I. Introduction to the Gospel

What is the gospel?

“How should I present the gospel to a child?”

A. The Fallacy of Saying __________

Christians today are often cautioned not to say too much when presenting the gospel to the lost.

Certain spiritual issues are labeled taboo when speaking to the unconverted:

God’s law,
Christ’s Lordship,
turning from sin,
surrender,
obedience,
judgment,
and hell.

Some people fear mentioning these things so that they won’t “add something to the offer of God’s free gift.”

Proponents of “no-lordship” evangelism take the reductionist trend to its furthest extreme.

B. The Danger of __________ the Gospel

The reducing of the gospel dis-empowers the message of salvation. It has also populated the church with "converts" whose faith is counterfeit and whose hope hangs on a bogus promise that a prayer when they were young will save them. Although they say they have "accepted Christ as Savior," they brazenly reject His rightful claim as Lord over their life.

They offer Christ lip service, but in fact scorn Him with their hearts (Mark 7:6).
Casually affirming Jesus with their mouths, they deliberately deny Him with their deeds (Titus 1:16).
Addressing Him superficially as "Lord, Lord," they stubbornly decline to do His bidding (Luke 6:46).
Such people fit the tragic description of the "many" in Matthew 7:23 who will one day be stunned to hear Him say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."
C. Discussion

1. What are some common ways in which the gospel is “reduced” for children?
2. Does teaching a child about hell, “scare” them into a profession of faith? Why or why not?

II. Keeping the Gospel from Corruption

A. The Gospel is about a _______________not a plan

   It is not a formula that must be prescribed to sinners in a series of steps.
   It does not call for a mere decision of the mind, but a surrender of the heart, mind, and will - the whole person to Christ.

B. The Gospel is a Divine Transaction not a Human _______________

   Decision-ism is the idea that eternal salvation may be secured by the sinner’s own movement toward Christ.
   A "decision" for Christ is usually signified by some physical or verbal act such as raising a hand, walking an aisle, repeating a prayer, signing a card, reciting a pledge, or something similar.
   If the sinner performs the prescribed activity, he is usually pronounced saved and told to claim assurance.
   The "moment of decision" becomes the grounds of the person's assurance.
   Decision-ism is often employed in evangelizing children.
   Youngsters in large groups are asked to raise a hand, stand, come forward, ask Jesus into their hearts, or make some similar gesture.

C. The Gospel is Dying to Self not Easy _______________

   EASY-BELIEVISM believes that saving faith hinges on human initiative.
   In their system, faith begins with a human response, not the work of
God in the believer. Therefore they must scale back the definition of faith to make believing something a depraved sinner is capable of doing. At its heart, EASY-BELIEVISM is a misunderstanding of the depth of human sinfulness. If ungodly, depraved, spiritually dead sinners are capable of believing solely on their own initiative, then faith must be something that makes no moral or spiritual demands. The “no-lordship” theology has made the act of faith a non-moral exercise.

D. Discussion

1. What is the difference between decisionism and easy believism?
2. How do “Lordship” salvation and “Works” salvation differ

III. Classifying Sinners

The Gospel means Good News. What makes it truly good news is not that heaven is free, but that sin has been conquered by God’s Son. However, the gospel is not a message that can be encapsulated, abridged, and shrink-wrapped, then offered as a generic remedy for every kind of sinner; because sinners are:

A. __________________
   Sinners need to be instructed about who Jesus is and why He has the right to demand their obedience.

B. __________________
   Sinners need to have their sin exposed by the demands of God’s law.

C. __________________
   Sinners need to be confronted with the reality of God’s impending judgment.

D. __________________
   Sinners need to hear that God in His mercy has provided a way of deliverance.

E. __________________
   Sinners must understand how perfectly holy God is. They must comprehend the basic truths of Christ’s sacrificial death and the triumph of His resurrection. And they need to be confronted with God’s demand that they turn from their sin to embrace Christ as Lord and Savior.
F. Discussion

1. Why is it important for children to understand different kinds of sinners?
2. What are some common errors we make when talking about sin?

