

The Teacher as an Evangelist

[Arizona-California District Teachers' Conference, Good Shepherd, Tucson November 7, 1980]

By David Valleskey

A few years ago an essay entitled, "The Grade School Evangelist," was delivered at a WELS Metropolitan Milwaukee Lutheran Teachers' Conference. In it the author, Pastor Wayne Mueller, recalled the time one of his members came up to him and said, 'Pastor, my daughter enrolled in a public college in north central Wisconsin last fall, and she came home last weekend depressed. She has a roommate who is constantly witnessing to her faith in Jesus. My daughter does not resent her roommate's witness, but she feels embarrassed because she cannot witness to her own faith.... If it were a matter of differing gifts, I don't think it would bother my daughter. But humanly speaking she should possess every gift necessary for witnessing to her faith. She is a good public speaker. She can talk about anything. We've brought her to church every Sunday since she was born. She went to our Christian day school for nine years. She attended our Lutheran high school. She has memorized Bible passages and hymn verses. She wants to tell others what she believes but she just does not know how to start. What can I tell her? Why don't we train our young people to talk about what they believe?'

The pastor could have replied, "She *has* been taught. With her lifelong church attendance along with her Christian schooling all the way through twelfth grade she knows more about the Bible and Christian doctrine than most other people her age." And, of course, in so saying he would have been correct. But why then did this young woman feel unprepared, untrained, inadequate? Why didn't she feel ready to give an answer to the hope that was in her (1 Peter 3:15)? Why are there many others like her—who want to witness about Jesus but feel that they don't know how? In the essay before us today we are going to talk about one way to help equip the rising generation for a lifetime of being witnesses for Jesus—through the training that our children receive during their years in the Christian day school.

We do not wish to imply that if our young adult and adult members feel unqualified to share their faith with others the fault rests with the Christian day school and High School. The matter is much more complex than that. Here, too, what *happens* or *doesn't* happen in the home speaks more loudly than anything that the children hear and learn between 8:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Monday-Friday.

It is to the *parents* that God has given the commission to teach their children in such a way that their children are also equipped to teach others. The Psalmist writes:

O my people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden from of old—
things we have heard and known,
things our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done.
He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel,
which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children,
so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.
Then they would put their trust In God
and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his commands.
They would not be like their forefathers—

a stubborn and rebellious generation,
whose hearts were not loyal to God,
whose spirits were not faithful to him.
(Psalm 78:1-8)

These verses, it is true, speak particularly about the importance of parents teaching their *own* children who in turn will *teach their own* children, etc., in an unbroken line until the end of time. But at the same time isn't it true that if a child is being prepared by parents to "tell to the generation to come the Praises of the Lord" that child will also then be able to share with his own generation those same "praises"?

It is *not* upon the Christian day school, then, that the ultimate responsibility rests for training children to be witnesses for Jesus. But what a wonderful opportunity exists in the classroom to *assist* the parents in preparing their children for this glorious calling God has given to every Christian. As St. Peter writes, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pe 2:9). Our children too are a part of God's "called out" people, the Church, who now are commissioned to be calling others in by the Gospel.

How might the Christian day school, particularly the Christian day school *teacher*, be used by God as equipper of the saints (Eph 4:12) for this particular area of service In Jesus' name?

WHAT IS MEANT BY AN EVANGELIST?

First of all we need to define our terms. What do we mean when we speak of a teacher as an evangelist? The word "evangelist" comes from the beautiful Greek verb *euangelizo*, a compound verb which literally means "to announce good news." It is the word the angel of the Lord used at the birth of Jesus when he announced to the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy.... Unto you is born ... a Savior!" Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon adds the note that "in the New Testament (it is) used especially of the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ."

The New Testament also uses two nouns that come from this verb. The one used most often is *euangelion* that means "good news," and is often translated as "Gospel." It is *euangelion*, for example, that is used in Romans 1:16 which speaks of the "Gospel of Christ" as the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

The other noun, used only three times in the whole New Testament, is *euangelistes*. It means "a bringer of good news," or, simply, an "evangelist." In the New Testament Philip is called an evangelist (Acts 21:8) and Timothy is urged to do the work of an evangelist (2 Ti 4:5). The word 'evangelist' is used also in Eph 4:11 which speaks of Christ giving to the church 'some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as *evangelists*, and some as pastors and teachers."

Euangelizo—to proclaim the good news about salvation through Jesus. *Euangelion*—the good news about our Savior, the Gospel. *Euangelistes*—a proclaimer of the good news, an evangelist. What *beautiful* words! And what a *privilege* is ours. We know the good news about Jesus. Many, probably most of us, have known it since our earliest days. We have come to trust in Him who is the center of the good news—Jesus. And now we are given the honored title "evangelist"¹—called to proclaim the same good news of salvation, redemption, justification, reconciliation to the children in our classrooms.

