


D R . D A N B R E W S T E R



Child, Church and Mission

*A Resource Book
for Christian Child
Development
Workers*


Releasing children from poverty
Compassion
in Jesus' name

“Dan is not just another Western author but has shaped and written this book from years and years of living among the people in Africa, Latin America and, for almost the last decade, working with the Church in Asia.

“This book is a collection of learnings from a man who truly lives out his passion and life’s calling to speak out on behalf of those who are not able to speak for themselves. I believe that this book will help you go deeper in your understanding of God’s heart for children, the current state of children around the world today and the mandate the worldwide Church has to minister to these children and provide a holistic approach to discipleship.

“Compassion International is passionate about advocating on behalf of children, especially those marginalized by the issues they face around the world. My hope is that through this book you too will become a child advocate as you learn, cry over some of the realities that children face and rejoice over how God is using so many today to respond to these realities.”

— *Mark Yeadon, Vice President of Child Ministry, Compassion International*



**CHILD,
CHURCH
and MISSION**

Dr. Dan Brewster

A Resource Book for
Christian Child Development Workers

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Note: All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version.

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Acknowledgements

Writing a book is a much larger task than one originally anticipates. “How hard can it be,” I thought, “to connect all the presentations from the *Child, Church and Mission* course I teach at Malaysia Baptist Seminary, with some verbiage and a few illustrations?” Surely simply a matter of stringing a few sentences together. Many drafts and a fair bit of frustration later, I now know better.

This work benefits from the encouragement and work of many others. My first thanks goes to my colleagues in Compassion International with whom it has been my pleasure to work and serve for over 20 years. Foremost among them is my friend and mentor in the Asia Area Office of Compassion International, Dr. Bambang Budijanto. Dr. Bambang first envisioned the Program in Holistic Child Development which has now become part of the curriculum at Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, and for which I developed the ideas and notes which became the course called *Child, Church and Mission*. Dr. Bambang then encouraged me to translate the concepts and lessons from the course into book form for wider use. As my supervisor at Compassion, he insisted that I block out large chunks of time to see the task through to completion. I thank him for the inspiration and encouragement, as well as for his very valuable appraisals and critiques of the work in process.

My thanks also go to the faculty and staff at Malaysia Baptist Seminary. The visionary president, Dr. John Ong, has led and nurtured a seminary which reaches out to all of Asia, and which recognizes the strategic importance of children as both objects of mission and as key agents for furthering God’s kingdom in our generation. Under Dr. Ong’s leadership, the particular hard work and always friendly encouragement from the Academic Dean, Dr. Sunny Tan, and his wife, Mrs. Rosalind Tan, the seminary Child Studies Coordinator, have been exceptionally helpful. They have provided both vision and leadership for the program in Holistic Child Development, and have administered a complex cross-cultural program which is, I believe, the finest such graduate-level program in existence. It has been a pleasure to teach and now to write in that stimulating environment.

During the course of many re-writes I received valuable editorial assistance from Ms. Siewling Lim, who also provided lots of insights using her sharp Asian eyes. Mrs. Carmen (Menchit) Wong, the delightful Filipino international director of Compassion’s Advocacy Initiative also provided very helpful cultural and organizational insights. Further editorial work, and the whole of the layout and design was carried out by Mrs. Nydia Teter and her colleagues in the International offices of Compassion in the U.S.A. To all of those skillful people, many of whom I haven’t even met, I am also grateful.

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Dr. Dan Brewster, Penang, Malaysia
July 2005

About CHILD, CHURCH AND MISSION

The material in this book was originally prepared for the course by the same title taught in the Master of Arts Program in Holistic Child Development at Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary in Penang, Malaysia. It was designed to help students develop their understanding of the meaning and nature of the relationships between child, church and mission. From a biblical perspective, it provides an overview of the child, poverty and holistic child development, and thoughts on the relationships between holistic child development and the ministries of the Church.

This material may be used as a course of study in seminaries or Bible colleges. By carrying out the course requirements shown on page 189, students may receive either undergraduate or graduate credit for their work. We hope this material will also serve as a resource for training other groups and in other venues — such as training for children’s ministry workers, workers with at-risk children (specialized groups), and training conducted by Christian child development networks.

About the Program in Holistic Child Development at the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS)

Until recently there were no graduate-level programs for Holistic Child Development in Asia to provide training and support for the frontline Children at Risk (CAR) workers. To address this need, Compassion International (CI Asia) and Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS) formed a partnership to provide high-level training for CAR workers ministering in Asia.

This program is designed for people who are already working in the ministry of child development or for mature Christians with a desire to be involved in such ministries. The instruction takes a reflective practitioner approach, helping learners to critically analyze their work against current development theory as well as disciplines like theology, sociology, economics, anthropology, and gender studies.

The overall objective of the program is to equip students with a wide range of competencies and understandings related to Holistic Child Development and to develop skills to relate and apply Bible principles to current child developmental theories and practices.

For more information about the program, please contact:

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About Compassion International

Compassion International exists as an advocate for children, releasing them from spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty and enabling them to become responsible, fulfilled Christian adults.

Founded by Rev. Everett Swanson in 1952, Compassion began providing Korean war orphans with food, shelter, education and health care, as well as Christian training.

Today, Compassion helps more than 675,000 children in more than 20 countries.

The course in Child, Church and Mission is one such advocacy initiative. See the appendix of this book for more information about Compassion International or visit www.compassion.com.

FOREWARD

HONG KONG, AUGUST 20, 2005

Asia is home to the largest number of the world's poor children and also home to a significant number of the world's unreached people groups. At the same time, in recent years churches in Asia have witnessed one of the most significant growths in the history of the Church. The Compassion Asia Team commits to walk alongside the Church in Asia to link the explosive growth with the immense needs of children who live in poverty and are alienated from the truth of Christ.

Dr. Dan Brewster's book *Child, Church and Mission* is one of Compassion's most important resources for the Church worldwide. The content of this book was initially developed as a teaching module for the master's degree program in Holistic Child Development at Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary in Penang, and has been taught in different seminaries and Bible colleges across Asia.

As of today, approximately 140 students from 17 different nations in Asia are enrolled in the program. While Dr. Brewster would love to teach and pass on the subject that is very close to his heart at many more seminaries and Bible Colleges worldwide, physically he cannot do so. This book will spread what Compassion International believes and what Dr. Brewster and I are so passionate about.

This book is the first of a series based on the courses taught at the Malaysia Baptist Seminary that will be published to support, encourage and equip the Church to take the strategic and needed investment in the lives of the future leaders of our churches, communities and nations.

Congratulations to Dr. Brewster for this important milestone. It has been a blessing for me to walk alongside him in making a difference to impoverished Asian children, the potentially flourishing godly leaders of the 21st century. I pray that this book will accomplish its purpose and bring honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Raising up a generation of Daniels and Esthers in Asia,

Bambang Budijanto, Ph.D.
Area Director for Asia
Compassion International

WHY CHILD, CHURCH AND MISSION?

THE CHILD IN THE MIDST

Jesus placed a *child in the midst* (Matthew 18:1-3 KJV). We are familiar with this story from three of the Gospels about the discussion between the disciples about which one of them would be greatest in His Kingdom (Matthew 18:1-6, Mark 9:33 and Luke 9:46). Each passage gives this short incident a slightly different slant. Mark, for example, includes the touching illustration of Jesus' care for the children by "taking the child into his arms." Luke elaborates slightly on the point of the object lesson for the disciples: "For he who is least among you all — he is the greatest." It is only in Matthew's account that we are given anything explicit about children which Jesus found so attractive. He says that whoever "humbles" himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.

Was the child naughty or well behaved? It is interesting that we know almost nothing about the child. He is apparently a boy; the male pronoun is used in all three Gospels. But was the child young or old? Was he naughty or well-behaved? Healthy or sick? Playful or introverted? We don't even know how the child manifested humility. We know nothing more. In a sense, he is the "child in the *mist*." But this is also the beauty of the story. The child is any child. The child is every child. The child is boy and girl, poor and privileged, Asian, African and American. Jesus made one of his more significant "declarations" to the disciples — and to us — about this child, and every child: "Unless you change and become like little children, you *will never* enter the Kingdom of heaven."

If we take Jesus seriously, then we had better pay attention to this. The "child in the midst" is often missed! We often ignore this. But notice that Jesus didn't threaten the child and say, "Unless you become like these big disciples here, you will never get into the Kingdom!" It seems at times that this is our message to children. But Jesus reprimanded the disciples in effect: "Never mind having highest rank in my Kingdom. Unless you change and become like these children, you will *never even enter the Kingdom!*"

The child in the midst is the starting point for this course.¹ There are many programs and courses on the various aspects of development and many more on the mission and mandate of

the Church and modern missions. This course is about these things, but all with the child in the midst. It is not a course on the “how-to’s” of holistic child development but rather a foundational course exploring some of the biblical and philosophical bases that provide the rationale and mandate for holistic ministry to children.

First, this course is about the **Child**. The child is a person created in the image of God and therefore has inherent worth and dignity. As such, we want to see the child from a biblical perspective. What does the Bible say about children and specifically children in need? We will find that the Bible is not silent. What we will learn is God’s heart for children must characterize our view of them as well.

