

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR CHILDREN!

'Through the eyes of a child...'

How to Use This Outline

The emphasis of this outline is on the exegetical material for the chosen passage. The emphasis of this sermon is on the following issues:

- What children see and understand by faith talk
- The need to educate and inform others about God
- The responsibility of each generation now and later

The outline will need to be customised and contextualised by each Corps Officer for the congregation to whom the sermon will be preached:

- Adding appropriate illustrations that will connect with the specific congregation
- Modifying language to be appropriate to the socio-cultural setting of the Corps
- Modifying sermon style if you prefer a topical rather than expository sermon style
- You may also wish to make the application more specific to your context.

PowerPoint slides have been provided for the following:

1. **Title Slide** – Introducing the sermon
2. **Scripture Slide** – Deuteronomy 4:5–14 (highlighting verse 9)
3. **Scripture Slide** – Romans 10:5–17 (highlighting verses 14 and 17)

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 4:5–14 (CEV)

⁵⁻⁸No other nation has laws that are as fair as the ones the Lord my God told me to give you. If you faithfully obey them when you enter the land, you will show other nations how wise you are. In fact, everyone that hears about your laws will say, 'That great nation certainly is wise!' And what makes us greater than other nations? We have a God who is close to us and answers our prayers.

⁹You must be very careful not to forget the things you have seen God do for you. Keep reminding yourselves, and tell your children and grandchildren as well. ¹⁰Do you remember the day you stood in the LORD's presence at Mount Sinai? The LORD said, 'Moses, bring the people of Israel here. I want to speak to them so they will obey me as long as they live, and so they will teach their children to obey me too.' ¹¹Mount Sinai was surrounded by deep dark clouds, and fire went up to the sky. You came to the foot of the mountain, ¹²and the LORD spoke to you from the fire. You could hear him and understand what he was saying, but you couldn't see him. ¹³The LORD said he was making an agreement with you, and he told you that your part of the agreement is to obey the Ten Commandments. Then the LORD wrote these Commandments on two flat stones.

¹⁴That's when the LORD commanded me to give you the laws and teachings you must obey in the land that you will conquer west of the Jordan River.

Romans 10:5–17 (CEV)

⁵ Moses said that a person could become acceptable to God by obeying the Law. He did this when he wrote, 'If you want to live, you must do all that the Law commands.' ⁶ But people whose faith makes them acceptable to God will

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never ask, 'Who will go up to heaven to bring Christ down?' ⁷ Neither will they ask, 'Who will go down into the world of the dead to raise him to life?'

⁸ All who are acceptable because of their faith simply say, 'The message is as near as your mouth or your heart.' And this is the same message we preach about faith. ⁹ So you will be saved, if you honestly say, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. ¹⁰ God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others.

¹¹ The Scriptures say that no one who has faith will be disappointed, ¹² no matter if that person is a Jew or a Gentile. There is only one Lord, and he is generous to everyone who asks for his help. ¹³ All who call out to the Lord will be saved.

¹⁴ How can people have faith in the Lord and ask him to save them, if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone tell them without being sent by the Lord? The Scriptures say it is a beautiful sight to see even the feet of someone coming to preach the good news. ¹⁶ Yet not everyone has believed the message. For example, the prophet Isaiah asked, 'Lord, has anyone believed what we said?'

¹⁷ No one can have faith without hearing the message about Christ.

Sermon Outline:

Introduction

1. Today we celebrate the International Day of Prayer for Children and we focus both on our children and the children of the world. We know that while children around the world have many needs, the greatest thing they can have is a personal relationship with Jesus. Today, I'd like us to consider how a child learns about Jesus, and how they understand and explain Jesus to others. What does learning about Jesus look like through the eyes of a child? What does a discussion about Jesus sound like? What does a child *do* with the good news of the Gospel once they've made their own commitment to Christ?

What children see and understand by faith talk

1. Clearly, to talk to children about faith issues using traditional 'Christianese' jargon is fraught with danger. Imagine sitting your five-year-old down, looking them in the eye and saying: 'Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Have you been redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit? Are you a dirty, filthy sinner in need of purification? Have you died to the world so that Christ can live in you?'