IV. Calling People to Faith

A. Put __________________ Before Form

1. No biblical issue may be __________________

   Although the FORM of the message may vary, the CONTENT must always relate the reality of God’s holiness and the sinner’s helpless condition.

   If we want to follow a BIBLICAL model, we cannot ignore the issues nor make distinctions where SCRIPTURE does not.

   2. The Bible presents the __________________ in different ways

      Furthermore, in all the instances where Jesus and the apostles evangelized, whether they were ministering to individuals or crowds, there are no two incidents where they presented the message in precisely the same terminology.

      They knew that salvation is a sovereign work of God.

      Their role was to preach truth; God Himself would apply it individually to the hearts of His elect.

      *This is also what we must remember when presenting the gospel…

   3. Salvation is a __________________________ work of God

      4. __________________________ is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit

      “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6

      “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8

      5. The message must be articulated __________________

      Clear proclamation of truth is the means through which the Spirit works - not creative programs or human charm (1 Cor.1:21; 2:1-5).

      Specifically, if we want to articulate the gospel message as PRECISELY as possible, what are the points we need to make especially clear to children and unbelievers?
B. The ___________________ Points of the Gospel

1. Teach God’s ___________________

   “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10, Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Micah 6:9).

   Those who teach the “no-lordship theology” misses this point entirely. In fact, much of contemporary evangelism aims to arouse anything but fear of God.

   “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,” is the opening line of the typical evangelistic appeal today.

   No-lordship theology takes it a step further: God loves you and will save you from hell no matter whose plan you choose for your life.

   a) God is perfectly Holy and His Law demands perfect holiness
   b) The gospel requires this holiness (“you shall be holy…”)
   c) Because He is Holy, God hates sin
   d) Sinners cannot stand before a Holy God

2. Teach ____________________ Sin

   a) Sin makes true peace impossible for unbelievers
   b) Sin makes the sinner worthy of death
   c) Sinners can do nothing to earn salvation
   d) Sinners are in a completely helpless state

   as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one: There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips”; “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”; “Their feet are swift to shed blood, Destruction and misery are in their paths, And the path of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Ro 3:10-18

3. Teach About ___________________

   The gospel is good news about who Christ is and what He has done for sinners. “No-lordship” doctrine tends to emphasize His WORK and de-emphasize His PERSON, particularly the aspect of His divine authority.

   But Scripture never presents Jesus as something less than Lord in Salvation.

   Christ’s Lordship is not an addition to the gospel.
Some things about Jesus Christ which must be understood are:

a) He is **Eternally God**

b) He is **Lord of All**

c) He Became **Man**

d) He is **Utterly Pure and Sinless**

e) He became a **sacrifice for our sin**

f) He shed his **blood** as an atonement for sin

g) He died on the **cross** to provide salvation for sinners

h) He rose triumphantly from the dead

4. Teach What God ____________________

   a) **Repent of your sins**

   b) Turn your **heart** from all that dishonors God

   c) Trust Christ as **Lord and Savior**

5. Teach to ___________________ the Cost

   a) Salvation is **free** but costly

   b) The **cross** is central to the gospel

   The CROSS is the CENTRAL picture to understand the gospel. It is a graphic message, that teaches the awfulness of sin, God's wrath against sin, and the efficacy of Jesus' work in crucifying the old man (Rom. 6:6).

   “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

   **Jn 12:24-25**

   “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? “For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? **Mk 8:35-37**

6. Teach to _________________Christ
Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. **2 Co 5:11**

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **2 Co 5:20**

Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. **Is 55:7**

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. **Ro 10:9-10**

C. Discussion

1. What is the essential content of the gospel?
2. What are some ways the form of presenting the gospel to children might be varied?

V. Confirming the Gospel to Children

A. Don’t ____________________ or Abbreviate the Message

Should we streamline or abbreviate the message when we teach children the gospel?

