

A Quick Start GUIDE



CHILD EVANGELISM

A Quick Start Guide for Child Evangelism

Manuscript created by Barbara Manspeaker
Managing editor: Phyllis Washington
Design and layout: Alan Eno

Available from:
AdventSource
5040 Prescott Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68506
800.328.0525
www.adventsource.org

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN #: 978-1-57756-560-4

Introduction

Any time we interact with children, we have the opportunity to lead them to Jesus. Most people who accept Jesus as their Savior will do so before or during their adolescence. Child evangelism means helping a child know Jesus as his or her best friend.

While there are many opportunities for ministry to the children in your church, don't overlook children in the community. Their needs may be even greater if they have not had the opportunity to learn about Christianity, Jesus, and salvation.

Following Jesus' Example

Jesus had a special place in His heart for children. He rebuked His disciples when they tried to turn the children away. Success in child evangelism can be found in following the example of Jesus and His interaction with people. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Meet people where they are
- Love and accept everyone
- Communicate in terms people can understand
- Spend time where you're likely to meet and interact with people
- Look for opportunities to introduce yourself
- Determine the needs of the community you are serving
- Listen to others
- Celebrate with your new friends and acquaintances
- Share a meal
- Teach others about salvation

Advocating for Children

As adults search for meaning in their own lives, they often do not hear the voices of children – sometimes in words, often in actions. We become so involved with making our own lives and families work that we often forget about the children around us in need. Their needs may vary from spiritual to emotional to physical.

No matter where you live, you can reach out to the children around you. While many of their needs will vary, they all need love, acceptance, and hope. They all need Jesus. Many people don't know about Jesus. They may not know much about Christians, and what they do know may not be positive.

Your experience with the Lord is valuable to children. Share how the Lord has led you in your lifetime and how He has blessed you. Show the children how to have a close relationship with Jesus through your relationship with them.

Your child evangelism program will look different than any other church's. That's because your church and community are unique. Each family has different needs.

How to Become a Child's Advocate

- Remind your church of the value of children
- Raise the profile of the value of a child
- Celebrate the contributions children make to life
- Create an awareness of children's needs
- Challenge your church to a new vision of making children first
- Teach and encourage the discipleship of children
- Provide or point people to resources and support that will enhance children's lives
- Increase the awareness in your church for the needs of the children in your community
- Interact with community leaders who provide services to children and become involved on a community level
- Stay current on the culture that shapes the minds and hearts of children today

Involving Children in Ministry

Remember that young people are the next generation of leaders. They should be given responsibilities as soon as they are old enough to understand the purpose of ministry. Young people can be very effective in reaching their peers, so it is helpful to include them in your ministry.

Getting Started

In the same way an evangelist prepares to lead a series of meetings, child evangelism leaders must plan carefully and in detail if they want to succeed. The first and most important step is praying and asking the Lord what He wants you to do. Then you must listen and obey, even if God asks you to do something out of your comfort zone.

Success in child evangelism cannot be measured through baptisms, tithes, regular attendance at Sabbath school, continued involvement, or parents accepting Jesus. Our job is simply to plant seeds. Often we will not see the final result during this life. But results are not our responsibility; they belong to the Lord. The Holy Spirit brings about conversion – not us.

Some will try to discourage you by pointing out a lack of visible results. Others may believe you are wasting the Lord's money. Don't believe them. Keep focused on the work the Lord has given you.

If you trust in God and continually ask for His guidance, you will be rewarded. Consider these biblical examples: Nehemiah prayed for the Lord's plan on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. God rewarded his obedience and faithfulness throughout the entire process. Moses was worn out with the work the Lord had given him to do, so the Lord sent Jethro to explain His plan to Moses. Jesus knew God's plan for Him because He lived a life of prayer. Early in the morning He went alone to learn what God had planned for Him that day.

That's the secret – prayer, and lots of it. God will answer your prayer. It may not be in the way you expect or even the answer you want, but stay alert. He will reveal His plan.

How Can My Church Get Involved in Child Evangelism?

Set aside a minimum of three to five years for your church to concentrate heavily on child evangelism. Everyone can expect to see exciting results, though this will require the involvement of many people within the church. Not everyone involved will work directly with kids. Some members will pray for the project, help prepare resources for those on the front lines, make children feel welcome by greeting them and learning their names, or supply financial support.