We also expect to see all children developing their God-given gifts and talents to become all that God wants them to be. We call this process “holistic child development.” That is, children developing as whole people in body, mind and spirit.

Since many children are not able to become what God wants them to be, we will also look at why so many experience poverty and deprivation. From a biblical standpoint, why are people poor and how should we understand poverty? And how is poverty overcome? We will look at these issues generally but all with special attention to the child and development. We will place the child “in the midst.”

Christian holistic (yes, we know that is redundant!) development, by definition, includes spiritual nurture as well as attention to physical needs. Since the spiritual aspects must include and involve the Church, we will look at the Church, again *with the child in the midst*.

In the **Child and the Church**, we will explore some theological foundations on the role of the Church in holistic development. We will touch on the long-standing “debate” concerning evangelism versus social action. And we will look at practical matters relating to the child and the Church. We will examine some fundamental issues on conversion and faith development of children, partly as a precursor to our examination of the same topic in a cross-cultural context in section four. We will then ask questions such as “What should a child expect from the Church?” “How can the Church improve its ministry to children?” We will provide a sample Covenant that the Church at all levels in any country may use to identify and make commitments on behalf of children.

Further, though it is tragic to have to bring up, we must open up the issue of child protection and the Church. Specifically, we will look at protecting children from ourselves — that is our own employees or volunteers who may participate with us in our programs for children in order to gain access to children for exploitation. We will include the essential components of a child protection protocol for our churches and child development projects.

In the **Child and Mission**, how (if at all) does the child relate to Mission? Or better, how does or should Mission include the child? How do children fit into mission strategies? Are children the Great *Omission*? How can cross-cultural ministry to children be sensitive, ethical and effective? How can children be both “objects” of mission as well as agents and resources for missions? To explore these, we will first acquaint ourselves briefly with some of the issues and concepts in historical and contemporary missions and seek to apply some of these to children’s ministries. We will touch generally on the important matters of the ethics of child evangelism and conversion in a cross-cultural setting. Then we will look at the broader matters of children as resources for missions, children’s ministries and mission strategies with special attention to the “4/14 Window.”

Our final section, **Avenues for Advocacy and Networking**, will introduce topics related to child advocacy and networking with special attention to the non-confrontational advocacy approach of Compassion International. The focus is on informing, improving, increasing, influenc-

ing and inspiring “the worldwide Church” to greater involvement and effectiveness in its ministry to children. One aspect of advocacy is awareness of other people and resources also committed to improving the welfare of children. The Church needs to be aware of the primary secular initiatives and tools relating to protecting and providing for the child, mainly the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We will examine the useful aspects of this and other tools but we will also raise some of the questions asked by some Christians from a biblical standpoint.

In our final lesson we will examine briefly some of the benefits and how-to’s of advocacy and networking.

¹ The “child in the midst” is also the inspiration and focal point of the emerging Child Theology Movement, headed by Dr. Keith White. Dr. White teaches the Child Theology course in the program for Holistic Child Development in Penang.

SECTION ONE:

Development in Biblical Perspective



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing the lessons in this section, the student will be able to:

- Discuss why and how some children suffer from poverty and other children suffer from prosperity.
- Discuss and apply a wide range of biblical insights into God's heart for children from a variety of scripture passages.
- Provide for oneself a definition of holistic child development and state clearly what it is and what it is not.
- Show how and/or why world-view may either create tendencies toward wholeness and life or destruction and poverty.

INTRODUCTION

There are nearly two billion children in the world today — one-third of the world's population. And all these children could be said to be “at risk.” Many are at risk because of poverty — in danger of suffering, exploitation, neglect and death. Indeed, according to UNICEF's *State of the World's Children 2005*, nearly 30,000 children die every day around the world. At the same time, millions of children are “at risk” due to prosperity. The post-modern mindset and modern materialism leave hundreds of millions of children with hopelessness. We will examine the issues, obstacles and challenges facing children in poverty and in prosperity in lesson one.

However, neither the needs of children nor their potential and promise are new issues. In fact, the Bible has much to say about children — far more than most people realize. In the second lesson, we will look at the child from a biblical perspective. What does the Bible say about children and particularly children in need? We will find that the Bible is not silent, and what we learn of God's heart for children must surely characterize our view of children as well.

God's expectation is that all children will develop as Jesus did — “in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). But many children do not have this opportunity. Development is not a biblical term but the idea is certainly present in terms that express the ideas of growth and revelation. How should Christians promote the holistic development of children? In lesson three we will look at some biblical perspectives on development and give attention to what it is and what it is not. We will also review the important matter of self-reliance as a component of development and look at facilitation as the most

appropriate approach to *doing* development.

In lesson four we will look at the issue of poverty, again from a biblical point of view. The main emphasis here is that poverty is not simply a matter of a lack of resources or of deficits, but rather, most fundamentally, it is a *spiritual* problem. God and Satan have very different agendas for children. Christians need to understand that “beliefs have consequences” and that what people believe and act upon have important implications for their spiritual and physical well-being. We will look at these issues generally, but with special attention to the child and development. We will place the child “in the midst.”

LESSON ONE:

Why Children?



OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Discuss why *all* children are at risk — both those in poverty and those caught up in the post-modern mindset of materialism and pessimism.



KEY VERSE:

Psalm 78:4-7

“We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.”



Children are the most in need people on the planet. Never in history have we had so many children among us and never have so many of them been at great social risk. Children age 15 and younger comprise one-third of our world’s six billion people. In many developing countries children make up nearly half the population. An additional 26 percent² are young people — ages 15-29. Another one billion children may be born in the next decade, many into extreme poverty.

One of our best spokespersons for children, Patrick McDonald, founder of the VIVA Network, highlights the importance of children and the

particular responsibility of the Church to care for them.³

Children are a priority for the King and his Kingdom: They are many, they are strategic, they suffer and God’s unambiguous mandate in their favor shouts for urgent action right across the pages of Scripture. They are both key to the Great Commission and an essential expression of the Great Commandment. The Christian response to children today stands in many ways at a cross-roads. Most children at the turn of the century are “children at risk” or children that need more

than mere words to demonstrate the love of God. They are hungry children, homeless children, hurting children. Faced with the urgent need to nurture and protect these children, lots of Christians respond compassionately, even sacrificially but most struggle to engage effectively and consistently. The increasing need for professional standards in care poses a defining challenge for the church.

ALL CHILDREN ARE AT RISK

For many children in America and in developed countries around the world, the future looks bright. Their education is secure. Their health is usually sound, and doctors are rarely more than a phone call away. Technology promises to bring them to greater achievements than we could ever dream. But the truth is that even these children are at risk.

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN SUFFER FROM POVERTY

An overriding reason for focus on children is that, more than any other segment of humanity, children suffer, in a sense paying for the sins of adults. Every year tens of millions of children are victims of exploitation, violence and abuse. Today more than 37 percent of our children live in absolute poverty — a total of 674 million children.⁴ Many, many more live in conditions of severe deprivation, facing lack of income, hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion.

The news about children is not all bad. According to UNICEF's *State of the World's Children 2005*,⁵ "only" about 30,000 children under age five are dying each day around the world — down from nearly 40,000 a decade ago. Between the early 1990s and 2000, the average under-five mortality rate declined by 11 percent and child deaths from diarrhea, the foremost killer of children at the beginning of the 1990s, declined by half, saving an estimated one million lives.

The staggering truth however is that more than a billion children — or 56 percent — are living in severe deprivation!

To unpack this situation further, statistics tell us that:⁶

- An estimated one million children enter the commercial sex trade every year.
- More than 91 million children under five are growing up with debilitating hunger.
- 134 million children have no access to school.
- 15 million children are orphaned as a result of AIDS.
- 246 million children work; and 171 million of those are engaged in the worst forms of child labor.
- 265 million children have not been immunized against any disease.
- Over one-third of children have to live in dwellings with more than five people per room.
- Over half-a-billion children have no toilet facilities.
- Almost half-a-billion children lack access to published information.
- 376 million children walk more than 15 minutes to get water and/or are using unsafe water sources.

The risks and ravages facing children are many and complex. Some are as obvious as simply not getting enough to eat. Perhaps 30 percent of the children under the age of five around the world suffer from severe to moderate malnutrition. And even in the richest countries, many children are raised in families who live below the poverty line. In spite of the existence of vaccines and other measures that protect children in the industrialised world against diseases, millions of children still die each year from diseases that could have been prevented. Despite a near-universal consensus on the life-affirming importance of education, more than 100 million children are not in schools — nearly 60 million are girls.

Moreover, in the last decade perhaps two million children have been killed and more than six million children have been injured or disabled in armed conflicts. Tens of thousands of children have been maimed by landmines and thousands have suffered in the upsurge of conflicts fueled by the hunger for land, gems and oil.⁷

■ ***The Impact of Globalization on Children***

In some sectors and in some developing countries shifting to market economies, it seems that our children are paying the price for globalization. Families are seeing increases in the costs of basic food, along with cuts in subsidies for food, health care and education. Many developing countries are finding that children are among the most vulnerable when local economies are opened up to global market forces without investing in and providing adequate safeguards for the poor.⁸

■ ***Street Children***

Street children live in vulnerable situations. We find them sleeping in the dark corners of cities, on the verandas of shops, and on railway platforms. They survive by begging or scavenging. We see them on the roads when the traffic is blocked, as they approach begging, or selling candies or other small items. Poverty, negligence, and broken families lead them to the city streets.