There is no biblical warrant for that. Certainly we need to use terminology they can grasp and be clear and patient in communicating the message.

But when Scripture talks about teaching children spiritual truth, the emphasis is on **THOROUGHNESS**:

"And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (**Deut. 6:6-7**).

Over simplification is a greater danger than giving too much detail.
1. Use **terminology** they can grasp

2. Be clear

3. Be patient

4. Be thorough

**B. Emphasize ________________**

Children cannot be saved before they are old enough to understand the gospel clearly and can embrace it with genuine faith. They must therefore be MATURE enough to understand **good and evil, sin and punishment**, and **repentance and faith**. Certainly they need to be old enough to understand the gravity of sin and the nature of God's holiness. What is that age? It varies from child to child. Children mature at different times. Part of our task in teaching them is to help them come to a developed understanding of these very issues.

1. They must understand the **terms** of salvation
2. They must understand the **gravity** of sin
3. They must understand God's **holiness**
4. The **age** of proper maturity varies
C. Don’t __________________ the Message

Don't soften the parts of the message that sound unpleasant. CHRIST'S BLOOD, the CROSS, and ATONEMENT FOR SIN are at the heart of the message. If we bypass such topics, we're not giving the full gospel.

CHRIST’S LORDSHIP is not too difficult for children to understand. Any child who is old enough to understand the basic gospel is also able by God's grace to trust Him completely and respond with the purest, most sincere kind of surrender.

Jesus "called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Mt 18:2-4

1. Christ’s **blood**
2. The Cross
3. Atonement for sin
4. Christ’s **Lordship**

D. Emphasize _______________ Work

Remember that the primary factor in any person’s coming to Christ is not how much doctrine he or she knows. The real issue is the extent of GOD’S WORK in the heart. Even the most mature believer does not comprehend all of God's truth. We can only begin to fathom the riches of God's Word in this present life. **Full understanding of every aspect of the gospel certainly is not required for salvation.**

After all, the **thief on the cross** next to Jesus knew only that **he himself was guilty** and that Jesus, who was Lord and the true Messiah, had done nothing wrong (23:40-42). How did he know that much? As Jesus said to Peter, "Flesh and blood did not reveal this... but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). The thief's appeal was simple: "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (v. 42). But despite the meager amount of doctrine he knew, our Lord assured him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (v. 43).
E. Don’t Give False ______________

It is the HOLY SPIRIT'S task, not ours, to offer assurance (Rom. 8:14-16). So don’t overemphasize objective assurance with children. As noted earlier, too many people whose hearts are utterly cold to the things of the Lord believe they are going to heaven simply because they responded positively as children to an evangelistic invitation. Having "asked Jesus to come into their hearts," they were then taught never to examine themselves and never to entertain any doubt about assurance.

1. The Holy Spirit gives assurance
2. Help them examine their hearts in light of Scripture

F. Do Not Assume a Profession of Faith is ______________

1. Children respond to the gospel for many reasons

Certainly we cannot assume that every PROFESSION OF FAITH reflects a genuine work of God in the heart, and this is particularly true of children. Children respond positively to gospel invitations for a host of reasons. Many of these reasons are unrelated to any awareness of sin or apart from any real understanding of spiritual truth. If we spur children to "faith" by external pressure, their "conversion" will prove to be spurious.

Only those who understand and are prompted to believe by the Spirit are truly born again (John 3:6).

2. Children are easily self-deceived

Scripture indicates that children tend to be immature (1 Cor 13:11, 14:20), naïve (Prov 1:4), foolish (Prov 22:15), capricious (Isaiah 3:4), inconsistent and fickle (Matt. 11:16-17), and unstable and easily deceived (Eph 4:14). Children often think they have understood the ramifications of a given commitment when they have not. Their judgment is shallow and their ability to see the implications of their decisions is very week. Despite the best of intentions they seldom have the ability to think far beyond today, nor do they perceive the extent to which their choices will affect tomorrow. This makes children more vulnerable to self-deception, and it makes it more difficult for a parent or teacher to discern God’s saving work in their hearts.
G. Early Childhood Response Does Not ________________the Issue

Remember, an early **CHILDHOOD RESPONSE** does not necessarily guarantee that the question of eternal salvation is settled forever. While many people do make a genuine commitment to Christ when young, many others - perhaps most - don't come to an adequate realization of the meaning of the gospel until their teenage years. Others, who profess Christ in childhood, often turn away.

