEIGHBOUR’S DIAGRAM OF FAITH BELIEVERS

Dr. Ralph Neighbour, Jr., editor of the *Cell Church* magazine, has used the following diagram to describe the situation of people who have not yet come to faith in Jesus.



The people in area 5 are the furthest away from God. This represents the largest group of people who are unaware of the Gospel. A smaller group, shown in area 4, is people who have heard the Gospel but have not been receptive to it for a variety of reasons. They may be hostile to the Gospel because of what they have seen in the inconsistent lives of Christians, or in the life of the church. Maybe they are simply indifferent. These two groups are called “Type B Unbelievers”.

The top 3 areas of the triangle represent people who are related to the church in some way. They may know people in the church, or they may be attending the church, but have not made a decision yet. These are the “Type A Unbelievers” and by far, most of the believers come from this category.

Children fit into these groups. Some children have never heard of Jesus, and so they are unaware of the Gospel. There are also those who have been exposed to the church or to Christians, but have turned their back and decided not to follow Jesus. These are “Type B Unbelievers”.

Most of the children who fill our Sabbath Schools and programs are “Type A Unbelievers”. They are related to someone in the church or their parents attend church.

You will notice that the “Type A Unbeliever” receives the Gospel message through two ways. Area 2 represents the children who receive Bible study and these are the ones who come faithfully to Sabbath School to hear about Jesus. Area 3 represents the other form of teaching in the church which is through the church life. As children watch the adult believers practice their religion, they draw conclusions about the truth of the things they have been taught.

It is important that the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of the church Body be consistent. For example, it is useless to teach children in Sabbath School that Christians ought to love one another, when there is a lot of fighting among the adult church members. Prayer is not effective if no one in the church has received any answer to prayer.

It seems that our church has been successful at introducing children to the Bible through well organized Sabbath Schools. This is only half of the evangelism process. However, the church has not shown the children that Christ works in ordinary human lives. The Body of Christ must show that we love one another, support and forgive one another just as Jesus has shown us.

Discussion:

- a.) Do you agree with Ralph Neighbour's diagram of unbelievers? Explain.
- b.) What can you do in Areas 2 and 3 in order to impact children who have just got acquainted with your church?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

Children are precious to God and we want to lead them to follow Jesus. It is easy to find ourselves making beautiful plans for children's evangelism and forgetting that children are individual people. They are not miniature adults, but instead they have their special needs, fears, and questions that should be taken into consideration. Children are also very vulnerable and we have a responsibility to be thoughtful and prayerful in our approach to evangelizing them.

A. CHILDREN'S NEEDS. Children are individuals with emotional, social, physical, spiritual and mental needs. They all need love and care. They need to be free to play, explore, create and express themselves. They need to be instructed with the right values and be challenged to learn and master new skills and knowledge. When they are in our care, we need to offer a safe environment where children feel welcomed, valued and accepted.

Caregivers and teachers need to build genuine and warm relationships with children. However, it is vital that such relationships are healthy and appropriate, making sure adults do not take advantage of them.

Listening to children is important. Use language that is on a child's level and use concrete examples to illustrate concepts. Be sure to make eye contact when talking with them.

REVIEW CHECK!

- Learn names, be interested in child's interests.
- Make eye contact when speaking.
- Use language on child's level.
- Listen with your ears and your eyes.
- Pray for the children you meet.

B. CHILD PROTECTION. The physical safety of children is paramount. Make sure that the rooms used by them are safe, clean and secure. There should be enough adult teachers and helpers for the number of children in your care. Check the exits and entrances and fire escape exits. First-aid kits should be available in case of minor injuries.

It is imperative to have a register with the child's name, address, phone number of parents or adult caregiver and information concerning the child's health. If you are taking children out of the church premises for a field trip, be sure you have 'consent' forms with the parent's signature.

CHECK IT OUT!

- Check safety of premises.
- Train volunteers in safety issues.
- Check child/adult ratio.
- Keep a register.
- Follow your child protection .policy.

The church should also have a child-protection policy. If there is none, the church should develop one. These guidelines should include volunteer helpers signing a declaration form and providing a reference. All volunteer children's workers should have training in child-protection issues. The following guidelines taken from the Home Office report "Safe from Harm," following the 1989 Children Act, are helpful for the protection of both children and those adults who work with children.²

GUIDELINES FOR SAFE PRACTICE

- When possible, try to have at least two adults with a group.
- An adult should not be alone with a child where there is little or no opportunity of the activity being observed by others.
- Where children are transported by car, have more than one passenger in the vehicle.
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Be sure the level of physical or verbal contact is appropriate.
- If you see another adult acting in ways which might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to another leader.

Discussion:

- 1.) How can we encourage children to tell if they have been touched inappropriately by an adult or have been taken advantage of?
- 2.) How often should the church have training programs for the volunteers who work with children?
- 3.) Do you agree with the idea that children are "simply miniature adults"? Explain.

INFLUENCING AGENTS

Children do not make their decision for Christ in a vacuum. There are many agents that influence them to accept Jesus. Let's explore each of these powerful influencing agents.

A. FAMILIES. God did not design the family to be just a channel of food and protection. It is to be a close and warm community in which the children learn the skills of living with one other, values and traditions, and the morals of society. They also learn about the family's belief about God. Parents are called by God to pass on the stories about Him and His teachings to their children.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.” (Deuteronomy 5-9)

The children in the Old Testament community learned about God from their early years. As they shared in the family celebration, sacrifices and religious feasts, they were often reminded of how God led their ancestors through the Red Sea and the river Jordan, and how they entered the Promised Land.