Evangelism! It's too bad that indiscriminate use of this word that is found over 100 times in the New Testament has perhaps robbed it of its beauty in the eyes of some of us. What comes to your mind when you hear words like evangelism or evangelist? Do they conjure up in your mind the image of someone like Sinclair Lewis' hypocritical Elmer Gantry traveling up and down the sawdust trail with his tent show and one all-purpose sermon and a sweaty, back-slapping, foot-stomping, hand-clapping audience packed in to hear him every evening? Or does hearing the word evangelism or evangelism program produce a distasteful vision of a slick, smooth, well-oiled piece of machinery, churning out pre-fab evangelism programs on an assembly-line basis?

Well, that isn't evangelism; nor was Elmer Gantry an evangelist. Let's not let men's distortions of these Scriptural terms rob us of their beautiful meaning. Evangelism, we repeat, is proclaiming the good news about

Jesus, especially to those who do not yet know it, and an evangelist is one called to do this. Such as you and I are.

We're going to concentrate this morning on three specific ways by which teachers can serve as evangelists in the classroom: 1. by the kind of example they set; 2. by teaching their children the way of salvation; 3. by training their children to teach others the way of salvation.

THE TEACHER'S EXAMPLE

We shouldn't underestimate the importance of a teacher's example. An evangelistic spirit is not just *taught*, it is *caught*. In the ministry of both Jesus and the Apostle Paul we see the importance of a leader's example. Jesus didn't say to his first disciples, "*Listen to Me* (although they were to do a lot of listening), and I will make you fishers of men." He said, "*Follow Me*" (Matthew 4:19). Jesus called his disciples "that they might be *with him*, and that he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14). From Jesus' own example they learned the importance of seeking out the lost, people such as Zaccheus (Luke 19:1ff) and the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1ff). From his lips they heard the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1ff), all of which gave evidence of Jesus, passion for souls. The time they spent with him gave them the opportunity to "catch" his evangelistic fervor.

Paul, too, didn't hesitate to use himself as an example. In fact, he even urged the Corinthians, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Co 11:1). He tells the Philippians, "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things" (Php 4:9). Certainly one of these "things" that the Philippians had "heard and seen" in Paul's life was his love for proclaiming the Good News to those who did not know Christ. The very fact that the Philippians were now Christians was due to Paul's evangelistic activity in their midst (Ac 16:11-40) which the Holy Spirit used to bring them out of the darkness of unbelief into the light of faith and salvation through Jesus.

In several ways the example of the teacher can move children to want to be evangelists, sharers of the good news, themselves. *One important aspect* of a teacher's example is to demonstrate daily the joy of being a Christian. This will lead a child to think, "I'd like to *have* more and more what my teacher has and *be* what my teacher is." And that in turn will also make it more natural for him to think, "I'd sure like my friends to have the same things." If your life were an advertisement for Christianity, would it lead others to want to "buy" it? Our lives *are* such advertisements. We are "letters" which are "known and read by all men" (2 Co 3:2) Including the boys and girls in our classrooms. What do our lives tell these children about the desirability of being a Christian?

Look at the Apostle Paul again, writing to the Philippians from imprisonment in Rome. It wasn't easy to be a Christian in those days, certainly not in Philippi. So Paul encourages them, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7). Then he reminds them that these aren't just words. They are the truth of God which he has personally experienced and which the Philippians themselves have seen in Paul's life. "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am," he writes. "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength" (Php 4:11-13). What an incentive this was to the Philippians to keep the faith and also to share the faith with others!

Teacher, the way you act day by day in the classroom preaches a powerful sermon. A teacher whom children view chiefly as cross, grumpy, irritable, temper-prone, yelling a lot who seldom smiles or laughs, is not giving a positive image of Christianity to the class. But when the fruits of the Spirit are blossoming in a Christian teacher's life—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23)—then it's a different story. Then the children see Christianity as something good, positive, to be desired for themselves and others.

The German philosopher Nietzsche once said about the Christians of his day, “I would believe in their salvation if they looked a little more like people who have been saved.” Shouldn’t it be obvious that we have been saved, rescued from death and hell, that we are now a part of the family of God? By saying this we are not maintaining that all teachers at all times should be bubbling over with joy and merriment. There are occasions in every classroom that call for sternness, even anger. But at the same time it is valid to ask the question, “How will my children remember me—as a gruff old bear or as one in whom they could see daily the fruits of the Spirit?”

The *way you teach* also can preach a sermon on the joy of being a Christian. We’re not talking here about *what* you teach, but about the *way* you teach what you teach. As you know there are two chief doctrines in the Bible, the Law and the Gospel. Both are needed in teaching, not just in Word of God classes, but in any teaching situation that calls for the use of the Word. But both need to be used properly, *with the Gospel always predominating*.

