

Altar Calls And Children

A few pointers by Dick Gruber

Jesus said, **“Let** the children come to me..”

He did not say, “drag, coerce, push, force, threaten, or brow beat them to come to me.” Over the years, altars calls for and with children have included many different styles, uses, and sad to say, abuses. I have witnessed people holding children down until they received. At one camp an adult was shaking a child by the shoulders, and demanding that the child receive. I have even heard an altar worker encouraging children to repeat phrases in order to be filled with the Spirit.

I have also experienced the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit filling children to overflowing. In our church boys and girls using ministry gifts as they pray with other boys and girls. I have participated in many prayer services where children have been saved, healed, and delivered at altars.

The altar call/service should be a positive experience for children. Workers must be sensitive to God’s leading and encourage children to pray one for another. Physical contact should be limited to a hand on the shoulder, head, or back. When appropriate, a hug may be given to a child. Cry with the children. Laugh with them. Above all, enjoy the presence of God with them at the altars.

We encourage boys to pray with boys and girls with girls. In the mid to upper elementary ages, more distraction is evident when children pray for those of the opposite sex. Nothing should be allowed to distract children from meeting with God.

The leader giving the altar call must speak with confident authority. God has placed him/her in this service for such a time as this. Many times the altar call is referred to as the “invitation.” Think of it as an invitation and you will stay away from improper attitudes, actions, or words. A loving, Christ-like calling out of those wanting to respond will reap great results.

I often encourage every child to spend a little time with Jesus. Children are directed to find a place to pray at their chairs or at the altar area. What a blessing to see children turning and kneeling to pray. What a thrill I’ve experienced in children’s church when joyfully praying with boys and girls at the altar.

I've listed some things below to do and say when giving an altar call or ministering around the altars. I trust that these will help you to better sharpen this ministry skill.

Things to do:

1. The theme is repeated throughout service
2. Pray about the established theme
3. Speak with God's authority
4. Use kid-friendly language/concepts
5. Keep it simple saint
6. Repeat instructions as needed
7. Relax, let God do the work
8. Pray for this part of the service all week long
9. Give a variety of options I E: prayed at chair, altars, alone, with friends, stand, sit, kneel
10. Encourage those not praying to worship and be respectful
11. Compliment those not praying for showing respect to God and their praying friends
12. Play slow worship music that is familiar to the children
13. Direct children to pray for other children or adult helpers
14. Let them pray as long as needed
15. Be positive in your approach. I E: I know some of you are ready to pray today...
16. When most are done praying, close in prayer. You may want to sing a song with the children as they go back to their seats.

Things to say:

1. Some of you want to respond
2. Put your faith and trust in Jesus
3. Ask Jesus to come into you life
4. Trust Jesus to be your best friend
5. Ask God to forgive the wrong things you've done
6. We call the wrong things we do, sin
7. Only Jesus can clean the sin out of our lives
8. Jesus wants to save us from the destruction that sin causes
9. You may all find a place to pray right now
10. You can pray up at this altar or turn and pray at your chair
11. Pray/repeat after me

12. If you want special prayer, raise your hand. A worker will come and pray with you
13. Prayer time is time to meet with God. That's why we are not talking or playing with friends right now.
14. I want to thank you for showing respect to God and your friends by sitting quietly or worshipping Jesus when you are done praying

Things not to do or say:

1. Ask Jesus into you heart
2. Just let go
3. Just hang on
4. Sin is black
5. If you've done this before, do not come down
6. Give your heart to Jesus
7. Come let the blood of Jesus wash you
8. Pray now or go to hell

Here are some pointers specific to praying with children to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. Be positive! God wants to fill every child to overflowing.
2. Encourage children to ask God for this according to Luke 11:13
3. Once they have asked God for His baptism in the Spirit, encourage them to praise and glorify God out loud. In 25 years of praying with children, I have never witnessed a child receiving this gift without first praising God out loud in his own native tongue.
4. Praise God in English and He will give you a prayer language at just the right time.
5. Never tell a child that he has received. Ask him what God is doing. Ask him if he is speaking in tongues. If the answer is yes, encourage him to continue.
6. Remind children that according to Luke 11:13 those who ask will receive.
7. Encourage children to speak out by faith when the Holy Spirit even gives them a partial word to say.

Children leaving the altar without having received should be encouraged to walk by faith knowing that they will be baptized to overflowing any

minute. God may have a special time picked out just for that child. I have done this many times with great success and awesome testimonies. One girl pushed the button on the elevator and her and all of her friends were baptized in the Spirit and began speaking in tongues. Another boy told me that he was walking to the bathroom and just began praising God. Before he knew it, he was speaking in a heavenly language. A girl in one camp prayed every night. It wasn't until she was at home with mom and dad that God allowed her to pray in tongues. As a result, mom and dad were both baptized in the Spirit as the girl laid hands on them.

It is important in any altar service to let God be God. Do not attempt to force a move of God or raise the spiritual level of the altar time by your own strength. Jesus is the Lord of the altar time. He will assist you in keeping it spiritual. Let the children come to Him.