Yes, children learn about God in an environment where they see Christian lifestyle being lived out around them. They are positive about their parents' teachings and belief system as they see them “practice what they preach.”

Ellen G. White reiterated the importance of parental teaching about God:

“The first lesson that children are to be taught is that God is their Father. This lesson should be given them in their earliest years. Parents are to realize that they are responsible before God for making their children acquainted with their heavenly

Father. . . . That God is love is to be taught by every lesson.”
Child Guidance, p. 487

It is in the family that children first learn about love and trust. When parents show love to their children, listen to them, spend time to play and have fun, and value them, they are connecting their children with the love of God. This provides a foundation that will impact the children’s response to Jesus.

B. FRIENDS. Most children who accept Jesus have already received a Christian friend first. They trust Jesus because they trust their friend. So kids can tell kids about Jesus.

Lorna Jenkins in her book, *Shouting in the Temple*, emphasizes the fact that “the first step in leading children to Christ is to enter into relationship with them.”³ Friendship is what draws a child to Vacation Bible School when invited by his/her friend. Friendship is what attracts a child to Story Hour, Bible Camps, and other programs.

In Argentina, I saw a child of eleven lead a child of ten to Christ. At the end of the baptism, the boy hugged his eleven-year old friend and said, “I love you. Would I see you tonight?” A new friendship has started.

Jeremy and Gary were good friends. One day after school, Jeremy asked Gary excitedly, “Guess what? We are having a Bible Club in our church this Friday night. Would you like to come?”

“What’s a Bible club?” asked Gary with a puzzled look.

“It’s a club for kids like us. Lots of neat things to do. We sing and listen to stories. There are crafts and games, too. Come and see for yourself!” Jeremy answered enthusiastically.

Gary has never missed a Bible club meeting since. Today, he is a baptized member of the church. In fact, Jeremy and Gary are teen leaders in their small cell group. That is the impact of Friendship Evangelism!

Greatly supporting this fact is the recent Barna Research findings that conclude that “the influence of peers...appears to reflect what affects most kids in the 5- to 18- age category in America.”⁴ Moreover, “the older a child gets, the more distracted and vulnerable he or she becomes to non-family influences, particularly peer influences.”⁵

In his outstanding book, *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis discusses the good and evil of friendship. He points out that this wonderful gift of friendship can bring delight and joy into our lives as well as turn us away from God.

Yes, don't underestimate the influence of your children's friends. They have been found to impact children both positively and negatively. Peers have been found to persuade children and youth to choose drugs, alcohol, smoking, premarital sex and violence. But, peers can also influence children to come and learn of Jesus' love.

C. FAITH COMMUNITY. Families were not left to teach and bring up their children to adore God in isolation. It was the concern of the whole church community.

The people in the Old Testament community would help each other bring in the harvest. Children as well as adults participated in this activity. Afterward, they joined to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles,⁶ thanking God for providing food for them for another year.

Sometimes, the whole village would go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the great feasts. Remember Jesus traveled with his mother and father to Jerusalem to celebrate the

Passover Feast. After it was over, He did not return home with them. Have you ever wondered how Mary and Joseph could have traveled for a whole day without realizing that their twelve-year old son was not with them? ⁷

If you are acquainted with many of the village-type families, you will begin to understand. All families in a village look out for each other. All the children belong to the “tribe.” They can wander among the families freely. When they are hungry, you feed them; when they are sleepy, you put them to bed. Eventually, their parents will come and fetch them.

The church community plays a vital role in making children feel a part of the faith community. Children need to feel included in the entire life of the church. They need to feel accepted and forgiven even when they step out of line with the teachings of the church.

Barry Gane tells the heartwarming story of why he is still in the church today. ⁸ He owed it to the unconditional love of godly parents and a church family that saw potential in him even when he did everything that violated church doctrines. As a teenager he joined the motorcycle gang and lived a reckless life, drifting home for a while and then leaving again. Finally, at age nineteen, he promised God that if He helped him and his girlfriend pull through the accident they were involved in, he would go back to church. He did go back to church, though with an embarrassing and improper exterior—unkempt hairdo, black leather jacket, black grease on his hands and mounting a motorcycle. He expected censure from the head deacon, head elder and the members. But, instead they welcome him home. That was the beginning of the changes in Barry’s life.

There is no doubt that the unconditional love of Barry's parents and the support of the church was instrumental in bringing him back to church. It was the church that really was family that understood community and acceptance that finally broke through the shell of anger and alienation and helped him realize that he is still greatly loved by God.

Yes, the faith community needs to realize that children and youth need to live, breathe, and work within the church's vision. They need to be involved in worship, celebration, small groups, and the entire life of the faith community. When Moses demanded that Pharaoh let the Israelites leave Egypt and Pharaoh tried to insist, saying, "but let it be just the men. Let the women and children stay behind."⁹ God would not accept the proposition. If the women and children did not go, nobody would go. God intends that children be part of the faith community. We are to integrate the children into our churches.

Unfortunately, in many churches today the adults of the community feel no ownership for the children. They leave the children to the sole care of their parents and the Sabbath School teachers. Many Christian children today may experience the life of their family and know about the church. But sadly, they don't have enough adults who are close to them who can be their models and mentors. They don't experience a spiritual community. We need to reverse this trend and surround our children and youth with caring adults who show true love and concern for them.