In the essay referred to previously, “The Grade School Evangelist,” the essayist calls our attention to the way Jesus taught: We all know our Savior did not shun the harshest preaching of the law. He condemned the Pharisees publicly. He cleansed the temple bodily. He rebuked Peter sharply. He gave the most vividly horrifying descriptions of hell we have in Scripture. But we don’t ever characterize Jesus in our minds as being a law preacher, do we? We do not because for all of his harsh condemnation of sin, his words of peace and love and forgiveness leave their more lasting impression on our mind. He ate with sinners. He forgave the adulterous woman. He received Peter back. He promised the thief heaven. And to Nicodemus he spoke the unforgettable, gracious words, ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life’ (Jn 3:16).” The essayist continues, “I wonder if this is how my ministry will be remembered. Will yours? Our impatience with the lack of sanctification among our children often leads us to the law of Moses rather than to the grace and truth of Jesus. For instance, we want our children to attend public worship on Sunday. So we make them memorize the Third Commandment and Luther’s Explanation. We ask them if they know what it means when they skip church. We may take weekly church attendance. We show our displeasure when the percentage is poor. True, all of these things can be done in the context of a Gospel-oriented ministry. But does our love, like the Savior’s, always shine more brightly than our law? Do we speak of the joy we experienced in going? Do we invite with the promise of grace and forgiveness?... If our children are asked why they go to church, would we expect them to respond, ‘Because I should,’ or ‘Because I want to’?

“We could be doing everything right in our classroom and still not have the results we want.... But while we cannot hasten the Spirit’s gifts with our own efforts, we can by our weaknesses hinder and obstruct his work. And there is no better way to hinder the Holy Ghost than to emphasize Law over Gospel. In imitation of us our children will be legalists instead of evangelists. They will be *heavy* with a conscience still *burdened* instead of *happy* with a soul *free from guilt*. They will be obedient in reciting to their instructor but hesitant to speak of Jesus when not specifically directed to do so by him.”

We can *teach* our children how to give verbal witness to their faith in Jesus. In fact, we’ll be giving some specific examples later in this essay. But what must come first is the clear teaching of the Gospel itself. Our Savior in his ministry emphasized Gospel above Law—forgiveness above condemnation, not the burdening but the unburdening of consciences weighed down with sin and guilt. He applied Isaiah’s prophecy to Himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). That was the emphasis of Jesus’ ministry and the result was a group of devoted followers who gave their lives to bring this same good news to others. When this emphasis is in our teaching, the Holy Spirit will fill the hearts of the children with a joy that moves them to share it with others.

A *second way* a teacher’s example can inspire an evangelism-consciousness in children is through the teacher’s own passion for the salvation of souls. If a teacher seldom mentions the plight of unbelievers around the world and at home, chances are that the children won’t think much about it either. It would be good to have

some kind of “mission time” every week in each of our classrooms. Perhaps it could be done in connection with the gathering of the mission offering. In our school, for example, we have a weekly mission offering, the proceeds of which are given to various synodical mission endeavors. Instead of merely handing out the mission envelope, why not schedule time for talking about the need for reaching the lost with the Gospel with specific application to the current mission project. To a certain extent witnesses for Jesus are made, not born. Children, and teachers, too, need a continual reminder that what we have been privileged to see and hear (Ac 4:20) is of earthshaking importance; for without it the unbeliever is lost forever (Ac 4:12).

The teacher would do well to include in the daily prayers, petitions for the salvation of those who are perishing without the Gospel of Christ and also to encourage such prayers on the part of the children. Such petitions have always been one of the marks of devout children of God, going all the way back to Abraham who pleaded so persistently that the Lord would spare Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction (Ge18:22-33).

A Christian teacher’s passion for souls will also be demonstrated and quite likely be increased by personal participation in the congregation’s program of evangelistic outreach. There appeared an interesting series of articles in “The Worldwide Evangelist” a few years back. Under the heading, ‘May God Bless You with a Changing Neighborhood,’ the author, a LC-MS pastor, spoke of steps being taken to revitalize the congregation he was serving, Our Savior Lutheran Church of Detroit. Since I was brought up in Detroit, I know something of Our Savior congregation. It was one of the largest, if not the largest, Lutheran church in Detroit, a city of many large Lutheran congregations. That was 25 years ago. But then, as with many of our Milwaukee WELS congregations, the neighborhood changed and Our Savior fell on hard times.