Here are Some Other Ways Your Church Can Support Child Evangelism:

- Pastoral support – The support of the pastor is a must. He or she is your advocate to the church board and the church. With your pastor's support, others will listen and be more receptive.
- Church board support – The board will need to allocate funds and support the process.
- A dependable leader – If your church agrees to support child evangelism, they will need a dedicated leader. This person should be willing to commit to at least one year, and preferably longer. He or she needs to be spiritually grounded, organized, reliable, and a “people” person who understands the development and spirituality of children. The skills of team building, developing a network for accountability, and knowing how to delegate responsibility are also desirable traits.

- A church with a progressive attitude – Child evangelism will be a catalyst for many changes, and enough members must be willing to allow it to happen. It could potentially lead to many new faces in your church.
- A committed group of helpers – Remember Jethro’s advice to Moses: don’t burn out by trying to do everything yourself. The church works best as a body with all members using their talents.
- Compassionate Sabbath school leaders – Sabbath school classes must be adaptable to the needs of children and parents who are attending church for the first time.

Starting Procedure

- After the leader and volunteers are selected, it will be important to conduct a community survey to discover the demographics and the needs of your area. This will help you determine what programs to offer.
- When the information has been gathered, work with the pastor, church board, and a steering committee to assess the results.
- The next step is to conduct a visioning seminar. Its purpose is to help you set goals or priorities and work out action plans. Beware of setting too many goals or starting too many projects at the same time. It’s better to move slowly and experience success than quickly wear everyone out.
- For every goal, create a plan that outlines the necessary steps. Then assign these steps to various individuals. Be sure to give them the necessary instructions along with a timeline and accountability plan.
- Plan for any extra resources or education your team members may need to complete certain assignments.
- Set dates and times to review your progress. If something is working well, continue with it. If something is not working, determine why. Make changes as necessary or choose a new direction. Don’t be afraid to let go of what isn’t working and try something new.

Who is Your Audience?

Not every program is right for every church, every situation, or every child. That’s why a demographic survey of your community is important. You should also survey your church family to discover talents, interests, and abilities. Meet with community and other denominational leaders and do an assessment of programs already offered in the community. Determine how your program can be an expansion of what is already in place.

Once you have outlined your demographic, strive to understand their needs. This will ensure you won't start out blindfolded and then wonder why your outreach didn't work. To best reach the diverse people within your community, enlist the help of those who have knowledge and experience with different groups. As you begin to understand other cultures, become flexible in your programming. Studies have shown that family values, music, time, language, and traditional stories are all areas of diversity. Being willing to incorporate some aspects that are already familiar to the group will make your program more acceptable.

Our society is constantly changing. The people in our communities come from all over the world. We speak different languages. People have varying degrees of education. We come from a wide range of economic backgrounds. We must minister to people just as Jesus did – meet their needs and lead them to God. We can prepare for challenges knowing that the Lord is with us and will show us what to do and give us the strength and the ability to do it. Be willing to listen, learn, and adjust.

Some of the specific audiences you could reach out to are relatives of church members, friends of the children in your church, and children from the surrounding neighborhood. Some of these children may come from church-going families, while others may not. It is important to make sure these kids feel comfortable coming to your programs. Invite them to be a part of the program and become a contributor – children learn by doing. Remember, everyone has three needs: to be loved, to feel that they belong, and to feel that they have a purpose – all three in a safe environment.

As you reach out to the children in your church and community, remember that their needs may extend beyond the spiritual realm. Some may also have physical or emotional needs. As you learn about them, think about how your church can help.

21st Century Challenges

The children we are trying to reach for Jesus have already been indoctrinated with various religious beliefs and exposed to occult practices through the Internet, media, books and games. For many, every abominable practice listed in Deuteronomy 18:10-12 is a part of their everyday experience.

To assume that this has not affected the thinking of our children is to be naïve. Understanding how this shapes some children's thinking will better equip you to present the gospel message as the truth that shines brightly in a world full of lies.

For more information, visit www.adventsource.org and type "Child Evangelism Challenges" into the search bar.

As new children enter your church, try to gauge how much they know about Jesus. It might be necessary to start with the basics. Don't become discouraged if they find it difficult to trust you at first. Keep showing that you care about them.