D. MASS MEDIA. This appears to be a dominant influencing agent in impacting our children today. George Barna's research reports, "In American society today, it appears that the most dominant agents of influence are contemporary music, movies (including videos and DVDs), television programming, the Internet, publications (dominated by

books but including magazines and newspapers), laws and public policies, and parents.”¹⁰ It continues to say, “Naturally, the relative levels of influence vary from person to person, but these levels appear to reflect what affects most kids in the 5- to 18-age category in American.”¹¹

Children learn all kinds of world views and philosophies from the mass media—television, music, movies, books and the internet, in particular. Views such as putting self above others, premarital sex is acceptable, materialism is a worthy goal, and the ends justify the means are daily absorbed by our children. Often parents and the church leaders wonder how to influence the children to choose spiritual things, but in reality many do not have a comprehensive view of how to actually help children and young people grow into active, passionate followers of Jesus.

In another national research by the Barna Group, the researchers find that many teenagers and adults do not have a strong Biblical worldview.¹² So the challenge is for churches to teach our children a Biblical worldview. George Barna suggests the 4 P’s:¹³

1. Purpose—identifying their purpose in life
2. Perspective—clarifying their core life perspectives
3. Provision—providing basic conditions and benefits they need to grow in a healthy manner
4. Performance—describing the performance of specific activities that enable them to lead productive and meaningful lives.

It is also important to link these perspectives to Biblical principles and the worldview of God as the Creator. Therefore, the church needs to counteract the

worldviews presented by the mass media by involving children in the six pillars of Christian development:¹⁴

1. Worship—Research shows that many Christian adults have little understanding of genuine worship. Children need a spiritual believer who will help them see the meaning of authentic worship and have a close connection with God. They need to understand that they live each day as worship to God, feeling God’s presence with them.
2. Evangelism—Jesus’ great commission to His followers is also for every believer today: “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). This command is also for the children who have accepted Jesus as their Friend and Savior. It is important that we encourage them to share their faith in Jesus with friends.
3. Discipleship—Discipling children is really an interesting and rewarding task as we watch them grow in their faith. We need to train and equip them in this process as we lead them to develop a habit of daily prayer, Bible study, service and outreach to others. We cannot afford to leave it to incidental learning, but instead we need to find good spiritual guardians for our children.
4. Stewardship—Training children to understand that they are managers of all the resources given by God should be an intentional task. Children need to recognize the resources they have dominion over—money, time, spiritual

gifts, ideas, possessions, and relationships—and that the church teach them to administer these resources effectively for the Lord.

5. Service—As children grow in their relationship with Jesus, they need to see that their Christian faith of love is to be shared with others through actions and service. Build the habit of service in the children so that it will become a lifelong practice of helping the underprivileged, handicapped and poor.
6. Community—Assisting our children to connect themselves emotionally and spiritually to the church community is an important responsibility. Children need to be among their faith community where they are accepted, instructed, encouraged and supported. Such a bond serves as a refuge for them when they need counsels and help.

E. CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS. No one can deny the potent influence of good Christian schools and godly teachers on children. Children growing up in these schools can gain Bible knowledge, principles of Christian living and a friendship with Jesus as their Savior. Ellen White supported this important institution when she said:

“Parents, guardians, place your children in training schools where the influences are similar to those of a rightly conducted home school; schools in which the teachers will carry them forward from point to point, and in which the spiritual atmosphere is a savor of life unto life.” Child Guidance, p. 303.

Teachers who develop a close relationship with children are more likely to influence the lives of children in their classroom. Children love and respect such a teacher and will learn and take in whatever their teacher says. The children’s incline toward spiritual things are made possible in an atmosphere of good teacher-student relationships. Ellen G. White agreed fully with this when she said:

“Then to those who are accepted as teachers in our schools is opened a field for labor and cultivation, for the sowing of the seed and for the harvesting of the ripening grain. What can give greater satisfaction than to be laborers together with God in educating and training the children and youth to love God and keep his commandments?” Christian Education, p. 155.

One day, our older son, then in the third grade, said to me, “Mom, my room teacher invited me to join her Meals-on-Wheel project for the shut-ins. Sounds pretty cool! We get to help others. I have signed up for it before asking for your permission. Is it okay?”

“Of course, Terrence,” I said excitedly. “I’m sure you’ll like it.”

“I’m sure I will,” Terrence replied enthusiastically. “I believe in my teacher. She knows what’s best, Mom.”

Yes, the impact of good Christian teachers could be much more than we can imagine as suggested by Ellen G. White:

“If the teacher has the love of Christ abiding in the heart as a sweet fragrance, a savor of life unto life, he may bind the children under his care to himself. Through the grace of Christ he may be an instrument in God's hands to enlighten, lift up, encourage, and help to purify the soul temple from its defilement, until the character shall be transformed by the grace of Christ, and the image of God be revealed in the soul.” Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students, p. 197.

Discussion:

- a.) With many broken families these days, is it still possible for the family unit to impact the children in spiritual matters?
- b.) What can the church do today to keep our children faithful to Jesus?
- c.) How can you help parents guide their children in choosing their friends?

- d.) In what ways can the church equip parents to help their children deal with television, internet, music, books, etc.?
- e.) What are the values of intergenerational worship services for children and young people?

PLANNING EVANGELISM FOR CHILDREN

When the church plans for a public evangelistic campaign for adults, several months of ground work is done before the actual meetings. In a similar way, when we plan evangelism for children we need to prepare the church, the parents and the children themselves. Such preparation should be on-going rather than just a short-term outreach preparation.

Relationship is the foundation of any successful program. Good relationships are essential in children's evangelism. When we have established good relationships with friends and neighbors, they will be more inclined to accept our invitation to attend an evangelistic series. Here are some suggestions.

A. FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM. This approach is found to be the most effective method in evangelizing children. All children have friends and when a friend invites them to church, they are more likely to go than when they are being invited by a stranger. Relationship is paramount in the lives of children!