In all these years this 2,000-member congregation had had no Christian day school. In fact its pastor made no bones about his opposition to church-related schools, although he did send his own children to a neighboring LC-MS school. But then came a new pastor and a school was begun with the specific purpose of making it to be, under God’s blessing, a leading mission arm of the congregation, a place where children could be brought both to learn the way of salvation and to learn how to share the way with others. The key to the success of this endeavor would be the teaching staff. So that the teachers might be well equipped to do evangelism teaching and training in the classroom, each teacher was expected to participate in the evangelism-training program the congregation offered.

It would appear to me that such a course of action would be wise for all of our schools. You can best teach others both the “*how*” and the *joy* of witnessing when you are doing it yourself. Granted, our teachers are already loaded down with many extra-curricular responsibilities. But is it not possible that some of these areas can be just as well carried out by others? And if not, perhaps one teacher at a time could be given one semester of a somewhat reduced extra-curricular schedule so that he/she could be given some on-the-job training in the work of personal evangelism.

Your class will benefit from this not only by your *increased expertise* in teaching them the way of salvation and how to teach others, but also by what you will be able to tell them from *first-hand experience* about the joys of witnessing. If I may be permitted a personal note here: Over the past several years I have been conducting Talk About the Savior seminars in various WELS congregations in our District. They have been very well received. One reason for this, I’m sure, is that the people know—from the experiences I am able to relate—that I am not just theorizing with them. I don’t speak of anything that I have not done myself. Teachers, who *themselves* are going and telling will have, it would seem, the greatest influence on their children when urging *them* to go and tell.

A *third way* a teacher can set a positive example in the classroom is by demonstrating that it is natural for the name of Jesus to be on a believer’s lips. We sing “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer’s ear,” but then so often we are hesitant to *use* it. We’re not talking here about using God’s name when teaching the Bible story or when praying, but about becoming comfortable in speaking the name of our Lord in our regular conversation. How can we ever be comfortable in speaking the name of Jesus to an unbeliever if we hardly ever speak the name of Jesus among ourselves? For example, should a Christian teacher substitute the words “luck” or “fortune” for the name of the Lord? Yet don’t we often do just that (“I was really lucky to have

escaped an accident coming to school this morning”; “Fortunately help arrived just in time, etc.). Why not name instead the name that is above all names—“God was with me”; “The Lord protected me”; “Praise God! He was there when I needed Him.”

Our school is in an athletic league composed of various Christian schools in the San Jose area. We are the only Lutheran school in it. Our girls’ basketball team recently played a game that was more important to another team than to us, for we had already clinched the championship. But second place was still at stake. This was important because the first two teams in each division go on to the play-offs. We were playing the second place team. If we won, Liberty Baptist, the team currently in third place, would end up tied for second and there would be a playoff for second place. The morning after the game the coach of Liberty Baptist called our school to find out who had won. When she was told that we had, her response was, “Praise the Lord!” “Just like a Baptist,” we might be quick to conclude. But wouldn’t, “Just like a *Christian*,” be more accurate? Doesn’t God’s Word speak of “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”? (2 Thess 5:20).

In the classroom the teacher can be teaching the children by personal example that it is only natural for Christians to talk *about* God and *to* God as the beautiful name of our Lord falls easily and naturally from the teacher’s lips. To foster such an attitude a teacher might include a weekly sharing time among the children under the heading, “What has Jesus done for you this past week?” Also, the teacher might himself or herself use *ex corde* prayers instead of written ones and give the children the opportunity to do the same on some kind of rotational basis.

A *fourth way* that teachers by example can inspire a desire on the part of the children to be evangelists is through the way the *Word of God lesson is taught*. If each day the children are subjected to a dry, dull, drab presentation, they will be led to believe that the Word of God is dry, dull, drab. The Word of God hour should properly be the highlight of every day. If it is to be that, it begins with careful preparation. More experienced teachers especially need the reminder that preparation is always necessary, no matter how often the story has been taught. Using up new information, coming up with new introductions; thinking of new applications—all of this will help to keep the presentation from becoming tired and stale. Even your tone of voice as you teach the Bible lesson conveys to the children how you feel about what you are teaching. Each lesson should be taught in such a living, moving way that the children recognize that what they are hearing is the most important and most exciting part of their day. Have we somewhat belabored this point of the importance of the teacher’s classroom example? We are well aware that it is the Holy Spirit, not the teacher, who leads children to faith and motivates them to share their faith with others. Yet we can hinder the Spirit’s work by attitudes and actions which “turn the children off to the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit works. A teacher’s example, then, is of key importance.

If we must confess that we have come short of being the perfect example, then we are only being honest. But we don’t have to be weighed down with guilt feelings. That’s why Jesus came, to be the Savior—of teachers, too. We can lay our sins on Jesus, the Lamb of God, and know that God will remember them no more. “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9). We have a wonderfully gracious God!