That is exactly why we must eschew the quick, easy response and teach our children **patiently, consistently, faithfully** over all their developing years.

**Encourage every step of faith as they grow.**
We must take extreme care lest we inoculate children against any real commitment to Christ when they do come to an age of full spiritual understanding.
Teach children the gospel, all of it, but understand that you may be planting the seeds for a harvest that may not be mature for many years. If you mow as soon as it sprouts you will never be able to reap a full harvest.

1. Some do make **genuine** commitments when young
2. Many don’t truly understand until the **teen** years
3. Many child “professors” **turn away** from God
4. We must not **inoculate** children against a true profession
5. Recognize that you are always planting **seeds**

H. Discussion

1. What are some salvation concepts that children might have a hard time understanding?
2. What are some reason’s a child’s profession of faith should not automatically be considered genuine?
3. What are some ways to encourage in Christ without “confirming” their salvation?

VI. Communicating the Gospel in the Classroom

A. __________________

Your life as a believer is an example to the children. Be open and honest with them as they are with you. Honesty builds trust.

Side note
Communication is…
55% non verbal
38% words and their meanings
7% tone at which the words are said

B. _______________________

Develop the gospel message during lesson time (remember that Jesus is in the Old and New Testaments – Luke 24:27)

C. _______________________

Use flannel graphs, board drawings, object lessons and other teaching helps to illustrate the gospel

D. _______________________

Upon it

Lay a foundation and build upon the various elements of the gospel message as you gather daily or weekly

E. _______________________

A teacher’s responsibility to discipline and correct provides an excellent opportunity to teach the gospel. Rather than seeking to modify behavior, the wise teacher will look at discipline as an opportunity to help his children become aware of their failure and inability to obey, and subsequently their need for forgiveness in Christ. In this way, discipline and correction are used to bring children to a sober assessment of themselves as sinner and to lead to the cross of Christ where sinners can be forgiven.

1. Don’t just modify behavior
2. Failure to obey indicates need for Christ

F. _______________________

Because of the immaturity and fickleness of children, it is tempting for some teachers to write off childlike expressions of faith as trivial, or even meaningless. In contrast, teachers should encourage every sign of faith in their children and use the opportunity to teach them even more about Christ and the gospel. Even if a teacher determines that it is too early to regard the child’s interest in Christ as mature faith, they must not deride a profession of faith as false, for it may be the seed from which mature faith will later emerge.
1. Take the time to explain the gospel well
2. Inform the parents of a child’s interest in spiritual matters
3. Pray for them
4. Follow up with parents to see if changes are taking place

G. ________________

Teachers should look for an increasing measure of fruit in the life of a child who has professed Christ. This includes following Christ (John 10:27), confessing their sins (1 John 1:9), loving their brothers (1 John 3:14), obeying God’s commandments (1 John 2:3), doing the will of God (Matt 12:50), keeping God’s Word (John 17:6), and doing good works (Eph 2:10). It is essential to remember, however, that an important part of a teachers work is to guard them from thinking they are saved when they are not.

1. Actively following Christ
2. Confessing sin
3. Loving their brothers
4. Obeying God’s commandments
5. Doing the will of God
6. Keeping God’s Word
7. Doing Good Works

H. Discussion

1. How does discipline help direct a child to Christ?
2. What are some ways in which a teacher might improperly minimize a child’s profession of faith? How might this be corrected?
3. What are some practical ways for a teacher to live a Christ-like example in the classroom?