Cesar and Juan are two eleven-year-old boys who live in Arequipa, Peru. They have a strong desire to share Jesus with their friends in the neighboring mountain village of Cierro Colorado. Riding on their bicycles, they rode each day to this village to invite their friends to attend their small group which was held in their village. Surprisingly, many came, some walking several miles while others rode on their parents' bikes. After several months, six of their friends made the decision to follow Jesus and were baptized.

Here are some ideas compiled by David Bell and Rachel Heathfield¹⁵ that will help you to get to know new children for the first time.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

Graffiti Names

Cover a large area with paper, e.g. strips of plain wallpaper or lining paper. Provide pens, paint, and large brushes. Ask each child to write their name as a big design and then color it in. If a leader or child is good at graffiti-style writing, they could do the outline of all the names and then each child can design the pattern to go inside. With young children, a leader should write the names clearly.

Alphabetti-Spaghetti

Get into small groups. Give each group a plate and a tin of alphabet spaghetti or dried spaghetti. Ask the children to spell out the names of everyone in their group on the plate. Have a time limit, say two minutes. Provide damp cloths for sticky hands. For a quick activity just use first names.

Nameball

Stand in a circle. Throw a ball from person to person at random. Each person should say their name as they throw. After a while, change the rules so you each say the name of the person you are throwing to. Or you can ask them to say the name of the person to their left. Get them to suggest further variations.

Name Bingo

As the children arrive, write their names on slips of paper. Include leaders' names too. Mix up the slips and put them in a bag. Give everyone a sheet of paper with a blank grid on it. (Use a 4 x 4 grid for a group of sixteen or more, or 3 x 3 for a group of nine to fifteen.)

Ask everyone to go around and find out the names of others in the group, getting them to write their names in the boxes on their grids. When everyone has a complete grid, sit down and play bingo. Pull names from the bag one at a time and read them out. Each person should tick off the names as they are called. The first to get a complete row across or down should shout 'bingo' and claim a prize. You could go on to see who is first to tick all their boxes.

Children could be taught skills like how to make friends, and how to invite friends, teachers and other adults they know.

1. Friendship Skills. Teaching children skills in making friends and keeping them is valuable in friendship evangelism.

- *How to Greet Someone* – Shake hands with a newcomer or a friend and say: “Good morning. Welcome to our Sabbath School (or Bible Club, camp). So glad you came.”
- *How to Keep Someone Company* – Show your friend to a seat and sit down with him. If there are two or more friends visiting, show them to the seats. Then let them know that you will come by to sit with them later after greeting other friends who might be coming.
- *How to Introduce a Friend* – Have the child who brought a friend stand up and introduce him/her. The child could say, “I’m really happy to introduce my good friend (or classmate, neighbor.), Tony Bacchus. Then turning to Tony, the child can say, “Thanks for coming, Tony. Do come again.”
- *How to Make Friends* – Children can learn to take the initiative to befriend others in the neighborhood, at school, or at an adult gathering. The Bible encourages us to do so in Proverbs 18:24: “A man that has friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”
-- Greet the other child and introduce yourself saying, “Hi! I am Jeff. I am in the fifth grade.”

-- Ask for the name of the other child saying, "What's your name? Where do you live? Which school do you attend?"

-- Get contact information like, "So do you come to this community center often? How do I see you again? Any phone number? Address?"

2. Invitation Cards/Postcards. Have postcards ready for children to send out to keep contact with these new friends. Encourage them to write and draw on it too. Give them cards to invite friends to special programs like a day camp, Vacation Bible School, or music festival.

3. Keep a Directory. Make sure the names of your children's friends and acquaintances are recorded in a directory. This directory is vital for future programs and activities as well as for visitations.

4. Follow-up. There should be a strong follow-up on the children who have attended one or more of the children's programs of the church. Organize the children who have brought their friends into groups and have them visit these new friends. Have other social activities to draw them in.

B. USING FAMILY EVENTS. The best strategy for any family event is for church members to bring non-church families along with them. Family events can attract families with children and through such occasions they can get to know the people of the church. Each event will need to have something interesting and appealing to each age-group. Try some of the following possible family events in your church:

1. Family Night. It's a night of get-together of families for games and food. Families play group games, table games, and have time for chit chats. Bringing new families to join this event is a great start.

2. Ethnic Vegetarian Food Demonstration. Have a cookery event where the preparation of various kinds of vegetarian food representing different countries is demonstrated. Then everyone will get a chance to taste the prepared food and get recipes to try them at home. Find the opportunity to talk about the connection between good health and the Bible.

3. Mother's Day/Father's Day Celebration. A special program and meal are prepared to honor mothers and fathers. There may be poems read by children, dramas, a sermon, special songs and gifts. Mothers and fathers who are invited to this church event can be asked to share the joys of motherhood or fatherhood they have experienced.

4. Church Garage Sale. Church families can donate things that they no longer need or use for the church's garage sale. The funds raised would be used for specific charity projects as designated by the church. This is a good time to invite neighbors or friends to patronize it.

5. Treasure or Scavenger Hunt. Team up non-church families with their church friends and set them off to find the treasure from photographic or written clues.

C. USING CHURCH SERVICES. Your church may provide for any of the following types of service as a way of acquainting them with the church:

1. Main services—time when all ages worship together, but there is a special story for the children.

2. Services for specific age-range—e.g. children's Sabbath School, children's church, children's praise services.

3. Services Marking Special Events—Christmas, baby dedication, church anniversary or centennial celebration, Thanksgiving praise.

Children and their parents need to feel welcomed by members of the church and are comfortable participating in the activities. Give a copy of your church's yearly calendar of children's programs and activities for the new families who attend. Invite them to come again with their children to the various special programs for children.