■ ***Child Labor***

Child labor is a serious worldwide problem because of the often irreparable damage it does to the child. The impact of child labor affects the intellectual development of the child. His or her physical and psychological development and moral well-being are seriously compromised when he or she starts working too young and are put at risk by the poor safety and health conditions in which he or she works. Child workers are also more vulnerable to extreme forms of violence and abuse.

In poor countries child workers are seen engaged in all kinds of work like in brickyards, rubber plantations, paddy fields, fishing boats, garment factories, motor workshops, service stations and restaurants. They also work as domestic helpers in rich people's houses. It is common each morning on the outskirts of many cities and towns to see children rushing behind garbage trucks trying to collect anything that can be recycled among the piles of rotten garbage. Hundreds of children wander the streets offering shoe polishing or selling newspapers, peanuts or fruit, while others beg for money from tourists or foreign aid workers.

■ ***Trafficking of Children***

Children are being sold in many parts of the world. These sales of children are for different kinds of exploitation, like trafficking for sexual exploitation and slavery, for pornography, for forced labor, for war, for organ transplantation, etc.

■ ***Sexual Exploitation of Children***

Sexual exploitation of children including child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking

of children, has become a serious problem ever since a new era of globalization. Sexual exploitation of children is on the increase globally and is a profitable industry.

One type of specialized clientele in sex tourism are the paedophiles who cause damage to a great number of children. Surely these are among those causing the little ones to stumble and for whom Jesus recommended the remorseless punishment of tying a millstone around their necks and throwing them into the deepest part of the sea (Matthew 18:6).

■ *Children in or Affected by War*

The changing nature of armed conflict, characterised by a growing percentage of civilian casualties, has had a severe impact on the lives of children. It destroys families and communities and undermines children's growth and development. On any given day, more than 20 armed conflicts are being fought around the world, mostly in poor countries. In the past decade alone two million children have been killed and millions more injured or permanently disabled. Unlike wars in the past, it is now estimated that between 80 and 90 percent of people who die or are injured in conflicts are civilians — mostly children and their mothers.

There are many other issues and problems facing children. They all add up to misery and suffering among children on a massive scale. But every statistic, of course, is really a real hurting child whom God loves and for whom Jesus died.

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN SUFFER FROM PROSPERITY

While not minimizing in the least the very real suffering and deprivation suffered by so many children in poverty, it is also true that children in affluent nations and affluent families are also suffering and at risk. It is said that children in the West have "everything to live with but nothing to live for." Many children and young people, especially in developed nations, are at a loss for who they are, for direction in life and for any sense of purpose. Millions are suffering from neglect, lack of parental care, nurture and protection and the exploitation of predators of many kinds. Too many children lash out in violence they learned from television. Too many teenagers hate themselves. Too many children are confused and discouraged by the disheartening premises of post-modernism — life is absurd and has no meaning; there is no truth, you are the only one who cares about you, don't trust anything or anyone.

■ *Love Is Spelled "T-I-M-E!"*

Wilson Grant, in his fine book *The Caring Father* says that children measure love in how much time we give them. For children he says "Love is spelled T-I-M-E!"⁹ Sylvia Hewlett has written another impressive book with the provocative title, *When the Bough Breaks*. The title comes from a song often sung by mothers while rocking their babies to sleep:

*Rock-a-bye baby, in the treetop,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.*

Hewlett suggests that the "cradle has fallen" for American children today. She suggests that the main problem is not a resource deficit but a "time deficit." She details some of the reasons why parents can't spend time with their children:

No-Fault Divorce. No fault/no responsibility divorce has dramatically decreased the amount of time that parents are able to spend with their children. In the past, American divorce laws were based on the assumption that marriage was a partnership that lasted in most cases “until death do us part.” Hewlett notes that prior to 1970, divorce was a legal option but only upon proof of such serious, fault-based conduct as adultery, cruelty, or desertion. Sadly, today divorce is increasingly seen as “morally neutral, just another option — a life choice no better or worse than staying married.”¹⁰ Americans don’t realize that they cannot leave their spouses and kids without placing their children in serious jeopardy.

More Work, Less Family. In the past, most mothers, especially those of young children, stayed at home to care for their children. However, in the 1990s, over two-thirds of mothers were working outside the home. And while mothers are working more, fathers are also working longer hours. According to a recent study, the average workweek jumped from 41 hours in 1973 to 47 hours in 1989.¹¹ Hewlett notes that the Hallmark® company now markets greeting cards for over-committed, professional parents who find it difficult to actually see their children. “Have a super day at school,” says one card, meant to be left beside a child’s breakfast in the morning. “I wish I were here to say goodnight,” says another card, designed to be placed on a child’s pillow at night.¹²

Adult Values Conflict. Another major reason why families are in trouble is the shift of values away from the family. Hewlett notes that attitudes are changing in America away from the family. What is happening in America is common in many other affluent societies throughout the world. Hewlett notes that since the late 1960s, American adults have been on a quest for personal growth and self-realization:

Times have changed for both men and women. Our new priorities have dramatically diminished our enthusiasm for self-denial, delayed gratification, and other less selfish behavior patterns. Sacrifice is out of style, and future orientation is for the birds. The current getting-giving compact reads as follows: I give time, energy, resources to a relationship as long as my needs are fulfilled, as long as I am stroked. If I become unhappy (or just plain bored), I have every right to move on and seek what I need elsewhere. The fact of the matter is, however, that the qualities needed to succeed in meeting personal needs often conflict with the qualities needed to succeed as a concerned parent.¹³

Lacking Money. There are of course those who lack money. Many Africans and Asians whose annual family income is under \$1,000 would either laugh or cry at the thought that Americans cannot live on forty and fifty thousand dollars a year. And yet, ever driven by the market economy, parents are spending much more of their energies earning money and not nearly as much on investing time in their children.

■ **The Myth of “Quality Time”**

In their 1987 book, *Quality Parenting*, Linda Albert and Michael Popkin assured moms and dads that by working hard at their interactions with their children, parents could “transform ordinary moments into encounters that, like a healthy diet high in natural foods and vitamins ... sustains the kids throughout the day,” when they had to be busy elsewhere.¹⁴ It’s an attractive idea but it doesn’t work.

The main problem with quality time is that there’s so little of it! Someone has compared “quality time” with going to a restaurant when you decide you want to have the best steak in town. Suppose you did that and after ordering the most expensive steak on the menu, the waiter

**It really *is* true that children learn what they live.
As Dorothy Law Nolte reminded us:**

If a child lives with *criticism*, he learns to *condemn*
If a child lives with *hostility*, he learns to *fight*
If a child lives with *ridicule*, he learns to be *shy*
If a child lives with *shame*, he learns to feel *guilty*
If a child lives with *encouragement*, he learns *confidence*
If a child lives with *praise*, he learns to *appreciate*
If a child lives with *fairness*, he learns *justice*
If a child lives with *security*, he learns to *have faith*
If a child lives with *approval*, he learns to *like himself*
If a child lives with *acceptance* and *friendship*,
he learns to *find love in the world*.

returned, plate in hand and lifted the lid with a flourish. And there was the best steak in town — about an inch thick, but only an inch across! No matter how good that steak might be, if that is all we get, it simply is not enough. We have to have quantity as well as quality. It's the same with quality time with our children.

It is clear then that families really are in trouble and children pay the price. When 1,500 school children recently were asked, "What do you think makes a happy family?" they did not list money, cars, nice homes or television. Their most common answer: "Doing things together."¹⁵

CHILDREN ARE STRATEGIC BECAUSE "THE CLAY" IS STILL SOFT

Whether suffering from poverty or prosperity, childhood is the most formative and therefore the most strategic stage of life. To shape an adult — reach a child. Children need our attention more urgently than any other group of people, for childhood is quickly over.

Most parents know that childhood years are formative. Anyone who has been a child knows it, too! Our brains are 90 percent formed before we reach the age of three,¹⁶ and most of our adult personalities are formed by the time we reach six years of age. There is substantial truth in the Jesuits' refrain: "Give me a child 'til he is seven and I'll show you the man." The Bible simply states, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

TRAILING CLOUDS OF GLORY

Vinay Samuel has said, "Children are born with transcendence. While they are born into risk, children recognize transcendence. Yet if they are not immediately invited into the kingdom . . . if

they do not experience and enjoy the realities of kingdom, they will lose that sense of transcendence.”¹⁷

What is transcendence? It has a kind of ephemeral quality. There is mystery about it. How is it that children inherently have it? How is it that they can lose it? Do we adults also have it, or have we too lost any sense of transcendence?

The dictionary definition of transcendence is something which exceeds “usual limits,” or “extending or lying beyond the limits of ordinary experience.”¹⁸ Thus, if we say that a woman has “transcendental beauty” it would mean that her beauty “goes beyond our normal experience of beauty or the natural limits of beauty.”