Most of this sounds like surgical procedures or the stuff of horror movies. Many adults have enough trouble getting their heads around Christian concepts, doctrinal statements and spiritual matters, let alone a child who's still learning how to tie shoelaces.

2. *Read Deuteronomy 4:5–14.*
3. Moses earnestly begged the Israelites to not only remember all that God had done for them, but also to tell their children and grandchildren. Did Moses say to confuse the children? No. Did Moses say to unravel, extrapolate or interpret what God had done? No, he simply said to report what they had seen God do. Did Moses say to wait until the children were 18 or 21 or 43? No, he said to tell them immediately.

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4. Tell someone sitting near you: what is the longest word you know and what is a word you know in another language? (*Give them a moment.*) Now, imagine someone trying to explain what Jesus did for you and how much he loves you, but only using long, long words or foreign words. That's what it's like telling a child that he or she needs to seek 'redemption and salvation in the sacred blood of the Lamb who was slain for their immortal soul.'

The need to educate and inform others about God

1. We need to talk about God, then, in ways that are relevant, understandable and sensible for whoever it is we're talking to, child or otherwise. Our aim is not to confuse people but to lead them to a point where they can make an informed decision about following Christ. Moses was quick to remind the Israelites that there was no age requirement for being a believer—whether you are six or 16 or 60, you should know about God.
2. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul talked of the importance of people being informed about God, and the importance of believers doing the informing (*read Romans 10:5–17*).
3. Paul echoes the same sentiment Moses raised: How can someone hear about God if you don't tell them? I'm a big fan of trains (*pick your own hobby/passion/football team/interest*) and I can bore you to tears by talking for hours about them. I can tell you about different engines, where certain trains were made, what trains can go fastest, which countries have the longest train routes, even how many carriages were part of 'The Orient Express' in 1883. If I want to attempt to have people love trains like I do, I have to want to talk to people about trains—which is easy to do because I love trains.
4. So what if the topic wasn't trains but God? Do I love God enough and have I studied His Word enough and do I have a strong enough passion for other people to know about God, that I can talk about God for hours? Wouldn't it be sad if I was a Christian who could talk more about trains than I could about God? Be in no doubt, Christians have an obligation to educate and inform others about God—and this includes talking to our children. How sad would it be if my child grew up to be an expert on trains, but knowing nothing about God.

The responsibility of each generation now and later

1. At the core of wanting to tell others about God is unselfishness—sure, I could live happily in faith and not tell anyone about God, but how does that help others? Remember, the Gospel is, literally, 'good news', and we all want to share good news. And if we don't tell our children about God and His amazing love and grace and the gift of Jesus, we run the risk of our faith dying out with this generation.
2. I'm not planning on going anywhere real soon, but in 50 (*pick a suitable number for yourself*) years, I most likely won't be here. My time to serve God and witness to the truth of the Gospel and fight for Jesus is now. In a few decades time, it will be someone else's responsibility. Christian singer Keith Green once said, 'This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on the Earth.' Guess what? The next generation of Christians—our children—will be responsible for the next generation and for carrying on the work of the Church.
3. So what are you doing now to help our children do that? We've talked about looking at God 'through the eyes of a child', well, our children are starting to see glimpses of God through what they learn in Kids Church and at home with their families and by observing other Christians and by learning to pray and read the Bible. But how are you 'telling' a child about God? Is it in your words, your attitudes, your behaviour, your service, your demeanour? What are our children learning from you and from me about this thing called Christianity?

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Conclusion

1. Hear Moses: 'Tell your children and grandchildren as well.' Hear Paul, 'How can they hear unless someone tells them?' On this International Day of Prayer for Children we've attempted to see faith 'through the eyes of a child'; as our children look at us individually and at our church, what are they seeing? What are they being told? What are we passing on to the next generation of Christians?
2. We're reminded today that we need to pray for children everywhere; well, we need to start somewhere—let's promise to pray, regularly and faithfully, for our own children. Let's tell them about our great God, but let's also tell our great God about them. And then, let's pray for children in our community, that they would be told about God and would learn to love Him themselves.
3. Invite people to respond and commit themselves to pray for children.

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