D. USING SPECIAL EVENTS. Use festivals or church events throughout the year as a reason for celebration. This provides an opportunity for members to get together as well as for them to invite their friends. Such events include:

1. Valentine's Day
2. Good Friday
3. Christmas Cantata/Party
4. Centennial Celebration of the Church
5. New Year's Celebration
6. Children's Day
7. Church Picnic

E. USING SCHOOLS. Building a good relationship with schools in your local community is a very important part of the church strategy for evangelism among children. Children spend a great deal of time in the schools and they are in great numbers, too. Planning to offer quality activities for children in the schools open the door to ministry as well as the opportunity to meeting the parents of the children. It is vital that we establish a very good relationship with the principals and teachers of the schools that we plan to start up a program. Let the schools know how your church can help and what interesting and new activities you can offer the children. Consider some of the following:

1. Special Events. Put on a special event over a number of days with different activities, groups, talks and discussion that children can come and participate in and be introduced to Jesus. Such an event could include a Christmas drama about the birth of Christ, or an Easter play.

2. Lunchtime Club. Start up a lunchtime club with fun activities like a puppet show or story hour. Such a club helps to support church children and also to reach out to others. Be sure they are lively and fun!

3. Chapel talks and Assemblies. If you can get permission, it is good to do this regularly to become a familiar figure to the children. Be careful not to have too heavy a Christian overtone. Work with the principal and let him/her know what you are going to say or include in your presentation. Topics could include areas of healthful living, how to deal with peer pressure, how to beat temptations to try drugs, alcohol, and sex, and social skills like how to get along with people and developing genuine friendships.

4. Christian Prayer Group. Starting a prayer group in schools these days is possible, especially with the uncertainties of attacks and terrorism. In United States and some other countries, church groups are allowed to run prayer groups. You can work the principal and teachers to have a prayer group after school for those children who would like to join in praying for world peace, for their country and for the safety of their families and people around the world.

Discussion:

1.) If friendship is crucial to evangelism, why is making friends with non-church people a difficult task for church members?

2.) Is it true that “once you have the child, you have the parents, too”?

3.) Which of the above five ideas seems easiest to us in planning evangelism for children? Which seem the most difficult? Briefly explain.

PROGRAMS FOR CHILD EVANGELISM

Everyone who works with children wants to see them make a decision to follow Jesus. Our struggle is to build these children and disciple them, making them part of the church community.

I have divided this section into two, with suggested programs to evangelize our children within the Seventh-day Adventist church, and programs for evangelistic outreach.

PROGRAMS FOR EVANGELIZING CHILDREN WITHIN THE CHURCH

A. Children's Sabbath School

Purpose: To provide religious education for children that helps them build a relationship with Jesus. This is the time when children study the scripture, fellowship together, and are involved in service so as to become faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Description: A total hour Sabbath School program based on a weekly Bible lesson. Children are involved in active learning and participate in a variety of activities that meet their learning styles.

Unique features: This is the only ministry that reaches all Adventist children. It provides a great opportunity to study the Bible with the children and help them relate these truths to everyday life. Children's Ministries Directors need to make sure that in all churches where there are children; Sabbath Schools should be provided for the children according to their appropriate ages.

Resources: The GraceLink Bible Study Guides for Beginners, Kindergarten, Primary and Juniors (Review & Herald).

B. Children's Small Group/Prayer Group

Purpose: To involve children in a meaningful small group experience.

Description: It involves a short study of a particular topic or text based on scripture to strengthen children's understanding of the Bible. Then they participate in prayer. It includes songs, prayers, and an activity or craft. Children can also meet in a home instead of the church.

Unique features: It offers children a special opportunity for spiritual growth and fellowship with other peers. It is also a great time for children to invite their friends.

Resources: Forever Stories Funpack (Review and Herald); 52 Ways to Teach Children to Pray (Rainbow Books); 100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids by Karen Holford (Pacific Press); children's devotional books; Week of Prayer children's devotionals (Adventist Review).

C. Children's Baptismal Class

Purpose: To prepare children who have expressed a desire to be baptized.

Description: The children study the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and the Seventh-day Adventists to understand their relationship and responsibilities to God and to the community of believers.

Unique features: Children's baptismal lessons are presented on a child's level of understanding. They can take as long as they need in preparation for baptism.

Resources: "It's My Choice" Baptismal Guide by Steve Case (Review and Herald); ChristWise: Discipleship Guide for Juniors by Troy Fitzgerald (Review and Herald); ChristWise: Discipleship for Teens by Troy Fitzgerald (Review and Herald).

D. Children's Retreat/Camp

Purpose: To provide spiritual evangelism and nurture for children in a camp setting.

Description: Children get together for 2-3 days on a campsite or a retreat center for interactive activities that encourage spiritual, physical, social, and mental growth. A specific theme is chosen and the program is then planned around this theme. Programs can include stewardship, Adventist heritage, Bible time experiences, and Bible heroes.

Unique features: Offers weekday programming as well as Sabbath programs. Children are also given opportunities to develop their leadership as well as their spiritual, physical, and social skills.

Resources: My Place in Space (GC Children's Ministries Department); Jesus, Then and Now (AdventSource).

E. Children's Evangelistic Meeting

Purpose: To help children make a commitment to Jesus, and to understand the plan of salvation and the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

Description: A series of meetings for children that present age-appropriate truths while the parents are attending the adult evangelistic meeting. The programs include Bible stories and doctrine, memory verses, songs, prayers, activities and crafts.

Unique features: Presents a concentrated study of the plan of salvation and the distinctive beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists on the level of the children.