There is something compelling about the confident statement that children inherently have transcendence, but it is fragile and vulnerable and may be lost forever; this gives it a sense of importance and urgency.

My friend Keith White suggests that the real quality Jesus saw in the child he placed in the midst of the arguing disciples, was more than just the humility, but in fact *transcendence*. It wasn't just that the child was humble, though apparently he was. But what really sets a child apart, and what Jesus would have admired in this boy and in children in general, is more than just humility, but transcendence. It is not that they see the differences in adults and ignore them. It is they actually don't see, sense, or know about them. They are oblivious to them. The quality Jesus liked is not just that children don't argue about who is the greatest, but that to argue in this way would not even occur to them.

Vinay continues:

“Jesus [said] ‘Come children into the community of the kingdom, with the king, this is the space where you belong. There you will experience transcendence, you will not lose your sense of transcendence.’ Children in the West need transcendence desperately. Children need that sense that there is a reality beyond just the television. They need transcendence that is real.”

Surely that transcendence is something borne out of the fact that each child is a person created in the image of God with all the dignity and inherent worth that this implies. Surely Jesus was fully aware of the transcendence in children.

Katherine Copsey, in her fine essay titled, “What Is a Child?” asks,¹⁹ “What, then, are the qualities, which naturally tumble out of children, which Jesus encourages us to learn from when He urges us to ‘become like a child’? In other words, what characterizes a child’s spirituality — those qualities which a child carries within by virtue of having been made in God’s image?”

She answers her question with this summary:

■ **Openness:**

To nature — Children exhibit a sense of awe and wonder

To feelings — Children tend to be direct, in touch with their feelings

To others — Children naturally tend to have an open, welcoming nature

■ **Ability to Be Present:**

Children tend to live in the present and think in concrete terms.

Children have a gift for perception — they know what we really mean and how we really feel.

Children tend to accept things at face value, taking as much as is needed for a given time.

■ **Uncomplicated:**

Children can find belief easy and uncomplicated; they do not need to analyze.

Children can find trust easy if they are brought up within a trustworthy environment. Children have simple, basic emotional and physical needs.

Nothing can destroy the fact of that createdness in God's likeness but there are many ways in which the sense of transcendence can be lost. Copsey says, "We may simply be unaware of it, we may fail to recognize it and therefore fail to nurture it. We may rubbish it, crush it, clutter it; we may allow it to be lost under the weight of a materialistic, consumerist culture."²⁰

This happens, she says, if²¹

- We give children the message that feelings are wrong.
- We offer children environments which have no beauty, which are soulless, and fail to help them discover a sense of awe and wonder in what lies around them.
- We destroy their sense of trust, openness or their perception through various forms of abuse and insincerity.
- We fail to meet their basic emotional and physical needs.
- We make belief too cognitive, too complicated, failing to recognize the value of affective learning.
- We kill their imagination and their sense of fantasy.

Whether suffering from poverty or prosperity, children around the world need and deserve the loving attention of caring Christians. As we will see later in this book, the Bible has much to say about children. And we will see that God is outraged about what is happening to children. Too often children have been dismissed or ignored, and their cries have fallen on deaf ears. Yes, we Christians have done a fair amount to teach the children we find in our Sunday school classrooms, but too often Christians have concluded that caring for those outside — especially the impoverished, the noisy, the dirty and the desperate must be someone else's responsibility. In this book we'll see that the Church can no longer pass off the responsibility to others. Caring for even impoverished children is the particular responsibility of Christians and of the Church.

The title of a new book by Wess Stafford, President of Compassion International, declares that "children are too small to ignore." That is the premise of this book as well. Let's explore together the relationships and the significance of the child, the Church and mission.

Trailing Clouds Of Glory

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!"

— *William Wordsworth*



SUMMARY:

- Children are the most numerous “people group” on the planet.
- Children suffer the most. Millions of children around the world are trapped in poverty, or suffer the ravages of hunger, disease, neglect, exploitation and abuse.
- All children are at risk. Millions suffer from poverty, while millions more suffer from prosperity.
- It is important to care for children because the childhood years are the formative years.
- Children are made in the image of God, and have an innate transcendence which must be protected and nourished.



READINGS:

- “Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children in the Midst of Globalization With a Focus on Children” Report of the WCC/CCA Inter-Regional Consultation held January 2004 (Mumbai, India: WCC/CCA, 2004), 1-19.
- Dawn, Marva, “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” Chapter Nine of *Is it a Lost Cause?* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 145-163.
- Dawn, Marva, “Amusing Ourselves to Death” Chapter 10 of *Is it a Lost Cause?* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 164-180.
- Copsy, Katherine, “What Is a Child?” Chapter One in *Celebrating Children* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003), 1-9.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What images come to your mind when you think of the word *child*? Where do these images come from? Are they positive or negative? Why?
- Describe a typical child in your church, community or workplace. Is the child more at risk from poverty or prosperity? What are the particular risks most prominent for this child?
- What images come to your mind when you think of the word “childhood”? Are the images positive or negative? Why? Did you think in terms of activities or significant people? If so, what or who were these?
- In a few paragraphs, describe how a materialistic culture may have crowded into your life and how it may affect your children or the children you work with.
- How do you understand the statement, “Children are born with transcendence?”

- ² Population in July 2004: 6,383,523,865. (6.38 billion). Source: International Programs Center, U.S. Bureau of the Census web site: <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw>.
- ³ Patrick McDonald, Forward to *Celebrating Children*, by Katherine Copsey (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003), xv.
- ⁴ Gordon D., et al., Gleaned from various pages from "Child Poverty in the Developing World" (http://aa.ecn.cz/img_upload/65636e2e7a707261766f64616a737476/Child_poverty.pdf, 2003).
- ⁵ *The State of the World's Children* 2005; Statistics section says that globally 10,643,000 children under age five died in 2003.
- ⁶ As reported by Brewster and McDonald in *Children: The Great Omission?* Booklet prepared for the Lausanne III Conference, Pattaya, Thailand, 2004. (Oxford: Viva Network, 2004), 4.
- ⁷ "Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children in the Midst of Globalization With a Focus on Children," Report of the WCC/CCA Inter-Regional Consultation (Mumbai, India: Diakonia and Solidarity Team of World Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia, 2004), 7.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* The overview of a few categories of children at risk are adapted from the Fullness of Life and Dignity of Children in the Midst of Globalization consultation (Mumbai, India: January 2004), 7-14.
- ⁹ Grant, Wilson, *The Caring Father* (Nashville, Tn.: Broadman Press, 1983), 18.
- ¹⁰ Hewlett, Sylvia, *When the Bough Breaks* (New York, Ny.: Basic Books, 1991), 108.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 88.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ¹⁴ Linda Albert and Michael Popkin, cited in Hewlett, p. 84, *Quality Parenting* (New York, Ny.: Random House, 1987), 4.
- ¹⁵ William R. Mattox, guest editorial, Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph (March 10, 1991).
- ¹⁶ Susan Greener, "The Effects of Failure to Meet Children's Needs" in *Celebrating Children* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003), 130.
- ¹⁷ Vinay Samuel, "Some Theological Perspectives on Children at Risk" in *Transformation* (Vol. 14, No. 2. April/June, 1997), 27.
- ¹⁸ Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=transcendent>).
- ¹⁹ Katherine Copsey, "What is a Child?" in *Celebrating Children* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003), 8.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

LESSON TWO:

What the Bible Says About Children



OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Discuss and apply a wide range of biblical insights on God's heart for children from a variety of Scripture passages.



KEY VERSE:

Matthew 18:6

"But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

In this lesson we will take a broader look at what the Bible says about children.²² We can be sure that we need to be serious about children because God surely is! Perhaps nothing upset Jesus more than hindering the children. In Matthew 18:5-6, the original Greek reveals that the millstone referred to is a very large stone, and the person is to be thrown into the deepest part of the ocean — not a very pleasant thought!

CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN THE BIBLE



Some people who should know better have said that the Bible has little to say about children and childhood. This though is surely not the case. A closer examination of Scripture — one with the child in focus — reveals not only that children are very prominent in the Bible but also that they play a significant role in the unfolding of the message of the Bible; that God loves and protects them, that they are extremely perceptive in understanding the things of God, and that God often used them as His messengers and models — often it seems when adults may have been too corrupt and deaf to His calling.

The fact that theologians and the Church have for so long overlooked these themes and ignored their import and may have had serious consequences in our overall understanding of

Children are not an afterthought in the Bible:

- “child” is used 121 times
- “children” is used 448 times.

There are also dozens of stories about or including children.

— Roy Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, 13.

Scripture and of children. Dr. Keith White²³ asks,

What if we have misheard or neglected God’s revealed teaching about children and childhood? What of the likely effects of such a process on the history and current life and shape of the church? What if by default we have not been salt and light in God’s world? What if our vision of the Kingdom of Heaven is a pale reflection of what Jesus revealed?

This book, and many other initiatives to see more clearly *the child in the midst*, are beginning to address some of these oversights and defects in our understandings.