As you plan your child evangelism program, keep the following in mind:

- All children need love. They need to know there are no gimmicks or expectations in what you offer, but that you simply care about them.
- Children need hope for a better life and future.
- They need to know they were specially created by a loving God who has plans for them.
- They need to know someone accepts them as they are and wants to help them to be all they can be.

The best way to reach children is through relationships. This can take time and effort, so be ready to invest both when you become involved with child evangelism. When relating to children, remember that a large portion of communication is non-verbal. Children are excellent at picking up on non-verbal cues, so it is important to be genuine. It may take some children longer than others to trust you. But when you do something to show kids that you love and care for them, they will respond.

It's important to be aware that some children will come with negative attitudes. However, it is not necessary to tolerate unacceptable behavior. Do not hesitate to set reasonable limits and stick to them consistently.

Four Ways to Develop Trust

- Participate in events that are important to special children in your life such as recitals, sporting events, competitions, and school programs.
- Give individual attention and affirmation by giving hugs, taking time to talk, and writing notes.
- Invite them to events that are important to you such as church programs, outings to fun places, and your home.
- Determine if they are missing any basic necessities and think about how you can help.

Child Evangelism in the Home

Parents have a responsibility to share the love of Jesus with their children. A child's love for God should begin in the home. Parents should exhibit Christian attitudes and regularly pray and study the Bible with their children. You will see the best results if parents are involved in your child evangelism efforts.

Sample Child Evangelism Programs

1. Vacation Bible School

Conducting a VBS that is geared for both children from your church and community is a good way to begin your child evangelism program. VBS provides the perfect opportunity for children from your church to invite their friends. Be sure your church's children receive training in how to conduct themselves as hosts before VBS begins. Consider training the children of your congregation as junior VBS helpers so they can experience leadership.

The purpose of VBS is to:

- Introduce children to Jesus
- Teach children about the Bible
- Provide Christian daycare
- Impact young lives
- Provide educational entertainment
- Make new friends
- Introduce people from the community to church members
- Show love and acceptance for all children
- Discover the needs of families in your community

Consider your circumstances, location, and church and community needs. Maybe one of the following VBS options would be a good fit for your church:

- Traditional: Five evenings, mornings, or afternoons for one week
- Day Camp: One week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Family Program: One evening per week for five weeks
- Middle of the Week: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for two to four weeks
- Mini: Kids put on a program once a week at a nursing home
- VBS Reunion: Once a month or once a quarter
- Community: Several churches work together
- Winter: Five evenings or one full weekend day per month
- Whole Church: VBS in conjunction with evangelistic meetings
- Fair: One week any time of the year
- Summer: One day per week all summer

- Sport & Bible Camp: Emphasis on a particular sport with Bible lessons
- VBS in the Park: One day per week for a month in a local park
- Semiannual: One week in the summer and one week in the winter
- One-Day Extravaganza: All-day VBS with stations, activities, and food

For more ideas check out the *Quick Start Guide for Vacation Bible School* from *AdventSource* at 800.328.0525 or www.adventsource.org. VBS supplies are available from *AdventSource* at www.adventsource.org and the Adventist Book Center at www.adventistbookcenter.com. Visit www.childmin.com for VBS recommendations.

2. Kids in Discipleship

Kids in Discipleship (K.I.D.) is a mentoring ministry conducted in local churches. Because many parents are unsure of how to act as their children's primary spiritual mentors, K.I.D. helps parents grow as disciple-makers.

K.I.D. helps families grow closer to each other and to Jesus. Parents and children participate in weekly small group Bible studies and enjoy take-home resources to reinforce mentoring in the home. As a result, the entire church is blessed.

K.I.D. University consists of three days of intensive training to equip volunteer leaders to direct Kids in Discipleship in the local church. Training is conducted at church-based centers with active K.I.D. ministries and is structured to offer the highest possible level of experience and training.

Visit www.kidsindiscipleship.org or call 423.893.3266 to learn more and request information about future training sessions.

3. Rainbows

Rainbows is a not-for-profit international organization that provides training and curricula for establishing peer support groups for people experiencing a painful family transition. Since 1983 the power of its programming has helped children, adolescents, and adults cope with the emotional pain of divorce, separation, death, and other loss.

Inspired by one mother's vision of a place where her three sons could express the grief that came with their parents' divorce alongside other young people in similar circumstances, Rainbows has a history of successfully restoring hope to those who have suffered the pain of loss.