Resources: Bible Treasures by Aileen Sox (Pacific Press); Forever Stories Funpack—ages 4-11 (Review and Herald); Come Meet Jesus—ages 8-11 (Review and Herald); The Underground Adventure (South Pacific Division).

F. Children's Church

Purpose: To provide children with the opportunity to worship in an age-appropriate setting, learning at their level of understanding, and participating in worship.

Description: Children's church is a church service just for children. It begins when the adult church begins. Children's church is scheduled according to the needs of each church, varying from once a month to twice a month. It is most needed by children ages 2-8, who find it difficult to sit for any length of time.

Junior-age children need their own junior church or they can attend the regular service. Children's church incorporate all the elements of regular worship such as praise, prayer, sharing or testimony, studying the Word, a children's sermon, and drama or skits that apply the word to everyday life.

Unique features: Children are given opportunities to participate in worship and to understand the elements of worship.

Resources: 101 Ideas for Children's Church by Jolene Roehlkepartain (AdventSource); Children's Church: Responding to God's Love (AdventSource); Children's Sermons: Using the 5 Senses to Tell God's Story by Philip D. Schroeder (Abingdon Press).

G. Children's Nature Camp

Purpose: To inspire and lead children into energized, enjoyable appreciation of the natural world.

Description: A get-away to a camp or place out in nature for a couple of days where children participate in nature activities that will uplift, motivate and inspire them to appreciate the Creator God.

Unique features: Children get the opportunity to explore the natural world through fun activities, games, video presentations, and nature study. This is a great time for group dynamics and bonding.

Resources: Sharing Nature with Children I and II by Joseph Cornell (Dawn Publications); A Family Guide to Sabbath Nature Activities by Eileen Lantry (Pacific Press); Four Seasons...Five Senses; 52 Weeks with Nature by Thais Randall Baer (Pacific Press).

PROGRAMS FOR EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH

A. Vacation Bible School

Purpose: To reach out to children in the community and lead them to Jesus.

Description: Vacation Bible School (VBS) is the most popular community outreach program. It is generally held during the vacation time, lasting 5-10 days. It can start in the morning from 9:00 to 12:00 or any other time suitable to the needs of the community. The program involves a general session, Bible stories, crafts, and games. Teens can be great helpers here.

Unique features: Children in the church are given the opportunity to meet with children in the community, and they learn how to be friends to these visitors.

Resources: Friends Forever (AdventSource); Jesus' Kids in the Kitchen (AdventSource); Creation Station (Review and Herald); Scuba Adventure, Lava Lava Island (Group Publishers)

B. Neighborhood Bible Club

Purpose: To continue as a follow-up from Vacation Bible School.

Description: This is a 1-1¹/₂ hour program of Bible stories, songs, crafts, and games that could be conducted in a home, car porch or backyard. A family of the church can volunteer to host the Bible club and invite the children who have attended the Vacation Bible School as well those who have not.

Unique features: It's a wonderful family outreach project for children who have attended Vacation Bible School. Invite them to that home for the club and encourage them to invite their friends in the community to join too.

Resources: Forever Stories Funpack (Review and Herald); My Bible Friends by Donna Williams (Florida Conference);

C. Play groups

Purpose: To reach out to young mothers in the communities and introduce them to God.

Description: Mothers with small children are invited to bring their children to the church for fun and play and socialization. They will get to meet with other young mothers of the church, thus giving them an opportunity to form friendships and network with each other. This program can be conducted twice a week in a large room where there is space for toy cars, jungle gym and other activities. Provide refreshments for mothers and children.

After some time, these mothers can be invited to parenting classes, small groups, etc.

Unique features: It offers young mothers some time to get away from the house to meet other mothers in the community. There is time to chat over food as they share parenting tips and issues.

Resources: Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) by Group Publishers.

D. Craft Club/Weekend

Purpose: To involve kids in fun activities by learning and making a variety of crafts.

Description: Children in the community are invited to participate in a fun-pack activity of creative craft making. This program can be conducted on a Sunday morning from 9:00 to 12:00 or at a time most convenient for parents to bring their children. Getting acquainted with the children and their parents is essential for building better relationships

Unique features: Children are given opportunities to learn new crafts and make new friends. It's another opportunity to know parents in the community.

Resources: I Can Make It By Myself; Bible Story Crafts for Preschoolers (Group Publishing, Encyclopedia of Bible Crafts for Children, Clip and Tell Bible Stories by Lois Keffer (Group Publishing), Snip and Tell Bible Stories by Karyn Henley (Group Publishing).

E. Welcome Baby Program

Purpose: To get acquainted with new mothers in the neighborhood and to support them in their early months of motherhood.

Description: Women of the church get together to visit mothers who have just delivered their babies. They could be friends, relatives, or neighbors of the church women. They bring food, gifts for the baby, and materials on childcare for the new mother to read. For the next 6-8 months, materials on childcare are sent to the new mothers and offering services like babysitting the infant for the mother so that she could get out of the house for a little while.

Unique features: This is an excellent outreach program for new mothers who need encouragement and support in the early months. Good friendships established can lead to further witnessing opportunities.

Resources: Welcome Baby Program by Kay Kuzma (AdventSource).

F. Children's Radio Program

Purpose: To reach non-church children through the radio.

Description: Programs for children are aired 2-3 times a week on the radio. These programs may consist of Bible stories, nature stories that direct children to a Creator God, prayer testimony and special sacred songs.

Unique features: This radio spot provides a wonderful opportunity for non-church children, especially those who live in unreachable areas, to learn about Jesus and the story of salvation. Free Bible lessons are also available for children who may request for them. The children who listen are also invited to write in to the children's radio program for questions and answers.