CHILDREN ARE CREATED WITH DIGNITY

A look at what the Bible says about children reveals first that children — like all humanity — are created in God’s own image, endowing them with dignity and inherent value. This is true of all children regardless of tribe, language, nationality, age, gender, ability, behavior, caste, or any other human characteristic. This is true even for unborn children, as is clear from Psalm 139:13-16:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. . . . I am fearfully and wonderfully made . . . My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

God affirmed their dignity by dying on the cross to provide salvation for each one. In other words, the Lord gave His own life and shed His blood for the dignity and salvation of every child. God also preserved and restored the dignity of children by using them to do His work (Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, the boy with the loaves and fish, etc.) by taking time to bless them, heal them, and even raise them from the dead.

God showed His respect for children by taking time for them and making them a priority — even when the disciples had no time for them. He valued them by making them examples of godly values (Matthew 18:6) and by giving them an understanding of His kingdom (Matthew 11:25). He valued them by accepting their worship (Psalm 8:2 and Matthew 21:16), and by protecting them — warning those who might do them harm (Luke 17:2).

A DEFENDER OF THE IMPOVERISHED AND FATHERLESS

Throughout Scripture we see many examples of the neglect or exploitation of children. Many of the same things we are concerned about today were problems in biblical times as well:

■ *Seizure for Debts:*

- Job 24:9 — The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.

- II Kings 4:1 — The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.”

■ ***Hunger and Nakedness:***

- Job 24:7 — Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked; they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold.
- Job 24:10 — Lacking clothes, they go about naked; they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry.

■ ***Trafficking and Prostitution:***

- Joel 3:3 — They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine that they might drink.
- Joel 3:8 — “I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away.” The Lord has spoken.

■ ***Abuse:***

- Amos 2:7 — They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name.

■ ***The Slaughter of Children:***

- Jeremiah 31:15 — This is what the Lord says: “A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more.”

■ ***Child Sacrifice:***

- Jeremiah 32:35 — They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.
- Psalm 106:37-38 — They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood.

Though these things happen to children, God is not silent. Throughout Scripture, we see the unmistakable and pervasive evidence of God’s love and care for children; that God is a defender of the fatherless child, the poor, protector of the vulnerable, and friend of the neglected, the exploited and suffering child. Throughout Scripture, we see that God is a defender of the orphans and the fatherless: Over 30 passages in the OT attest to God being the defender of the fatherless, and He expects His people to be the same:

- Deuteronomy 10:18 — “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.”
- Psalm 68:5 — “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.”
- Psalm 82:3 — “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.”
- Psalm 10:18 — “Defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.”

In numerous other passages we understand God’s concern for hurting children and commanding that His people share His concern:

- Genesis 21:17 — God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the
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boy crying as he lies there.”

- Lamentations 2:19 — “Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the LORD. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.”

We know too that God commands His people to instruct and train children. For example:

- Deuteronomy 6:6-8 — “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.”

And especially in Proverbs:

- Proverbs 22:6 — “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”
- Proverbs 22:15 — “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”
- Proverbs 29:15 — “The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.”

In the New Testament too Jesus’ concern for children is always evident. Jesus said that whoever welcomes a child, welcomes Him. When the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus placed a child in the midst of them. He said that if people were not willing to become like that child, they wouldn’t even get into the Kingdom — let alone have any place of prominence!

I love the word picture I see in Matthew 18:10: “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” To me, this verse suggests that the children’s angels, (they have angels looking after them!) have special access to the Father, which perhaps even other angels don’t have. It is like Jesus saying, “Whatever God may be doing at the moment — if one of the children’s angels sees a child in trouble, that angel will let God know immediately!”

CHILDREN CAN UNDERSTAND THE THINGS OF GOD

It is not only God’s love for and care for children that is striking in the Bible. We also see that God has high regard for their ability to understand the faith and to participate in His redemption activities.

- From the start of God’s covenant with His chosen people, God expected that the children would be included so that they too would learn to fear the Lord: “Assemble the people — men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns — so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:12).
 - When Joshua became the leader of Israel, he too included children in the reading of the law. “Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law — the blessings and the curses — just as it is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them” (Joshua 8:34-35).
 - Children are included in the drama and ritual of worship in the Old Testament. The ritual of
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the Passover begins when the children ask what it means (Exodus 12). The same is true for the remembrance ritual of the 12 stones taken from the bed of the river Jordan (Joshua 4). In Leviticus, we see the children participating in the dialogue about the meaning of the Passover.

- Much later in the Old Testament chronology Nehemiah showed the same confidence in the ability of children to understand and participate in the faith development of the community: “And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away” (Nehemiah 12:43).
- When the Law is read (Ezra 10), children are part of the crowd, echoing the occasion of the renewal of the Covenant in Joshua 8:35. They were present again in the celebrations of the completion of the wall (Nehemiah 12:43).
- In the New Testament, Jesus also shows high regard for the ability of children to understand the faith. In fact, he is our example for He is shown “confounding” the religious elders as a young 12-year-old boy. Jesus rebuked the teachers for questioning the children’s worship and their recognition of Jesus (Mathew 21:16). Then He praised God that He had revealed truths to little children (Mathew 11:25).
- Timothy is an early example of a young child who knew the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15).
- Throughout the Bible youth are encouraged to influence their communities by maintaining personal purity, by obeying God’s Word. (Psalms 119:9), by being exemplary in their speech, love, and faith (1 Timothy 4:12) and by pursuing godly virtues (2 Timothy 2:22).

GOD USES CHILDREN FOR SPECIAL TASKS

In many places in Scripture, we see God entrusting special Truth to children or using them as His messengers or instruments. Wess Stafford, the President of Compassion International, likes to say that often when God had something REALLY important to do — something that He couldn’t entrust to adults — He used children instead.

- Think of how different things would be, for example, if Moses’ sister, Miriam — just a child herself — had not rescued Moses from the Nile (Exodus 2)!
- When God needed to get a stern message across to Eli, he confidently entrusted that message to Samuel, a young boy at the time (1 Samuel 3).
- A young captive servant girl, who knew how God was using Elisha, urged Naaman, the powerful Syrian General, to go to him for healing (2 Kings 5:1-3).

OLD TESTAMENT THEMES REGARDING CHILDREN

The above shows that children are neither hidden nor insignificant throughout the Bible. But on a broader canvas, Dr. White notes four overriding themes into which these references are set, beginning in the Old Testament and continued and further developed in the NT.²⁴

■ ***The Father/Child and Mother/Child Relationship God Has with His People***

The first has to do with the father/child and mother/child relationship He has with His people. One portrayal of that relationship (subsequently developed in the New Testament), is as a Father. Dr. White writes:

In Deuteronomy 8 God disciplines those whom He has chosen as a father. In Psalm 27 a child may be abandoned by father and mother, but not by God, the Heavenly Father. God's compassion is like that of a father to a child (Psalm 103). The Wisdom literature is written largely as from a father to a son (e.g. Psalm 34; Proverbs 1-7). . . . The mother/child relationship is significantly used as an embodiment of the bond between God and us. There is a beautiful description of the weaned child in Psalm 131 representing a stilled and quietened soul. Isaiah closes with a tender description of childbirth that concludes: 'As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.' (Isaiah 66:13)²⁵

■ **Children: Ordained and Designed to Praise God and His Glory**

We see this in Psalm 8:2: "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger." Praising God and His glory is the true nature and purpose of children. They are not just consumers or future adults, but worshippers of the Creator God. Astonishingly, they even have a special role in silencing the enemies of God.

■ **A Little Child Will Lead Them**

The third theme is seen in Isaiah 11. The Messianic kingdom is vividly portrayed: "The wolf will live with the lamb . . . and a little child will lead them." The coming kingdom will be a safe environment in which children can play — unlike the urban, war-torn, consumer/market — dominated jungle of today.

■ **God's Salvation Is Through a Child**

Finally there is yet another crowning role for the child in the Old Testament. Isaiah talks of God's righteous anger against sin and hypocrisy. "This situation seems unimaginably bleak and hopeless, and yet God gives a sign: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). 'Unto us a child is born, Unto us a son is given. And the government will be on His shoulders . . . ' (Isaiah 9:6). The focus of God's promise of salvation is not a warrior king, a wise rabbi, or a High Priest, but a child."²⁶

NEW TESTAMENT THEMES REGARDING CHILDREN

In the New Testament we see the further development of these themes. There are, of course, many incidents involving children in the life of Jesus: the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matt 15 & Mark 7); the boy with a demon (Matthew 17; Mark 9 and Luke 9); the official's son at Capernaum (John 4); Jairus' daughter (Matthew, Mark 5 and Luke 8), and others. "In all, we see that Jesus has a heart for children and they are drawn to Him. His preferred method of teaching by story and sign is, as in the Old Testament worship and ritual, equally accessible to children and adults. The most pervasive description of God's love is, as Jesus taught us, 'Our Father'."²⁷

Jesus often took advantage of the special faith of children in order to influence adults:

- In the raising up of the daughter of Jairus He encouraged Jairus not to be afraid but to believe.
 - He took Jairus and his wife with Him to raise up their little girl.
 - Jesus included Peter, James and John in the healing of Jairus' daughter in order to teach them how to minister to the family (Mark 5:37, 40b).
 - In the healing of the boy with an evil spirit, Jesus asked *the father* to declare his faith (Mark 9:23, 24).
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Jesus was a role model to the disciples in the way He placed His hands on the children and prayed for them and touched them (Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:13; Luke 18:15).

