

How to Invest In Your Child's Conversion

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Many parents of unconverted children have come to realize through sound biblical teaching that salvation is God's work, not something they can accomplish on behalf of their children. They know that God must draw the child to himself by giving him a new heart if he is to be saved. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44).



This realization, however, often leaves parents confused about their role in their child's life with respect to salvation. Understanding God's sovereignty along with human inability, should they be actively pursuing their child's salvation, or passively waiting for God to act?

Hopefully you understand that your role in your child's conversion is an active, expectant, hopeful role, not a passive, pensive, or pessimistic one. But if you're still a bit unsure of what you can and should be doing as God's instrument in drawing your child to salvation, here are a few suggestions. These are in addition to the obvious necessities of teaching him about sin, hell, Jesus, the cross, heaven, and faith. My focus here is on God drawing your child to Christ by causing him to imitate you. Remember, your child is always observing, and he is prone to imitation:

Be enthusiastic yourself about life in Christ, and life with the body of Christ. If your child picks up from you the idea that the Christian life is boring or characterized by drudgery and unpleasant obligation, he will naturally be turned away. If you grumble about your church, or if it becomes obvious that you see opportunities for fellowship as obligations more than privileges, he will not be drawn to enjoy such things himself. But when he sees you joyfully sacrificing to make time for the church, loving other believers and desiring to be with them, he will absorb the idea that life in the body of Christ is supremely important in your life. And, by the grace of God, he will imitate.

Demonstrate the special place the Bible holds in your life. Make your own personal Bible reading time a special time, one that your child can tell you truly enjoy and cherish. Don't miss it if you can help it, and make sacrifices to keep it tops in your list of priorities. Talk about what you are learning. Always take your

Bible to church meetings, open it eagerly, and follow along attentively. Make careful notes in the margins. Show your child that you treasure the truth contained inside. Keep your Bible in a regular place at home so that you always know where it is. Don't treat it like just another household item that gets tossed wherever. He will notice, and imitate.

Provide your child with his own special Bible. At an appropriate age, invest in a good quality Bible. Have his name embossed on the cover, and write him a personal note of love and encouragement inside. Encourage him (that is, require him) to bring it to every church meeting. Teach him how to make careful notes in the margins, when appropriate, and teach him how to navigate its many pages, books, and chapters. This means you will need to be familiar with it yourself.

Be an attentive, eager listener when the Bible is taught. Don't allow yourself to appear disinterested or distracted during preaching or Bible study. Keep eye contact with the teacher, and require your child to do the same. Not only does this encourage the teacher and serve as a model for other adult listeners, it also makes a good listener and learner of your child. There is no reason why your four or five-year-old cannot begin to learn the discipline of sitting still, looking at the teacher, and listening carefully. It will be a skill, modeled and taught by godly parents, which will serve him well his entire life. Furthermore, the truths he will fail to hear apart from learning this skill are the very ones he must know in order to be saved.

Be an engaged learner. Ask questions of the teacher. Carry on discussion with other believers about the topic following a sermon. Discuss the subject matter on the way home, and at home throughout the week. Demonstrate to your child that Bible teaching is not just something you sit through, but something you chew on and apply afterward. By doing this you will motivate your child to further process these things himself.

The fact that your child's salvation is God's work, not ultimately yours, should also motivate persistent, passionate, expectant prayer. God has placed your child in your care, in full exposure to the truth by which He saves sinners. It is not an unreasonable request for Him to extend His mercy to your child as he did to you, nor is it an unreasonable expectation to believe that He will.

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