Then, if we want to grow in the *joy* of being a Christian, grow in our *passion* for the salvation of souls, grow in our *readiness* to use the Lord’s name in our daily conversation, grow in the *ability to communicate* the Word of God in an interesting, inspiring way, the way to such growth is through personal use of the Word of God. “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Pe 2:2-3).

Teachers, like pastors, always run the risk of using the Word of God on a professional basis only, merely to prepare for the Word of God class or for a school devotion. Such use of the Word is necessary, of course, but it’s not enough. The apostle Paul talks about the possibility of preaching to others but he himself losing the prize (1 Co 9:27). That’s the danger of professionalizing one’s use of God’s Word. Study of the Word is not just your *business as a teacher*; it is your *life as a Christian*.

Teachers themselves need to be fed in order to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pe 3:18). We strongly suggest that teachers take the time for a personal, devotional program of Bible study which covers areas not in the standard school curriculum, such as the epistles, prophets, and poetical books, and that teachers also participate in at least one of the group Bible study opportunities the congregation offers. The result, under God the Holy Spirit’s blessing, will be a spiritually strengthened teacher who then will be used by the Spirit to strengthen spiritually the children in his/her classroom.

TEACHING THE WAY OF SALVATION

Making clear God’s way of salvation is especially important if there are unchurched children in the classroom. But even if there aren’t, we shouldn’t automatically assume that every child from a *member’s* home is a Christian. Quite often children entering the 7th grade confirmation class are still somewhat uncertain of the proper relationship between faith and works, even those who have been in the school from kindergarten on. One question that I ask on a quiz very near the beginning of the year indicates this confusion: “T or F? I want to try hard to live a good life because that will help me get into heaven.” Each year several 7th graders circle the T instead of the F. This shouldn’t come as a surprise because work-righteousness in one form or other is *the* religion of mankind, but it certainly does underscore the need for teaching and re-teaching God’s way to salvation.

In this connection it will be helpful to remember that a traditional Christian day school curriculum appears to make an assumption, especially with the upper grades, which is not necessarily true, the assumption that every child in the classroom is a Christian. We need to teach the Bible stories with not just one but two audiences in mind. The Bible lessons should be taught with the goal of strengthening the faith of those who are trusting in Jesus as Savior and of leading others to trust in Jesus.

The same is true of *Catechism* teaching. In most, if not all, of our schools the pastor teaches the Catechism to the 7th and 8th or at least to the 8th grade. But it may also be used in intermediate grades. My personal feeling is that by teaching all of the Ten Commandments and then the First Article first one is taking too long to get to the Second Article and redemption. I have found it better to start with the First Article—Creation, Preservation, and Fall into Sin—and then to proceed to the Second Article and its wonderful Gospel of redemption through Jesus. We make a detailed study of the Ten Commandments in connection with the Third Article and a Christian’s new life of sanctification. This, as I’ve said, is my own personal feeling, but I’ve found it helpful to get the Law as mirror and the Gospel upfront and in this way put first things first.

Attached to this essay are three tools that may be of help to teachers as they seek to present God’s plan of salvation to their classes: 1) The Wordless Book; 2) Jesus My Savior pamphlet; 3) God’s Great Exchange. A suggestion would be to use the Wordless Book in grades K, 1-3, the Jesus My Savior tract in grades 4-6, and God’s Great Exchange in grades 7-8 and High School.

1. *The Wordless Book* may be familiar to at least some of you. Each page symbolizes by its color a certain Scripture truth:

BLACK - symbolizes the darkness of sin and unbelief. We think of such Bible passages as:

Proverbs 4:19 - “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness: they do not know what makes them stumble.”

Isaiah 9:2 - “The people walking In darkness have seen a great light.”

Isaiah 60:2 - “Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples.”

Matthew 8:12 - “Hell is described as “the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Ephesians 5:6 - “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:12 - The devil and his angels are called “the powers of this dark world.”

1 Peter 2:9 - Christians are those whom God has ‘called ... out of darkness into his wonderful light.’

You will want to explain to the children that this is what they, along with all people, once were—living in the darkness, the blackness of sin. An illustration of this darkness that covers only the unbeliever is the plague of darkness in Egypt (Exodus 10:21ff). By the way, some today view the use of the color black to illustrate sin and unbelief as prejudicial against people of black skin. But my brother, who was a missionary in

Africa for six years, told me that the Africans themselves use the colors black and white as a picture of evil and good, black representing darkness and death, as in the Bible, white representing light and life. If the Africans themselves do this, we should hardly hesitate to do the same.

RED - Representing the blood of Jesus who died for our sins. Here we think of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament and passages such as:

Acts 20:28, - which speaks of “the church of God, which he (Jesus) purchased with his own blood.’,

Romans 5:9 – “We have now been justified by his blood.”