More broadly again, Dr. White²⁸ draws our attention to some overarching themes surrounding children in the New Testament.

■ *The Incarnation*

At the outset of the New Testament, Matthew quotes Isaiah about the virgin and child (Isaiah 7:14). Luke tells of a sign for the shepherds that replicates the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12). Simeon prophesies that the child is “to be a sign” (2:33).

The word “child” is repeated in both Gospels again and again. What is the significance? God has chosen to enter the world as a baby. Perhaps we are so accustomed to Christmas that we do not realise how radical this is. The fullness of the creator God in a tiny child? Is it possible? If so what does it mean?

From God’s point of view there is no problem, but it shakes our preconceptions. A baby is small, weak, dependent and vulnerable, lacks education and training and language. “Yes,” says God, “and you must learn to find me in these things, in little ones. You must learn to move from the palaces and encounters with the learned and the powerful, to the manger and the child.”²⁹

■ *The Kingdom of Heaven*

The Kingdom of God was the central theme of the ministry of Jesus, and is perhaps the most powerful theological perspective supporting holistic child development. Just as it permeated all of Jesus’ ministry and gave it coherence and clarity, so the Kingdom of God provides coherence and clarity to holistic ministry to children.

The teaching of the Kingdom is foundational to understand the role of the Church in caring for the impoverished. The surprising teaching about the Kingdom of God is that it is so “upside down” — so unexpected. The last will be first, the lowly will be exalted, the meek will inherit the earth. Jesus’ surprising teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven is that greatness in His Kingdom has nothing to do with the normal assumptions in society. You need to become like little children if you are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Welcoming a little child we welcome the Lord of the Kingdom! The Kingdom belongs to such as the child.”³⁰

Children help us understand the remarkable truths of the Kingdom, for both they and the Kingdom are “already” and also “not yet.” Children are fully present and valuable now; but they are certainly not all they will be. “Childhood and the kingdom illuminate each other.”³¹

The third New Testament theme is the common but enigmatic truth that **“You must be born again”** (John 3:3). The truth is well-known and often cited, but we have allowed it to become detached from children and childhood. “Jesus is teaching exactly the same truth: you’ve got to let go of all your adult, culturally-laden preconceptions and be ready as it were to start all over again ... in Christ, just as a baby is starting life for the first time.”³²

GOD’S EXPECTATIONS OF ADULTS REGARDING CHILDREN

Finally in this overview of what the Bible says about children, we look briefly at God’s expectation regarding the adults in children’s lives, relating to their care for, protection of, and training and nurturing the children.

The Kingdom of God is at hand (“Already”).

Jesus made it clear in His teaching of the Kingdom of God that it is here already: The Kingdom became Good News to the poor *now* — not just in some future life.

- “As you go, preach this message: **‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’** Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt 10:7-8).
- “When you enter a town . . . eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, **‘The kingdom of God is near you’**” (Luke 10:8-9).
- “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” . . . “Go, . . . report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and **the good news is preached to the poor**” (Luke 7:20-22).

The Kingdom of God is also “Not Yet”.

At the same time, it was also clear that many aspects of the Kingdom were “not yet.”

- Jesus’ actions could still be limited by the lack of response of others (Mark 6:1).
- Jesus’ words could still be misunderstood or completely rejected (Mark 8:2-11).
- Jesus’ acts of power were not always convincing (Luke 11:16).
- “Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world. . . At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:26-27).
- “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. . . .” So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matt 20:1,16).

So when and where is the Kingdom?

- It is here now and it is coming (time). It is concurrent—like the wheat and the tares—with the Kingdom of Darkness.
- It is manifest here and now through the lives of believers, and at the same time it will come in the future, in the fullness of time, when Christ returns to fulfill all history.

■ **Parents are to train and teach their children**

- In Proverbs 6:20 children are encouraged to keep their fathers’ commands and not to forsake their mothers’ teachings.
- Proverbs 22:6 talks about the responsibility of parents to dedicate/create a desire for spiritual things in children from a young age. “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.”
- In Deuteronomy, adults are encouraged to teach their children to love and obey the law in a participatory way, “talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road . . .” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

■ **Adults are to love, respect and welcome the children**

Jesus modeled for us concern for children through His own approach. In Matthew 19:13-14, He insisted that His disciples receive the children and not hinder them coming to Him:

“Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

■ *Parents Are the Primary Caregivers for Children*

The fact that God Himself trusted His own Son to humankind as a vulnerable child is indicative of the primary place of parents (Luke chapters 1 and 2). God required that His Son be nurtured by a frail but able family and community, hence, symbolically providing a model of trust and responsibility.

- In the early church, parents were encouraged to “bring children up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4) and fathers were encouraged not to “exasperate your children, in case they lose heart” (Ephesians 6:4). These are both in the context of children themselves being encouraged to obey their parents but as such challenged the assumption that parental role carried with it unlimited authority over the children of the family.
- In the Old Testament, while children were entirely subject to the authority of the head of the household and counted legally as his property, there was much greater concern with the *responsibility* of the father for his children than with his *rights* over them (Deuteronomy 21:18-21, 24:16, 2 Kings 14:5-6).
- Jesus emphasized that the love of a father will be sacrificial in His parables of the tenants (Luke 20:9-19) and the prodigal son (Luke 15:20-24). Jesus’ mother illustrated the sacrificial love of a mother.
- Jesus said that parents will naturally want to give their children good things (Luke 11: 11-12). Paul noted how parents will encourage, comfort and urge their children (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

■ *The Community Is Also Important in the Nurturing of Children*

While the Bible shows that parents have the primary responsibility to care for and nurture children, the role of the community is also crucial.

- In his letter to Timothy, Paul describes the living Church as “God’s household” where there is a caring community of believers who are role models in the way they manage their own family households.
- In the Old Testament, part of the covenant of the community of God’s people involved the cohesion of the relationship between children and parents (Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16).
- According to Malachi 4:6 where the hearts of children are not turned to their fathers and vice versa, the land would be cursed.
- Children who are fatherless/orphans in the early Church are seen to need special attention (James 1:27) because they are outside the “normal” household family unit. This is an extension of God’s particular defense of the fatherless expressed in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 68:5).

CONCLUSION

Children are not absent from the Bible and are not insignificant. In countless ways they are both objects of God’s love and care, and agents for the outworking of His dealing with humankind. They are signs of His kingdom and illustrative of the qualities He values most. Moreover, God’s whole redemptive plan is both illustrated and embodied, not in the corridors of power, but in the light and life of a child. In this we see indeed that “A little child will lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).

**SUMMARY:**

Children and childhood in the Bible have often been overlooked.

The Bible clearly shows that:

- Children are created with dignity.
- God is a defender of the fatherless.
- Children can understand the things of God.
- God uses children for special tasks.
- Old Testament “themes” concerning children include the Father/child relationship and children being created to praise God and His glory.
- New Testament “themes” include the incarnation, the “already” and “not yet” aspects of both the kingdom and the child and the need to be born again.
- God wants parents to train and teach children, to love and respect them.
- The community is also crucial for nurture of children.

**READINGS:**

- Wright, Josephine-Joy, “What the Bible Says About Children” in *Celebrating Children*, eds., Miles, Glenn, and Wright, Josephine-Joy (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 18-32.
- White, Keith. “A Little Child Shall Lead Them. Rediscovering Children at the Heart of Mission.” Plenary paper presented at the Cutting Edge III Conference (De Bron, Holland, 2001), <http://www.viva.org/>.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- How are children (Christians and non-Christians) generally viewed and treated both at home, in school and the public areas *in your culture*? Are they treated as insignificant? List and discuss at least three biblical insights on God’s view of children, which could/should change some of those attitudes or actions.
- How have you or your church underestimated the understanding or contribution of children?
- In light of all the Bible says about children, Dr. Keith White suggests³³ that Christians, including (or especially) theologians have gone about theology in the wrong way. Write a few paragraphs on why this may be true.
- Discuss two other biblical examples (apart from those mentioned in the lesson) of God using a child to accomplish a task. From your Bible passage, explain what it says or implies about the significance of children in ministry.

²² I am indebted to my friend Dr. Keith White for many of the understandings of the “themes” concerning children in the Old and New Testaments as well as Glenn Miles in unpublished papers for some of the approaches taken and biblical examples in this chapter.

²³ Keith White, “A Little Child Shall Lead Them. Rediscovering Children at the Heart of Mission.” Paper presented to the Cutting Edge Conference (De Bron, Holland: 2001), 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷ Ibid., 5.

²⁸ This brief look at Old and New Testament themes surrounding children are summarized from White, “A Little Child Shall Lead Them,” 4-6.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Ibid., 7.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 8

LESSON THREE:

The Ministry of Child Development



OBJECTIVES:

- Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:*
- Show from a biblical standpoint that care for the impoverished is central to the heart of God.
 - Provide for oneself a definition of holistic child development and state clearly some essential characteristics of what it is and what it is not.
 - Understand essential aspects in facilitating holistic development.