Resources: God's Treasure Chest, by Charles Mills (GC Children's Ministries Department). Your Story Hour Bible Stories (Review & Herald).

G. Mobile Library Club

Purpose: To reach children in the community through regular lending of books.

Description: This "gospel on wheels" evangelistic van visits specific town or village regularly each week. The children in that community are invited to join this club that gives them the privilege of borrowing a variety of books that range from Bible stories to topics on moral, health and nature. They are allowed to keep the books for a week and then return them the following week so that they can borrow other titles.

Unique features: Besides getting the chance to borrow attractive books from this club, children also get to listen to Bible stories during the "Story Hour" time as well as enjoy a puppet show that presents health and value lessons. This begins a relationship that could

be followed up with other children's outreach programs, eventually leading them to accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

Resources: Your Story Hour videos (Review and Herald), Sam Campbell's Nature Stories Series (Review and Herald).

Discussion:

- 1.) What are some of the challenges of evangelizing non-church children?
- 2.) What do you see as some of the greatest problems in evangelizing children within the church?
- 3.) Why is Vacation Bible School able to draw more children than other children's programs?

QUIET TIME WITH GOD

After the children have made a decision to follow Him, they need to establish a daily Quiet Time. Children will get excited as you help them see that God wants to spend time with them personally. You will be putting them in touch with the greatest power on earth—the Word of God.

STUDYING HIS WORD

How do we help our children develop a love for God's Word? Try some of these suggestions:

A. CHILDREN'S DEVOTIONAL BOOK. It is a good idea for Children's Ministries leaders to place a devotional book in the hands of each child who attends the Sabbath School, Bible Club or other church programs. Encourage each child to read the message and listen to what God has to say to them in those devotional thoughts and passage.

B. JOURNALING. Teach the children to develop the habit of writing a journal. Give them each a simple but attractive journal. Show them how to write down their thoughts after they have read a Bible text or have read the devotional story. They are free to express their thoughts and draw pictures to illustrate those thoughts and feelings.

JOURNALING is . . .

Writing to God

 About your day

 About your Bible Reading

 Your acts of prayer

Recording God's message to you

 Imagine what He is saying to you

 What might He want you to do?

- C. CHILDREN’S BIBLE.** You can purchase children’s Bibles from the Bible Society at a very cheap rate and give them to the children. Encourage them to read God’s Word. Show them how to mark the passages in the Bible and write little notes and thoughts beside the texts. Get them to make their own bookmarks that can be placed in the Bible to locate their favorite texts easily.
- D. SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE.** Provide for each of the children with a Bible study Guide (GraceLink). Encourage them to study the lesson and do the activities provided for each day. Ask them to spend some time thinking about the Bible story as they look up texts, fill in puzzles, etc. Developing such a habit will help children know God on a more personal basis.
- E. SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY GUIDES.** It is helpful to children if we can provide them with other study guides which deal with specific topics, such as “Putting on the Armor of God”—a study of Ephesians 6:11-17, “What Does the Bible Say About Superheroes?” and others that are interesting for children.

PERSONAL PRAYER

Teaching children to pray and communicate with God on a daily basis is one of the most important ways to help them grow in faith. Ellen G. White reiterates the importance of prayer in character building:

“Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character.”

–E G White, AA 564

Here are some suggestions to help children develop the prayer habit:

A. FINGERS OF PRAYER. Teach children the meaning and concept of prayer.

Ask them to stretch out their right or left hand and introduce them to the Five Fingers of Prayer—praise, thanks, forgive, please, and pray for others.



Help children see that prayer is really talking to God as to a friend. They can tell Him about anything! They can tell God about their day. Tell Him if they are afraid or happy, or sad. Ask Him for help. Thank Him for making them and their families. Ask Jesus for forgiveness.

Encourage them to see the power of God in answering their prayer. Encourage children to pray regularly, but not to limit themselves to three times a day or at meal times only. Get them excited about being able to talk to Jesus and God any time they want.

B. PRAYER JOURNALING. It is a great idea to encourage the children to keep a prayer journal. The children can make their own journal or we can give them one. Their journal may include the following sections:

1. Things I am thankful for – the children can express their gratitude to God even for little things, such as helping them find their pet, happy for a good teacher, etc.
2. People or events I want to pray for – encourage children to write down specific names of people or events they want to pray for. Bring each name or thing before Jesus.
3. Prayers that have been answered – children can write down the date when each of their prayers has been answered. Help them to understand that God always answers prayers, but not in the way we sometimes expect. God’s answers can be: Yes, No, or Wait. This is because God’s knows what is best for them.

C. PRAYER ACTIVITIES. Show children a variety of ways to pray and encourage them to try them:

1. Prayer Partners – find someone to pray together, such as a sibling, a parent.
2. Prayer Trios – find two other persons to pray with the child, such two other siblings, parents, grandparents or schoolmates.
3. Prayer Walk – take a short walk around the garden, the backyard or the street around the house and talk to God as you walk.
4. Prayer Jog – Pray and jog at the same time, keeping your mind on Jesus.

Discussion:

- 1.) How can we help children maintain this “Quiet Time” habit?
- 2.) How can the church assist parents to help children develop meaningful Bible study and prayer life?

SECTION II

HOW TO ORGANIZE A CHILDREN'S OUTREACH PROGRAM

Jesus' commission for the disciples to bring the gospel to "every kindred, tongue, and people" undoubtedly includes bringing the gospel to children as well. Ellen White reminds us that:

"When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages,--to officers of the church, ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, "Suffer them to come"; as if He would say, They will come, if you do not hinder them."
Evangelism, p. 580.

