

All the Children of the World: Teaching Children to Love the Nations

Why the Nations? This session will not only address the *need* to teach our young people missions at an early age, but also to establish the *motivation* behind an “all nations” heart-beat. By piquing interest in your students of God’s global mission, you are better able to establish the priority of His glory among all peoples of the earth. When we, as influencers in the classroom, grasp that God’s desire is to be known and glorified among all nations of the earth, we have attached ourselves to a magnificent thought and an obligation to shape our teachings according to our findings. Practical suggestions are given in how to make much of missions in the lives of children. *All the Children of the World* will encourage us to see the world through a lens that includes all ethnic groups, languages, and cultures and to incorporate it into our classrooms.

Why Children Should Be Involved in Missions

Some of us may have grown up in a church with minimal exposure to missions. Perhaps your mission experience has been limited to an occasional missionary visiting on Sunday night. Because of that, many of us may have the idea that missions is for “professionals” something you do as a job. But, missions isn’t something we do. It’s part of our identity as believers. Some may think kids are too young to participate in missions. **But, if a child is a Christian, they can be involved in the Great Commission.**

Children learn by doing. They want to participate. If we want children to learn about missions, we have to *involve* them in missions.

It’s an unfortunate reality that many churches reserve missions opportunities for adults. But the Great Commission isn’t reserved for eighteen years and older. Missions is for Christians—adults and children.

I. Our Motivation

Consider these Scripture passages as they apply to the children in your sphere of influence.

- Mark 12:31 *“...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

Perhaps telling our neighbor about the love God has for them is the most loving thing someone could do. There are many resources available for children to use to share the gospel with their friends.

- Matthew 28:18-20 *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...”*

This command doesn't just apply to adults. The Great Commission has no minimum age requirement. I've personally seen children lead other children to Christ.

- Acts 1:8 *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

We often emphasize the “ends of the earth” part of that verse, but children can be his witnesses in their Jerusalem where they live, go to school, play ball, or go to the park. Children can also be involved in national and even international missions efforts. One of the greatest things our church has done in the past ten years for involving children/families in missions is championing family mission trips. We offer multiple mission trips specifically for families, and it has been very well received.

- I Timothy 4:12 *“Let no man despise thy youth...”*

The same Holy Spirit that equips and enables adults to share the Gospel lives in children who have become believers. If God saves a child, God can use them for His mission. **If we are saved, we are sent.** That includes

children. We are all called to share the Gospel where we live, work, and play, whether at home or overseas.

II. Our Mandate – Influencing students in God’s mission

The Biblical mandate to the church is clear in that we are to participate in global evangelism: *Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8*. It is also clear that we are to teach our children or those whom God has placed under our influence; they may be our own children, our students, or young people we are privileged to mentor in some aspect of their lives. *Deut. 11:18-21, 32:46; Prov. 22:6*.

- Your influence of missions is not asking students to choose “missions” over any other vocation, but rather a call to make it the “theme” of their vocation.
- When our students view “God’s glory in all the earth and to the nations” as motive for mission, we should guide them into prayer and preparation in seeing how they best fit into that plan.
- Teaching young people to focus on God’s glory is an extraordinary work!
- Teach them to attach themselves to something magnificent!

How you can involve children in missions:

Missions is vital to the church. Missions programs and events are great, but these only scratch the surface of what we can do to incorporate missions into our children’s ministries. **We need to move beyond the thought that missions is an annual event to teaching our children that missions is a natural byproduct of our relationship with Christ.**

III. Your Methods – Creating an all nations heart-beat in the classroom

- **Open up the “mission closet.”** – There’s all sorts of cool stuff in there; use it! Don’t have a “figurative” mission closet in your

mindset. Let it be missions conference all year long in your classroom. Decorate your room with maps, flags and things from other places. Thrift stores have loads ethnic clothing and décor. Use what you have; borrow what you don't. If friends are travelling abroad, ask them to bring you small artifacts to show the class, even free stuff from hotels and bathrooms! Newspapers and magazines in other languages broaden your students' view of the world.

- **Biographies** – Throughout history, a driving force in the missionary movement has been a correct view of God's greatness and a desire to make His name known among the nations.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." CT Studd

Tell your students about the exceptional sacrifices made by men and women through the ages who have served in the name of the LORD and made Him known. **Attaching a personality to a teaching will pique the curiosity to learn more.** Biographies are appealing because they help us see the humanity of individuals who went on to glorify God in spite of themselves. There is always the tendency to look for ourselves in those who aspired to a great task serving a great God.

- **Study Biblical Missions** – Help your students understand at an early age that missions and evangelism are central themes of the Bible. Teach intentionally about the church and missions as seen in the book of Acts. Help your class to understand that missions has been in the heart of God since the beginning of time. Teach on the lives of the Apostle Paul, Abraham, Jonah, and Namaan's little maid.

Repeatedly emphasize that missions is important to God and as His disciples we are all called to “Go.” Some are called to go farther than others.

- **Special Guests** – Invite a missionary to visit your class and share his/her experiences on the field. Hearing directly from missionaries makes an impact on young lives and builds powerful relationships. Invite a church member to your class who was born and/or raised outside of the US. Ask him/her to tell about the culture of his native land.

Encourage a respect for other-language speakers by inviting guests to your class who speak languages other than English; ask them to share some simple phrases.

- **Engage the Senses** – Connect your students with a new culture through the tastes and smells of food! Sampling new foods can help your children relate with nationals and the missionaries who work with them. Organize special events with your class that feature ethnic dishes. Get parents involved or church members with a particular specialty dish.

Help your students understand that food is not only a connecting point with a specific community or people group, but it can also foster respect and admiration when people are willing to step out of their comfort zones and enter the world of another.

Attach your teaching to something magnificent. Missions instruction for the young people of our churches is an eternal investment. It will filter up to the parents and potentially create a generation of Christians passionate about God’s glory among the nations along with the Great Commission that will get it there.