Ephesians 1:7 - “in him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

1 Peter 1:18-19 - “You were redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

1 John 1:7 - “The blood of Jesus, his (God’s) Son, purifies us from every sin.”

Revelation 1:5 - “Jesus Christ... loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.”

So many of our Lenten hymns, such as ‘Glory Be to Jesus,” “Not All the Blood of Beasts,” etc., emphasize the importance of the blood of Jesus.

You will explain to the children that something wonderful happened through the blood of Jesus. It washed the darkness of our sins away and made us clean, which leads to the third page.

WHITE - The symbol of light as opposed to darkness, life as opposed to death, purity as opposed to evil. Here we think of such passages as:

Psalm 51: 7 - “Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”

Isaiah 1:8 - “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Revelation 3:5 - “He who overcomes will...be dressed in white. I will never erase his name from the book of life.”

A good Bible story to illustrate the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus is that of Naaman who by dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River was cleansed of his leprosy.

GREEN - The symbol of new life and growth, the life of sanctification that follows justification. Here we think of the fruits of the Holy Spirit:

Galatians 5:22-23 - “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

These fruits spring up as the Holy Spirit keeps the child of God attached to Jesus by faith: John 15:5 – “I (Jesus) am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.” The story of Zaccheus illustrates the fruits of faith that blossom after God’s salvation has come to an individual.

We are not suggesting that all the above passages should be used as little ones are taught the way of salvation by means of the Wordless Book. We bring them to your attention to show the rationale behind the choice and order of colors in the book. Rather in a very simple way the teacher can use these pages to tell of Jesus’ redemptive work. Each teacher should be able to supply his/her own dialog.

2. *Jesus My Savior pamphlet* - Since you are dealing with older children here, possibly grades 4-6, the teacher will most likely want to have the children look up the passages in the Bible, perhaps underlining or marking them in some way. After studying the first three passages, Ro 3:23, James 2:10, and Ro 6:23a, which establish our sinfulness and separation from God, the teacher might write on the chalkboard: WE ALL NEED A SAVIOR.

Then after studying the next series (Tit 3:5, Isa 53:6, Jn 1:29, Ro 6:23b) the next statement can be put on the board: GOD HAD MERCY AND SENT A SAVIOR. These passages are meant to emphasize the unconditional nature of God’s salvation. It is his gift, not a matter of our “righteous things” in any way. And they also stress universal justification—“the iniquities of us *all*,” “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the *world*.”

The passages on the last page speak of individual justification—“believe... and you will be saved,” “Whoever believes In him shall not perish”—and of the necessity of the Means of Grace to receive the gift of

faith—“faith comes from hearing the message.” After developing the truths of these passages, then write: **JESUS CAME TO BE YOUR SAVIOR.**

To impress these truths on the children’s hearts it would be helpful for them to commit all of the passages to memory. You might make copies of the *Jesus My Savior pamphlet* and distribute them for the children to use in learning the passages. It goes without saying that above all they need to grasp the *meaning* of each passage and what that Bible verse says to them about their relation with God.

3. *God’s Great Exchange* - This is the approach that I have been using for some time in my evangelism calls. It would take too much time today to study it thoroughly. I have a 60-minute cassette tape that goes with the God’s Great Exchange outline and explains, amplifies, and illustrates the various points. The tape is available at my cost.

Basically God’s Great Exchange is a four-point Law-Gospel outline utilizing little stick men as a visual aid. The four points of the outline are:

1. What God demands
2. What God sees
3. Man-made remedies
4. God’s remedy

This outline is preceded by two questions, “If you were to die tonight, are you sure you would have eternal life?” and “if you were to die tonight and stand before God and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you tell Him?” Ask your 7th and 8th graders these questions sometime. You will get some gratifying answers but also from time to time some surprises.

The four-point outline is followed by two sections—God’s Promise (eternal life as a gift through faith) and Blessings that Follow (the new life of sanctification that follows faith).

A teacher can with a little preparation become quite adept at using the God’s Great Exchange outline as a way of presenting the plan of salvation to a class or to an individual student. This is certainly not the only way to present sin and grace, but I have found it to be quite easily learned and also easily understood by others.

At present we are in the process of preparing a four-page bulletin-size God’s Great Exchange brochure that will contain most of the material on the God’s Great Exchange appendix you have with this essay. When it is printed, we’ll spread the word.

TRAINING CHILDREN TO TEACH OTHERS THE WAY OF SALVATION

Why is this necessary? In fact, *is* it necessary to give children special evangelism training to equip them to share the Gospel with others? Necessary, no, but helpful, yes.