If you are interested in receiving training to start a Rainbows chapter in your area, visit www.rainbows.org or call 800.266.3206.

4. Neighborhood Bible Clubs

A neighborhood Bible club is similar to VBS. It involves a 60-90 minute program incorporating drama, stories, music, art, and games to help kids grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. Instead of inviting children into the church, this program takes place in a family's home or yard, or at a public location such as a city park. Neighborhood Bible clubs provide a way to invite children from your neighborhood to a church-sponsored activity. It's also a good way to involve children who attended VBS or might be interested in next year's VBS program.

5. Adventurer Club

The Adventurer Club sponsors spiritual learning in a social setting for children in grades 1-4. It brings the church and the family together to work for the spiritual, emotional, and social growth of children.

The club usually meets once a week for 60-90 minutes. Adventurers is a pre-Pathfinders ministry where children earn awards for completed activities. Children in Adventurers will build a friendship with Jesus, learn good sportsmanship, discover God-given talents, and strengthen their ability to get along with others.

For a complete listing of Adventurer supplies or to request a catalog, contact *AdventSource* at www.adventsource.org or 800.328.0525.

6. Pathfinder Club

Pathfinders is the next step after Adventures for children in grades 5-8. The purpose is to provide an active social setting for kids to make friends with God and each other.

Pathfinders offers a wide range of activities including camping and survival skills, leadership training, outreach activities, and interactive training in a variety of categories with awards given for completion.

For a complete listing of Pathfinder supplies or to request a catalog, contact *AdventSource* at www.adventsource.org or 800.328.0525.

7. Mentoring/Tutoring Program

Your church could become a center for an after-school program one or two evenings per week. Members with talents in different areas could assist children with their homework and study habits. Help with certain subjects could lead to a better school experience for children who take advantage of this program.

8. County or State Fair or Native American Pow Wow

If your church sponsors a booth at a county or state fair or Native American Pow Wow, be sure to include information on children's ministries. Parents who are considering attending your church will feel reassured if they know what their children will be doing. You can also use this as an opportunity to promote upcoming programs such as VBS.

9. Puppet Ministry

Puppet ministry can be a great addition to children's Sabbath school and other events. Your group could also perform at hospitals, nursing homes, shopping centers, and other places in the community. You can either purchase or make your own puppets and help the children learn how to use them. If done well, puppets can teach as no other method can. Through puppets you could act out Bible stories, popular children's stories, or skits featuring religious themes and moral values.

10. Camp Meeting

Camp meeting is a very special opportunity for evangelism – a time for members and families to connect in social and spiritual settings. Try inviting neighborhood children to attend your kids meetings. Along with traditional learning time, you could plan games and fun activities for time between meetings. Be sure to provide lunch for your guests. Additional activities could include swimming or hiking – anything that is fun and active. Make sure all kids who attend are invited to VBS or summer camp.

11. Community Kids Place (Kids Connection Corner)

The purpose of Community Kids Place is to give kids a safe place to participate in fun activities. The location of a Community Kids Place is variable. You could look for a space in a building within your community or you could use the church school.

Once you have a location selected, the next step is to plan a schedule of activities. The programs you provide will depend on the available facilities. Decorate your area so it appeals to kids. Remember to place an attractive sign outside and make sure the facility has restrooms and a place to cook or reheat food, if possible.

List your programs in a flier and distribute it in the community. Promote your programs in the newspaper or on the radio.

While you can provide many different programs, do not overextend yourself for space and available help. Start small and grow. Make sure your activities are consistent, well managed, and safe for kids. Invite their caregivers to visit and see what happens in your Community Kids Place.

12. Sidewalk Hour

The goal of a sidewalk hour is to present an exciting summertime children's program to your community. The key to success is knocking on doors in a neighborhood and inviting people out regularly.

The program can include various activities such as games, upbeat songs, character-building stories, Bible verse memorization, Bible stories, and a picnic meal. Prizes are given to everyone who comes.

Complete your program with a grand finale, possibly on your church lawn or at a park. You could include a special activity such as a bouncing castle for the kids to enjoy.

13. Hospital Visitation

Children in hospitals are another specific group to whom you could reach out. Many of these children spend much of their time in bed. A hospital visitation program could be a fun way for children from your church to share the love of Jesus with other kids. Obtain the hospital's permission to conduct an afternoon program in the pediatric ward. Your program could include songs, stories, and appropriate games.

