

# EVANGELIZING CHILDREN

(Breaking The Bubble Gum Barrier)

Prepared by Dick Gruber March 19,1992

Twenty-five million school lunches will be served today. Over 7 million of those served will arrive home this afternoon to an empty house. These latch-key children will step off the school bus and into a world of fear and loneliness. Over 40 percent of today's elementary pupils live in a single-parent or blended family. An estimated 1,300 step-families are formed each day. The prediction is that 60 percent of today's two-year-olds will have lived in a single-parent family by the time they are 18. Is it any wonder that the greatest fear among American children today is the fear of losing a parent?

Six thousand or more children, 14 and under will successfully take their own lives this year. An estimated three times that will fail in the attempt. One point two million children will run away. This is no surprise when 2.5 million American children are reported as being abused each year. One in seven boys and one in four girls will be sexually molested before the age of 14 in our country. Over 300,000 children were reported missing and not found last year. Daily 30,000 boys and girls are added to the missing list. Children are abused, molested, despised, kidnapped, and ignored.

"Every day in America 67 babies younger than one month old die, 27 children die from poverty, 10 children are killed by guns, 30 children are wounded by guns, 211 children are arrested for drug abuse, and 2,989 children see their parents divorced." (*Charisma*)

"Every eight seconds of the school day, a child drops out. Every 26 seconds, a child runs away from home. Every 47 seconds, a child is abused or neglected. Every seven minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense. Every 36 minutes, a child is killed or injured by a gun. Every day 135,000 children bring their guns to school." (*TIME*)

Television has become the electronic baby-sitter. Over 850,000 American children 12 and under will be watching television at 1 o'clock each morning. The average child watches 5 hours of TV each day. Multiply this by 365 days a year, and in twelve years that child has accumulated over 21,900 hours or over 912 days of TV watching. With the kind of moral input that TV gives our children it is hardly strange to witness the spiritual condition of today's child.

If the same TV watching child attends an Assembly of God Sunday school every week for the first twelve years of life, he has been in Sunday school 26 days. Add to that an hour each week for Royal Rangers or Missionettes and two hours for children's church. He has been in church 104 days in twelve years. One hundred and four church days balanced against 912 watching TV. This doesn't seem hardly enough.

According to our Annual Church Ministries Report about one third of our Sunday school students are twelve and under. An amazing 84 percent of our churches have fewer than thirty-five elementary aged children in Sunday school. The other 16 percent of the churches hold 42 percent of all Assemblies of God children.

Are children being won to the Lord in spite of social and media influence? The answer is YES! The harvest field of children is ripe. It is safe to conclude from the ACMR that over 70 percent of those reported as being saved each year, in the Assemblies of God, are under the age of fourteen. Fifty to seventy percent of all souls won in this Decade Of Harvest will be children!

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14 (NIV) The order has not been rescinded. We are still in the business of letting little children come to Jesus. When walking this earth, our Lord demonstrated a heart for children. That heart has not changed in these last two thousand years. God still cares for boys and girls. He still says to you and me, "...do you truly love me more than these?...Feed my lambs." John 21:15 (NIV)

A bubble gum barrier has been raised. Sin has raised a wall between boys and girls and the Lord Jesus. Like sin, bubble gum is sweet, for a while. The bubble looks great when filled with air but has no substance. When under pressure it bursts. The pleasure of sin is like the flavor in bubble gum. It lasts for a short time. Children are being held behind the bubble gum barrier of sin and destruction. We can make a difference. We can rescue the child from certain spiritual demise.

How can we break this bubble gum barrier? Start with prayer. This kind only comes by prayer and fasting. Pray for children, families, schools, the media, the country, the world. Pray that God will give you a new anointing of His Spirit for this important work.

Next, keep working the things that work like Sunday School, Children's Church, Royal Rangers, Missionettes, Vacation Bible Schools, Kids Crusades, Camps. These are still valid ministries that can do much to draw in the nets, winning boys and girls to Jesus.

Explore new possibilities in outreach. Churches are starting Sidewalk Sunday Schools and Branch Sunday Schools. Latch-key ministries, Mailbox Club, and TV and radio evangelism are opening new doors of ministry. Support groups for abused children, children of divorce, and children with mental or physical handicaps can be initiated.

Call, visit, and write letters to the boys and girls. In a world where they feel lost, afraid, and hurt, you can be a friend. Your church can be a beacon of outreach, care, and security in this darkening world.

I spoke in a children's service in Orlando one night. At the conclusion of the service an altar call was given. One sweet twelve-year-old girl buried her face in her hands crying uncontrollably. In talking with her I discovered that this was the first time she had ever been to a church. Jesus was just a story people sang about at Christmas time. A friend invited her that night and the bubble gum barrier was broken. That girl found the joy of sin forgiven. How many more American children have never been invited or have never been to a church?

It takes the tip of a finger to burst the bubble. It takes the power of God evidenced in the work of your faithful hands to break the bubble gum barrier of sin. Do not be weary in well doing. Continue to reach out to the lost children of our land. Statistics look scary and children in this society stand on a shaken foundation, but God is bigger than societal trends and sandy soil. Jesus still loves the little children of this world. With God's help, more and more children will be won to Jesus. With God's help we will break the bubble gum barrier.

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Statistics gleaned from:

*TIME* October 8, 1990, *Charisma* January 1991, *LIFE* Special Children's Issue 1990

*National Coalition Against Television Violence* Newsletter 1985, *Today's Child: Ministry Now!* Theology, News And Notes, March 1987