Certainly much witnessing is spontaneous and requires nothing more than a regenerated heart and lips that want to sing the Savior’s praises. We think, for example, of the healed blind man of John 9 who with no training whatsoever witnessed to the Pharisees, “I was blind but now I see” (John 9:25). Or, of the former demoniac who “went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him” (Mk 5:20). He did this without so much as a five-minute evangelism-training course. That’s really the ideal, such spontaneous testimony to others. Little children are particularly adept at this. On the first Palm Sunday the chief priests and teachers of the law were indignant over the fact that the little children were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” In reply Jesus quoted Psalm 8:2, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise” (Matthew 21:16). How great it would be for all of us to be as uninhibited as little children. But the older children get, the more inhibited they become and less likely to spontaneously “declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pe 2:9). What we have been talking about in this paper is aimed at breaking down some of these inhibitions and making us and our children more open in our talking about Jesus.

One of the best inhibition destroyers may well be to teach our children a specific way to share their faith with others. Learning a specific witnessing outline has helped tremendously in my evangelism endeavors.

This past Sunday afternoon while flying down to Los Angeles to preach for a Joint Reformation Service at North Hollywood, I was sitting next to a woman who was reading a book on health foods. I struck up a

conversation with her and soon discovered that she was a true believer in the ability of health foods to satisfy every need that one would ever have. After a little while I asked her, “What will these health foods do for you after you die?” and then proceeded to go through the Law-Gospel message of God’s Great Exchange with her.

I bring up this incident to illustrate a point: It is very helpful for Christians to commit to memory a basic outline of the way of salvation which can then be modified to fit the occasion. Some years back I’m quite sure I would not have shared the Gospel with this woman. I’m not a very outgoing person by nature so it’s not easy for me to strike up a conversation about spiritual matters with a stranger. But now that I know what I want to say, I don’t have nearly the fears that I had before. Couldn’t we be doing the same thing for our children?

Jesus gave his apostles quite a lengthy training period before he sent them out on their own to witness. They learned by being with him *what* to say and *how* to say it. And then, when they did go out from Jesus (Lk 10:1ff) he had a report-back session (Luke 10:12ff) to evaluate their successes and their failures.

My suggestion: that we teach each of our school children one simple way to share the message of salvation with others. We could use the same material to train children to be evangelists as we use to bring to them the message of salvation. For example, the little children could learn how to use the *Wordless Book* with others; Intermediate grades could use the *Jesus My Savior* pamphlet; upper grades could be taught to use *God’s Great Exchange*. In making these suggestions I am not in any way saying that these are the approaches to witnessing that should be used in all of our classrooms. I’m simply offering them as tools that you may want to use. You might have others that work equally as well or better.

But what I am saying is that we can help our children become more effective evangelists by giving them training in some specific way of witnessing. Perhaps the children might even practice on each other in a role-playing situation.

Two years ago I delivered a paper at a Synod-wide Convocation on Evangelism. It was entitled, “The Pastoral Office and Evangelism.” In it I pointed out that in the congregation the pastor is the key man: “It is his skillful and enthusiastic guidance and counsel that is needed to properly equip the saints for service—including the service of witnessing for Jesus.”

In the classroom it is the Christian *teacher* who has this role. The teacher is a *key person* whom God uses to properly equip Jesus’ lambs for service, and that includes the service of being witnesses for Jesus.

The teacher as evangelist. A high calling indeed—to make disciples of your children who will in turn make disciples of others in an endless line to the end of time.

Lord, thank You for this calling. Give us what we need to fulfill it. We trust Your promise, “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Philippians 4:19-20).

GOD’S GREAT EXCHANGE **(One Way to tell a Friend about the Savior)**

Approach #1:

Our greatest need: to be in a right relationship with God. Are you? Two questions that can help answer that question for you:

- 1) If you were to die tonight, are you sure you would have eternal life? (*Wait for answer*) If *yes*, reply, “What is it that makes you certain?” Or, let me put it another way” (*then immediately ask the second question*) If *no* or *uncertain*, reply, “What is it that makes you uncertain?” Or, let’s put it another way” (*then immediately ask the second question*)
- 2) If you were to die tonight and stand before God, and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you tell him? (*If the response to these two questions indicates an uncertainty about eternal life and/or a reliance upon works for salvation, you may then say, “From what you have answered it would appear that you’re not really in a right relationship with God. If you were, you would be certain of*

eternal life. God wants us to have that certainty. Could I tell you about GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE which shows how to get into a right relationship with God?")