14. Shelter Program

A homeless shelter program is another excellent ministry. You could simply volunteer at a shelter by preparing and serving food, or you could get permission from the shelter's director to conduct an afternoon program for the kids who come to that shelter.

15. Drama Club

Drama clubs can be fun for everyone involved. Kids enjoy learning about the Bible through watching and acting out character-building skits. This is also a great opportunity to get kids involved in reaching out to others. You can perform for your church, or you can take your drama club on the road and perform for other audiences.

Other Program Ideas

- Bus Ministries
- Community Fair
- Children's Health Club
- Technology Camp
- Easter Pageant
- Christmas Caroling
- Block Parties
- Street Ministry
- Family Night Out Supper and Program
- Summer Camp
- Clown Ministry
- Family Evangelism
- Holiday Programs
- Games and Bible Stories in the Park
- Special Community Programs
- Children's Christian Library
- Health Fair
- Children's Church
- Summer Day Camp
- Children's Choir
- Midweek Kid's Club
- FLAG (Fun Learning About God) Camp
- Children's Story Hour
- Photography Club
- Children's Evangelistic Meetings
- Thanksgiving Baskets
- Sports Camp
- Children's Ministries Page on Church Website

Hosting Visitors

When kids invite their community friends to church programming, try to make them feel welcome. Remember they may feel completely out of their element, so think of ways to make the program fun for them. Encourage the other children to explain things your visitors may not understand. Make sure they comprehend what you are talking about before you move on through the lesson. You may want to think of ways to make your existing programs more community friendly.

Tips for Activities

- Choose one activity at a time to begin.
- Don't be afraid to hold programs in a home, school, park, or another location other than your church.
- Be sure you have adequate security procedures so parents will feel comfortable leaving their children with you.
- Don't run the same program forever. Set a time to begin and a time to end.
- Take plenty of time planning and preparing before you begin.
- Evaluate what is happening and make changes as needed as you go along.
- Involve plenty of people with small jobs rather than a few people with large expectations.
- Don't start something you are not prepared to finish. It will mean a sacrifice of time, effort, and money. Be prepared in advance.
- Keep records of where children live, phone numbers, emergency numbers, allergies, special needs, etc.

Checkpoints Along the Way

In life there should always be checkpoints along the way. These are places or events when we stop to evaluate our progress. Because you are constantly striving to know and do the Father's will, you will need checkpoints along your ministry journey. Below is a sample list of questions:

1. Am I still growing in my relationship with Jesus while involved with this ministry?
2. Am I still planting seeds in this ministry or have I run dry?
3. Do I have an ongoing dialogue with the Lord about this ministry, or have I reached a point where I'm making all the decisions and think I have all the answers?
4. Am I willing to let someone else take over this ministry, make suggestions, or give advice?

5. Is the Fruit of the Spirit displayed in my life when I'm involved in this ministry?
6. Is it time to reassess this ministry and make changes?

If you can answer "yes" to the first 5 of the above checkpoints, press on. If you answer "yes" to checkpoint #6, take it to the Lord in prayer. When the Lord is ready to do something different, He'll let you know.

Ways to Involve Children in Church Ministry

Greeters

Children can welcome worshippers and distribute bulletins. Welcoming others to worship helps children develop a sense of ownership in their church. Youthful, smiling faces are an encouragement to older members. Children learn by watching others, so team them with experienced adults.

Worship Leaders

By reading Scripture, leading prayer, and providing music (vocal or instrumental) in a worship service, children have the opportunity to worship God with the talents He's given them.

Artists

Children are imaginative and creative. They enjoy preparing special artwork that can be displayed on the bulletin board, used for a bulletin cover, or as an illustration for the pastor's sermon. They could also make decorations for the front of the church.

Friends

Children can invite their friends, neighbors, and relatives to attend church-sponsored events such as VBS and summer camp.

Ministering to the Elderly

Children enjoy preparing and presenting special programs for hospitals, nursing homes, and senior citizens villages. Relationships between the young and the elderly are mutually beneficial. Making greeting cards and simple gifts brings joy to both the children and recipients.

Helping the Needy

Collecting and distributing canned food, baby clothes, and other necessities for people in need gives children a valuable look at reality, and helps them experience firsthand the happiness that comes from helping others.

