

## TEACHING CHILDREN TO SPEAK THE GOSPEL

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Sunday School provides the church with many wonderful opportunities to reach out to those who do not know or trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. One way in which Sunday School can serve this purpose is by encouraging children to speak the gospel to those they know who are outside the faith.

Paul wrote, “We believe, therefore we speak.” (2 Cor. 4:13). While it is only natural that a child will want to share the good news of Jesus Christ to his or her friends and relatives, sometimes obstacles can get in the way, such as the child being unsure of the basic truths of the Gospel.

With all the interesting stories, games, songs, snacks and other activities that are often a part of Sunday School, it is easy to lose sight of the primary message. The central biblical teachings of sin and God’s grace, as outlined in Luther’s *Small Catechism*, for example, should be reviewed regularly. As the students have more confidence of their knowledge of the Christian faith, they will have more confidence in speaking of that faith to others.

Secondly, by reminding ourselves and our students of the privilege and responsibility to speak the gospel we can all be encouraged to do so when the opportunity presents itself. Peter wrote, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV).

Finally, we can help our students to gain confidence to speak the gospel by providing opportunities to do so in our classes. One easy way to do so is to encourage discussion and interaction during the lesson. As the students become more comfortable talking about their faith in class, they will become more confident doing so outside of Sunday School. This means that we should be ready to field questions and address issues that students may bring up, even though they are not part of the lesson plan for the day. If students are afraid to talk about their faith in the relatively “safe” environment of a Sunday School class, they will probably be even more reluctant to do so outside of class.

We can also ask students to explain in their own words the meaning of the lesson for the day. Luther’s question, “What does this mean?” invites a conversation on not just the “facts” of the lesson, but on how the truth of the lesson for the day has an impact on our daily lives and understanding of the gospel. Perhaps we could ask students to explain the meaning of the lesson as if they were talking to a friend or schoolmate who doesn’t know the gospel. In that way, we can get a better idea of how well the students have assimilated the lesson, as well as give them practice in expressing the gospel in a spontaneous way.