Approach #2:

Whatever the situation, the problem will be solved (or you'll be given the ability to cope with it) when you are in a right relationship with God. This is our greatest need. How can you tell if you are in a right relationship with God? Let me tell you about GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE:

WHAT GOD DEMANDS

1. There are two things that must happen for a person to be in a right relationship with God:

a. you must have holiness

1) Leviticus 19:2 - "Be *holy* because I, the Lord your God, am *holy*"

2) Galatians 3:10 - "*Cursed* is everyone who does not continue to do *everything* written in the Book of the Law"

b. you must have no sins

1) Isaiah 59:2 - "Your Iniquities have *separated* you from your God"

2) Romans 6:23a - "The wages of sin is *death*"

(Draw the following on piece of paper):

WHAT + holiness

GOD * - sins * A stick person may be inserted here for illustration.

DEMANDS _____

life

WHAT GOD SEES

2. God demands that he sees no sin, that he see only holiness. But what does he see?

a. Looking at us, he sees people that lack holiness

Isaiah 64:6 - "We are all as a unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"

b. He sees sinners

Romans 3:23 "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

c. He sees people who are deserving of death not life

(Draw on a piece of paper):

WHAT - holiness

GOD * + sin * a stick person may be inserted here for illustration.

SEES _____

death

MAN-MADE REMEDIES

3. What can we do about this?

a. You might think, "Guess I'll have to try harder" (*ladder illustration*) But that won't remove sin or make you perfectly holy, will it?

b. Or you might determine to make up for every sin with a good deed (*scale illustration*). But that doesn't remove sin

c. Or, you might think, "I'm not perfect; but at least I'm better than many others" (*comparison illustration*). But God expects you to compare yourself to him and his perfect holiness

d. All such self-help efforts are doomed to failure

(Draw on a piece of paper): *

MAN-MADE REMEDIES

* At this point the use of three different pictures would work: a ladder (try harder), a scale (Balancing act) and two stick figures—one representing God and one representing a person (comparison).

GOD'S REMEDY

4. Only God has the remedy. His remedy might be called **GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE**

- a. He sent his only son into the world to become one of us.
- b. His Son lived a perfectly holy life—in our place.
- c. His Son died on a cross, paying the wages of sin in our place; for “the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:6) (*here bring out the meaning of “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and “It is finished!”*)
- d. God has credited the perfect life of Jesus and his death for sin to our account (2 Co 5:21- “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”)
- e. The result: we have the holiness (*Jesus' Holiness*) and the removal of sin we need for life

(*Draw on piece of paper*):

GOD'S + holiness + holiness

REMEDY - sin * - sin

= LIFE = LIFE

GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE

* The illustration here consists of a cross on the left and a stick figure on the right, with one arrow indicating my sins being placed on the cross and the second arrow crediting Jesus' holiness to me.

GOD'S PROMISE

5. This new life is yours as a gift

- a. Romans 6:23 - “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”
- b. God invites you: Acts 16:31 - “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (put your trust and confidence in him as the one who lived a holy life and died for sin in your place) and you will be saved”

BLESSINGS THAT FOLLOW

6. Once you are in a proper relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then many spiritual blessings from God are yours, such as:

- a. new life right now
John 3:36 - “Whoever believes in the Son **has** eternal life”
- b. eternal life in heaven
John 3:16 - “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”
- c. freedom from guilt
Psalm 103:12 - “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”
- d. “fruits” of faith
Galatians 5:22-23 - “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”
- e. power for Godly living –
Galatians 2:20 - “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
- f. answers to prayer Psalm 50:15 - “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you”
- g. guidance for your daily life Psalm 119:105 - “Your Word Is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path”
- h. Strengthening fellowship of other believers Ephesians 2:19 - “You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household”

- i. assurance of God’s love in every situation Romans 8;28 - We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him”

(While speaking, draw on the piece of paper):

*

New life right now	Eternal life	Freedom from guilt	Fruits of faith	Power for living	Answers to prayer	Guidance for life	Christian fellowship	Assurance of God’s love
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* Draw a cross with arrows radiating from the cross to each of the nine boxes.

FOLLOW-UP

7. Since faith and new life in Jesus Christ comes and grows through the Word of God (1 Pe 1:23,2:2), you need to stay close to God’s Word.

(Here give specific opportunities to do so—worship services and Bible class attendance, Bible Information Class, etc. Seek to get the individual committed to a specific course of action—enrollment in the Bible Information Class, church attendance next Sunday, etc. Then continue in prayer for the person and re-visit as necessary).

Endnote:

1 We should note that we are using here and throughout the paper the title “evangelist” In its broad rather than Its narrow sense. Not every Christian is an evangelist in the narrow sense (“Christ gave some as evangelists” Ephesians 4:11; compare with 1 Corinthians 12:28-30). The gift of being an evangelist is one of those gifts that the Holy Spirit apportions to members of Christ’s body “individually just as he wills” (2 Co1 2:11). An evangelist in the wider sense would be anyone who tells another the good news of salvation through Jesus. It is in this sense that we see every Christian teacher as called to be an evangelist.