Children and the Community

Children can represent the community in events by being part of a float for a parade or assisting with a stand at a local show. Children can also work side by side with adults in community projects to learn the value of practical Christianity.

Advertising

Children can create artwork for local shopping malls and other businesses to advertise Christian education or church programs, and to celebrate special days or events.

Technical Assistants

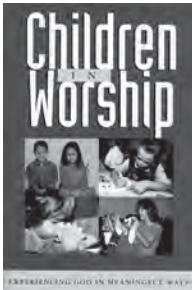
Children can operate the overhead projector or help with the PowerPoint presentation. They can also operate the lights and set up the DVD player, or help in any other way that is necessary.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking an interest in child evangelism, one of the most important ministries in your church. As you strive to show children a positive picture of Jesus and Christianity, remember that they are not only the future of the church – they are the present.

Resources

The following resources are available from AdventSource. For a complete listing visit www.adventsource.org or call 800.328.0525.

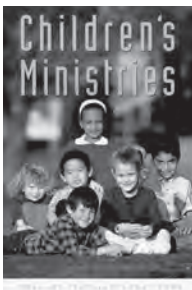


Children in Worship

by Jack and Ann Calkins

This book is for children's ministries leaders, children's ministries coordinators, pastors, and parents who want to make Sabbath worship more kid-friendly. Investigate children's stories, intergenerational church services, children's church, and more.

Catalog #020786



Children's Ministries Manual

edited by Anne Calkins

Learn how to reach children and ignite their passion for Jesus. This book is full of practical answers to your questions and tried and true techniques that fit all kinds of learning situations.

Catalog #021992



Fearless Bible Investigators

by Lori Watkins

Here is an ongoing series of innovative Bible studies and adventures where children ages 9-12 become the investigators. The series includes mysteries, puzzles, and comic book appeal to stimulate curiosity as kids learn Bible truths.

Catalog #018863



Making Jesus My Best Friend

by Claudio & Pamela Consuegra

This baptismal study guide will prepare children ages 8-10 for a wonderful walk with Jesus. It offers lessons with activities that parents and children can enjoy together such as fill-in-the-blank, word games, and Bible crossword puzzles.

Catalog #014050

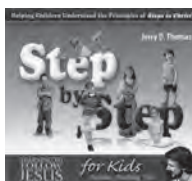


Putting Families First

by Noelene Johnsson

Healthy families are the main ingredient for healthy churches. From making sermon time more kid-friendly to involving parents in children's Sabbath school, this book offers the necessary guidance and steps for creating and maintaining a family-friendly atmosphere.

Catalog #0430252



Step by Step: Steps to Christ for Kids

by Jerry D. Thomas

Do you want the children in your life to understand what it means to be a Christian? This book will help kids ages 6-9 take their first steps in Christian discipleship. The chapters in this book are drawn from *Steps to Christ* by Ellen White.

Catalog #024885



What We Believe for Kids

by Jerry D. Thomas

Our statement of fundamental beliefs can be confusing to a kid. Now you can share your beliefs using child-friendly words. A story for each belief teaches the main concept.

Catalog #043035

Adventist Book Center

The following resources are available from the Adventist Book Center at www.adventistbookcenter.com or 800.765.6955.

God Loves Me 28 Ways by Linda Koh

Learn About God's Love Activity Book

A Child's Steps to Jesus by Linda Porter Carlyle

Step by Step by Jerry D. Thomas

Come Meet Jesus Program Guides

Race to Victory Lane by Crystal Earnhardt

Other Resources

Voice of Prophecy KidZone Bible Studies, www.vop.com

It Is Written My Place with Jesus, www.myplacewithjesus.com

Group Publishing, www.group.com

Kids Ministry Ideas Magazine, www.kidsministryideas.com

Winner Magazine, www.winnermagazine.org

Amazing Facts Kids, www.amazingfactskids.org

Child Evangelism

This Quick Start Guide for Child Evangelism is full of important information to help you start or revitalize a ministry at your local church. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or a seasoned volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use in your local church.

Other titles in the Quick Start Guide series

- Children's Ministries Coordinator
- Vacation Bible School
- Kindergarten Sabbath School
- Primary Sabbath School
- Junior Sabbath School

For a complete listing of Quick Start Guide titles visit www.adventsource.org



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ISBN: 978-1-57756-560-4



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