Monthly message for kids – Learning the basics of Christian belief (Part Two)

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 As we consider how to teach little children about salvation and our Christian beliefs, we must realize that their attention span is short and so it is best to look out for “teachable moments” to begin to lay down a simple foundation. These often come during the course of our busy everyday life, but as our little ones ask a key question, it is because they are genuinely interested and so this really IS the best moment to stop and address it if possible! Last month we considered that Salvation and our ongoing relationship with God has four distinct steps: recognizing our sin; repentance; receiving God’s forgiveness; and having our relationship with God restored. We discussed **James 4:17 “So any person who knows what is right to do but doesn’t do it, to him it is sin.”** (Amp).

God’s Word teaches us how to recognize sin. It is much like a traffic cop who stops us to point out that we made an illegal turn. We may have been ignorant of the fact, but if it is the law in that city, we may still receive punishment (in this case, have to pay a fine). We might just receive a warning, but now we know that this action breaks the law and deserves punishment. Little children are constantly being told what the “rules” are – don’t tease the dog; use an indoor voice; eat only at the table….As parents we often feel that we are ALWAYS correcting them, but they continually push the boundaries and so if they are to recognize their “sin” we must be consistent so that they learn the consequences of disobedience**. 1 John 3:4** says**: “When a person sins, he breaks God’s law. Yes, sinning is the same as living against God’s law.”** (ICB)

 As God was beginning to teach His people, the Israelites, He gave them the Ten Commandments in **Exodus 20.** Rather than just a list of do’s and don’ts, these actually give us clear guidance on how to obey God and recognize our sins. [*“God’s Rules for Kids*”](http://imofinc.org/hp_wordpress/?page_id=183) on our website is a modern day teaching for children on these that may be helpful. Rather than trying to teach the whole 10 commandments to little children (who would find some of them difficult to understand) it might be best to focus on the ones most applicable to them, **“Honor your father and mother”** is a command to respect and obey our parents – a vital preparation for also doing so with our Heavenly Father. **“You shall not steal”** is a clear rule that can possibly be less of a temptation if the final commandment is understood and obeyed: **“You shall not covet…”** To help with this, we need to teach how to be thankful for what we have and not be jealous of others,

 Of course Jesus gave a much simpler summary of the Law in **Matthew 7:12****“Do for other people the same things you want them to do for you. This is the meaning of the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets.”** (ICB) Later in **Matthew 22:37-40** Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment of the Law. His reply was simple enough even for a child to understand**: “…’Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind’….And .. ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ All the law and the writings of the prophets depend on these two commands.’**” (ICB)