KEY VERSE:

Proverbs 30:7-9

“Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”



GOD’S HEART FOR THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

Jesus said we would always have the poor with us. But He didn’t leave it at that. Yes, they will always be with us, but what are we going to do about it? Jesus showed us His concern by what He **did** for the poor. We can learn much about our responsibility to the hurting people of the world as we search the Scriptures.

One of the first things we notice when we look closely at God’s Word is how deeply God cares for the poor. Both the Old and the New

Testaments are filled with examples of God’s love for the poor, His hatred of the injustices that often cause poverty and His concern that the poor be aided.

It was God’s concern for the oppressed people that led Him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:6-8). But it was the Israelites own mistreatment of the poor that led to their own destruction, for in Amos we see that they trampled the poor (2:7). They got rich at the expense of the poor (8:4-7) and took advantage of them by bribing the judges (5:10-15). Even the

Even the Israelite women were crushing the impoverished, arousing God's anger. (Amos called them "Cows!").

"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the impoverished and say to your husbands, 'Bring us some drinks!' The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness: 'The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks.'" Amos 4:1-2

women — the "cows" of Bashan — oppressed and crushed the poor (4:1).

God, who loves the poor, was angry about their hypocrisy, religious feasts, assemblies, burnt offerings, and the noise of their songs. "Stop!" He shouts, and "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24).

■ **God has always been concerned about the poor and the oppressed**

From the earliest history of the people of Israel, God was concerned about their suffering in slavery under the Egyptians. Indeed, we read in Deuteronomy that it was for this very reason that God stepped in to rescue them from that bondage:

But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 26:6-9).

However, once liberated from the slavery under the Egyptians, the Israelites soon became oppressors themselves. The prophet Amos, who wrote around 760 B.C. was especially concerned about their flagrant abuses of the poor:

Hear this, you who trample the impoverished and do away with the poor of the land . . . — skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales . . . The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: I will never forget anything they have done. Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? . . . I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day (Amos 8:4-10).

■ **Care for the poor is central to God's nature**

"The Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — the Lord, who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked" (Psalms 146:6-9).

Proverbs 14:31 tells us that oppressing the poor shows contempt for their Maker: “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”

■ ***God loves the poor but there is nothing wrong with wealth***

God wants His people to prosper. He wants all people (including children) to have “abundant life” (John 10:10). Material blessing is often a promised blessing for those who obey His commands (several of the 10 Commandments end with the phrase “so that it may go well with you.” Scriptures reveal that wealth is neither bad nor evil. Our attitude should be like that found in Proverbs 30:7-9:

“Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

■ ***Three problems with wealth***

While there is nothing wrong with having wealth and possessions, the Bible clearly shows that it is difficult or nearly impossible for a wealthy person to get into the Kingdom of God. That alone is enough to make us reflect deeply on our tendency to hoard money and focus on accumulation. In fact, scriptures reveal three scenarios, where God is against the rich, or where riches may be a serious stumbling block.

1. **If the rich get wealth by oppressing the poor...** James 5 and the following passage in Jeremiah clearly speak on this:

Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. “Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the LORD. “But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion” (Jeremiah 22:13, 15-17).

2. **If the rich are not willing to share...** Isaiah says:

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (Isaiah 58:6-7).

3. **If the rich set their hearts on their wealth ...** Luke 18:22-25:

“When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’”

■ **God rewards those who care for the poor**

“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).

“One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:24-25).

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings” (Isaiah 58:12).

■ **Remember! Actions speak louder than words!**

In Matthew 25, there is the stunning suggestion that right “practice” is more important even than “right doctrine!” John warns us not to love only with words but with actions. What was true then is still true today.

I John 3:17-18 states:

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

James 2:14-18 has a similar message:

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”

(For further readings on God’s concern for the poor, see *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ronald Sider.)

■ **Jesus as our example in the New Testament**

God’s concern for the poor is a common theme in the New Testament as well and fully manifested in the life and teachings of Jesus. The pages of the Gospels are full of His concern for the poor, the suffering, the social outcasts and especially the children. Moreover, there are also ample New Testament teachings that exhort all Christians to follow the example of Christ.

WHAT IS HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

Development is a process by which people become whole. It is characterized by growth, change and learning. It is a process of becoming. Holistic child development is also a *ministry*. There are hundreds of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and other agencies doing child, family or community development around the world. Hence, there are many definitions of development. Here is one: “Helping people (children) understand their God given potential as human beings made in God’s image.”

For our purposes here, we are talking specifically about the work that Christians do on behalf of the impoverished, and in our case, what they do on behalf of children. We don’t call it “good

works” but a *ministry* of *Christian, holistic* child development. This ministry is the work of the Church and God’s people to enable poor children and families to overcome their poverty to become all that God has intended them to be.

■ **Definition of “Christian Holistic”**

If our interventions are to be holistic, then, by definition, they must give attention to spiritual as well as physical needs. As we have noted, “Christian” refers primarily to our motivations and intended outcomes whereas “Holistic” refers to the scope of our development interests.

Luke 2:52 is a key verse which provides a model for the kind of development we are talking about. This verse simply says that “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.” As we shall see later, these four components — wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man — neatly encompass all aspects of the whole person and provide a useful model around which to create meaningful holistic development programs. Our objective in Christian Holistic Development is that all those with whom we work, especially the children, have the opportunity to grow and develop in these same holistic ways — in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and man.

Development is not a biblical term but the idea is certainly present in terms that express the ideas of growth and revelation. (Some evangelicals prefer the term “transformation” to development. They believe that development is too wedded to a secular agenda to convey the radical change that is needed in order to bring blessing to a world of need.)³⁴ God created human beings with full potential for growth. He created us to handle the resources of the earth in co-operation with others in a way that would reveal His wisdom and glory as our Maker.³⁵

■ **Contrast Between Christian Holistic and Secular Development**

It is helpful to contrast the *Ministry* of Development — that is the work of God’s people on behalf of the poor and oppressed — with the kind of secular development work done by many non-Christians and organizations that are not specifically Christian in motivation or objective.

Many organizations do what they call *holistic* development, or *integrated development* or some other term, emphasizing that they are concerned with the “whole” person. In such cases, the “whole person” usually refers to the physical, emotional, psychological and other aspects of the individual. All these aspects of the person are important, and indeed, the activities and interventions made on behalf of the *whole person* following these strategies may be more or less the same whether made by Christians or non-Christians.

However, the motivations and intended outcomes of these programs may be quite different from those in programs done by Christians. Most important, secular development usually leaves out the essential consideration of the spiritual needs of the individual. Christians believe that true development is impossible without attention to spiritual needs. For this reason I will argue in lesson six that *only* Christians can truly do holistic development.

As we explore the idea of development, let us list a few things that may characterize Christian Holistic Development.

1. It is helping children and families know the Truth — a matter central to alleviating poverty as we will see in the next lesson.
2. It is enabling people (children) to become what God wants them to be.
3. It is awakening people (children) to their self-potential.
4. It is giving children and families options.
5. It is helping children grow like Jesus did — in “wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

6. It is providing opportunity — not just things.
7. It is promoting self-reliance. (See below).
8. It is always directed toward wholeness and completeness.
9. Its goals, motivation and methods are biblical and seek to bring people into a right relationship with creation and their Creator.

WHAT CHRISTIAN HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT IS NOT

It is also useful to state clearly what Christian Holistic Development is *not*. It is a fact that much development work is done by secular people from affluent Western countries. Sometimes these well-intentioned practitioners import their Western values, attitudes and/or economic theories. They also mistake their Western cultural values for universal development principles. Such values are often quite inappropriate for impoverished people in a non-Western context. Here are some things that Christian Holistic Development *is not*:

1. Money or Westernization
2. Promotion of Western value and priorities
3. Welfare
4. Something done *to* people, but *with* people
5. Paternalism — giving without dialogue on their perspectives, capacities and felt needs.
6. Patronism — giving anything and everything without assessing suitability, alternatives, or consequences.

We must stress the difference between *development* and *welfare*. Today's western societies often create extensive "welfare" programs to care for the impoverished and less fortunate among them. These welfare programs usually make no distinctions between the *deserving* and *non-deserving* poor. Assistance is provided simply based on a person's income, regardless of why that person has become impoverished, what destructive behaviors he or she may have engaged in or what his or her real needs and abilities are. Continued giving, especially of money, aggravates the problem rather than solving it. The continued problem of poverty in the United States, in spite of massive amounts of money distributed to the poor in various welfare programs, is a good example of the ineffectiveness of welfare.

A KEY RESULT OF DEVELOPMENT: SELF-RELIANCE

One aspect of development (child, community, health, economic or spiritual) is to bring people to positions of self-reliance or self-sufficiency — looking to their own knowledge, strength, funds or other resources to meet their own needs. Self-reliance is a fundamental concept that is talked about a good deal but which needs closer examination to understand and to achieve.

Self-reliance, of course, is two words — *self* and *reliance*. *Self* is the identity or character of the person, one's personality, or one's own welfare or interest. *Reliance* is to rely on, to trust, to depend upon or to have confidence in. When we think of "self-reliance" we are talking about the trust or confidence that one has within himself or herself. Development activities that do not bring people to a greater trust, dependence or confidence within themselves are not authentic development.