Recent research has also supported this fact that children below the age of 14 are most susceptible to accepting the gospel. Hence, the church needs to seize this opportunity to reach out and actively share the Gospel with children who have never heard about Jesus. Christ saw the importance of reaching out to children:

"In the children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer far more readily than would grownup people, many of whom were the worldly-wise and hardhearted. In teaching, He came down to their level. He, the majesty of heaven, answered their questions and simplified His important lessons to meet their childish understanding. He planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in after years would spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life." *Evangelism, p. 579.*

However, today's children face many challenges which keep them from coming to faith in Jesus. In undeveloped and developing countries, many children live lives that are complicated by poverty, exploitation and abuse, while others in the well-developed

countries face temptations of materialism, secularism and others. Ellen White strongly urged the church to reach out to children:

“Our camp meetings are one of the most important agencies in our work. At every camp meeting work should be done for the children. Let suitable workers be constantly educating the children. Ask the blessing of the Lord on the seed sown, and the conviction of the Spirit of God will take hold of even the little ones. Through the children many parents will be reached.” --Manuscript 52, 1900. Evangelism, p. 584.

“Meetings for the children should be held, not merely to educate and entertain them, but that they may be converted. And this will come to pass. If we exercise faith in God we shall be enabled to point them to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Evangelism, p. 582.

So the mandate is clear and we need to get to work in planning outreach programs for children from all walks of life. Ideas for outreach programs are as many as your creative minds can produce. Section I has outlined some suggested programs for reaching out to children and you can add more to your list. Remember, the end goal of reaching out to children is to help them know Jesus and will develop a loving, serving relationship with Him.

READY...GET SET!

Getting the ground ready is of utmost importance when planning for children's outreach. Do not be too hasty to rush into programming without first finding out more information about the children, the community and their needs. It is better to take time to plan well than to be disappointed and discouraged later.

A. PRAY FOR GUIDANCE. This is the first step that Children's Ministries leaders ought to take. Pray for guidance that God will give you ideas about the type of ministry that would be suitable.

The next step is to get your Children's Ministries committee together or a group of people who have a passion for children to do preliminary planning. These are just tentative plans which may be refined and implemented later.

B. DO A DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY. To better meet the needs of the children, do a demographic study of the community where your church is situated. Some of the questions that might be useful in such a study are:

1. How large is the population in this community? What is the makeup of the population?
2. How many families with children live within a 1-mile radius of the church?
3. What are the socio-economic levels of the families within a 1-mile radius of the church?
4. How many churches are in this neighborhood? Are there other places of worship?
5. In what type of activities do the children get involved?

When you have defined the demographic trends of the community, you are ready to plan more definitely what types of outreach programs will work effectively for children in your community.











C. DETERMINE PROGRAM PRIORITIES. As you plan for the children, check carefully that your programming is meeting the needs of those children whom you want to reach and attract. Start with one to three programs and don't feel that you have to organize many. It is better to succeed with one program where many children are introduced to Jesus than to have too many mediocre ones. When you have the details all planned, submit them to the church board for their approval.

D. DETERMINE RESOURCES. In planning outreach programs for children, it is a good idea to keep a file or notebook of possible resources needed. These will include resource people who can teach skills, crafts and stories, materials such as books, videos, crayons and other educational materials, financial resources, and meeting facilities. It is important not to overlook the local library or a sister church that can help supplement some of the materials you need.

E. FUNDING YOUR PROGRAM. Prepare a budget and request the church board for funds to run the outreach programs. If you have only a small amount of money, be creative to raise funds for these projects. Rally the help of church members who have a passion for children. Do not forget to involve your Sabbath School children to help raise funds for these outreach programs for children in the community. Have a food fair, a church garage sale, bake sale, and other money generating ideas. This can be a mission project for the kids in the church.

F. ADVERTISING YOUR PROGRAM. No matter how excellent your program is, if people do not know it exists, it will fail. Find creative ways to advertise your program to the community so that families are aware of them and will send their children. You may make posters, pass out attractive fliers door-to-door, or announce on the radio, TV, and newspapers. Get permission to have your posters in the schools, local library, or shopping centers. Have the church members involved in promoting these programs. Don't forget to get your Sabbath School children also involved in promoting these exciting programs for community children.

G. EVALUATE YOUR PROGRAM. It is vital that we evaluate all the outreach programs planned for children. Prepare a short evaluation form and ask the children who attend these programs to answer a few simple questions. Here is a sample of an evaluation form for children:

What Do I Think?	
CIRCLE the faces that represent your answers.	
1. I think this program is fun and interesting.	 
2. I like the crafts.	 
3. The teachers were kind and helpful.	 
4. I have made many friends.	 
5. I enjoy singing new songs.	 

NOTES

¹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), 42.

² David Bell and Rachel Heathfield, *Mission Possible: Ideas and Resources for Children's Evangelism* (Warwick, England: CPAS, 2000), 29-36.

³ Lorna Jenkins, *Shouting in the Temple* (Singapore: Touch Ministries, 1999), 202.

⁴ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003), 58.

⁵ Ibid 58.

⁶ Leviticus 23:40-43.

⁷ Luke 2:43-46.

⁸ Myrna Tetz, *We Can Keep Them in the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2004).

⁹ Exodus 10:10-11

¹⁰ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003), 58.

¹¹ Ibid 58.

¹² Ibid 60.

¹³ Ibid 61.

¹⁴ Ibid 72.

¹⁵ David Bell and Rachel Heathfield, *Mission Possible: Ideas and Resources for Children's Evangelism* (Warwick, England: CPAS, 2000).