Note however that self-reliance is not a mindless independence that refuses outside assistance

in whatever form simply because it is from the outside. A defiant refusal to learn from one's parents, peers or neighbors, for whatever reason, will stifle imagination and lead to stagnation.

Self-reliance is also not the *selfish* independence of the Westerner whose individual drive makes him ever more greedy and ruthless. The model of the West is, "You can do it! Look at me. I did it!" Or, to put it in the words of an old popular song, "I Did It My Way." These egotistical tendencies tend to lead to a breakdown of the extended family ties and of the willingness to work together with others. It causes people to be over-ambitious and to run over others to achieve their own objectives. It leads to an unhealthy individualism. Unlike former times when young men took up their father's profession, a young man in the West will often not pursue his father's profession *simply* because it is his father's and not his own.

The secular socialist or communal economic models are no better. The premise in these systems is that, given the right circumstances and resources, people will tend toward creating supportive, harmonious societies. Unfortunately, the premise is false because man's values are flawed. Without Christian values, people tend to think only of themselves. Most people are inclined to serve themselves rather than make altruistic contributions for the good of their communities. If these models are followed faithfully, it invariably stifles initiative and inhibits excellence. Reinforcement is given to behavior that conforms rather than excels.

Finally, self-reliance is not a substitute for faith. As Christians, we believe that all good things come from God. We have only what God gives us and what He wants us to have, whether it is money, talents, or other resources. The more we mature as Christians, the more we learn to lean on God's wisdom and to depend on Him for what He will provide. The paradox of self-reliance for the Christian is that it means more and more dependence, not on our own resources, but on the infinite resources of Christ.

What are we talking about when we say that we want the children with whom we work to become more self-reliant? What characteristics distinguish the person or child who is becoming self-reliant from the one who is becoming dependent? At least the following stand out:

1. Self-reliant people do not depend on someone else to meet their basic needs. They rely on themselves and are not dependent on outside money, ideas, motivation, know-how, technology, food or materials to satisfy their needs and aspirations.
2. They are aware that they can make a difference in their lives through their own efforts. They recognize that change can be a rewarding process and do not fear it.
3. Self-reliant people are aware of their own resources and their value. They know that their money, time, land, good will, cultural insights, etc. are worth much in enabling them to cope with and solve their own problems.
4. Self-reliant people are self-confident, not cocky or arrogant but know from experience that they can do worthwhile things and overcome problems.
5. Self-reliant people know the value of their contributions and have a sense of self-worth.
6. Self-reliant people are problem solvers. They recognize that everyone has problems and that problems can be opportunities for learning, growth and achievement.

■ **Promoting Self-Reliance**

In considering self-reliance, there are useful insights to be gained from our efforts to promote self-esteem and self-confidence in our own children. We do not make our own children independent and self-reliant, for example, by giving them everything that they want. We know that some things are not useful to them, some things are dangerous and some things are detrimental.

On the other hand, we do not make our children self-reliant by withholding support. We help them with things they need. We give them security and a warm, loving environment. We encour-

age, teach, and allow experimentation and failure. We do not give indiscriminately but as needed and as appropriate. We ensure that children make their own contributions — that they do their chores, participate in family activities, come to meals on time, and that they cooperate with the goals and the aspirations of the family.

We don't ignore or minimize the contributions of the children's own parents, relatives and communities in the nurture and development of their children.

Self-reliance is a delicate balance. While it refers to a condition of independence, in another sense it most assuredly is not independence that is sought. Rather, the ideal is a vulnerable "inter-dependence" on resources and goodwill — not just from within the person or group but from appropriate resources wherever they may be found.

How can we provide inputs to children so that they can have the characteristics mentioned above? What kinds of assistance can we provide so that they can concentrate on their studies and have the security they need while creating a healthy independence instead of dependence on the funds we provide?

Here are a few ideas:

1. **Don't do for people** — children, parents, teachers or others — **what they can do for themselves.**
2. When planning interventions, **look for a contribution both in cash and in-kind from beneficiaries.** Often people tend to under-value their own time, labor or other intangible inputs.
3. **Put the focus on training.** Learning is the one thing that children can acquire that they will be able to take with them and use in future situations. Learning will serve them not just for today but for the future.
4. **Start where the children are** and with what they have available in and of themselves. Start with their own interests and priorities.
5. **Encourage!** Positively reinforce the small steps that children and their parents are taking to meet their own needs and solve their own problems.
6. **Take a little at a time.** Go at the pace of the child or group of which he is a part. Small success experiences are needed to have confidence to take the next steps.
7. **Know when to phase out.** Recognize the indicators that let us know when we have provided enough of one kind of input for children and move on to something else.
8. **Understand how people define "success" in their own context.** What results and outcomes of child assistance activities will they perceive as successful or worthwhile?
9. **Give the people** the same luxury we give ourselves — **the right to fail.** We learn to depend upon ourselves not only through our success experiences but also in overcoming our shortcomings and our failures.
10. **Don't make promises that cannot be kept.** Don't start things that cannot be sustained.

Self-reliance is a process, not a point in time. Long-term programs give the opportunity to interact with children and the people responsible for their development over a long period. But long-term assistance can create either a healthy self-reliance or a helpless dependence on our funds and other inputs. We have a big responsibility to ensure that the assistance is beneficial rather than destructive in the end.

FACILITATING GOOD DEVELOPMENT

Finally, in this lesson we will note briefly some key components of good development work. A full treatment of the work of development is beyond the scope of this book. However, we will briefly note here some of the essentials of good development work and development workers. In every case, we will see Jesus as an example and model.

■ ***Raising Awareness***

Effective development workers (often called “facilitators”) never *impose* change. They recognize that fundamental change comes from both *within* people and that any kind of manipulation implies lack of respect. Rather, change can be *facilitated* by respectful awareness raising. (Some people have called this process “conscientization.”) It implies starting where people are, appreciating what they already know and understanding and building on those things in appropriate ways. It is oriented toward helping children and their families discover their own abilities and resources. Facilitation combines listening, questioning, provoking and challenging people (children and families) to reflect on their situation and discover internal or local resources to address that situation.

Jesus was a master facilitator. He took every opportunity to get people to think about what they were experiencing. His methods in building spiritual awareness are the methods of good facilitators in holistic development. Jesus asked leading questions (Matthew 16:13-17) and used contextual illustrations:

- Matthew 18:1-6 — a child
- Matthew 18:10-14 — a lost sheep
- Matthew 19:22-30 — the encounter with the rich young ruler
- Luke 18:15-17 — the disciples’ negative reaction to people bringing their children to Jesus
- Luke 21:1-4 — the poor widow’s offering

■ ***Increasing Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes***

Effective facilitators communicate more, though, than just raising awareness. In particular they build self-esteem, self-confidence in children, and the motivation and creativity that spring from new hope. Complementing this, they promote an increased sense of responsibility especially in such areas as stewardship of talents, resources and opportunities, care for the environment and commitment to diligence and quality in work ethics. They also seek to enhance the overall “development” of children in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Here again we learn from Jesus. He exposed the disciples to situations that taught them a range of basic truths — like the dignity of all people, especially the poor or marginalized (Matthew 9:9-10) and “not to be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:20-28). He gave them opportunities to gain practical experience and learn related guidelines (Matthew 10:1-20). He taught appropriate information, often allowing it to arise from the immediate context. For examples, see:

- Luke 11:1-13 — prayer
- Luke 18:1-18 — perseverance
- Luke 21:1-9 — sacrificial giving

■ ***Building Relationships***

Relationship building is primary. Without it anything else the development facilitator may strive to do will be impossible. Relationship building involves building trust, two-way communication, growing understanding, and implies deepening mutual respect.

John chapter four is an example of Jesus doing relationship building. The Samaritan woman

at the village well presented a significant challenge to Jesus' relationship-building skills. The barriers of gender, race, culture, historical tensions, education, social status and fatigue all added to the fact that these two were simply strangers. Yet Jesus broke through using a remarkably simple approach of affirmation, respect, provocative statements and gentle probing questions. We can learn more about Jesus' relationship building from His dealings with Nicodemus (John 3), Zacchaeus (Luke 19), the rich young ruler (Matthew 19), a father (Mark 9), sick and poor people (Matthew 9, Luke 5 and 18, John 5 and 9), Mary and Martha (Luke 10, John 11 and 12), and many others.

■ ***Modeling — Setting an Example***

Modeling is essential for any development worker but especially for those who work with children. Childcare workers make as much of an impact through their lives as in their words. This is true both in the teaching/showing/doing of learning activities as well as in providing a spiritual example.

Modeling was Jesus' approach throughout His ministry. He clearly communicated messages by His own actions and attitudes, as well as by the service itself (John 9:16-17), and He expected the disciples (and others) to take notice (Matthew 9:35-38, 11:4-6, John 10:37, 38, 11:41, 42, 14:11). Sometimes His actions were deliberately provocative as in His demonstration of His attitude to children (Matthew 19:13-15) and the use of these incidents to teach about the Kingdom. Even His words "Come follow me" seem to imply "Act on My example" (John 8:12).

■ ***Resource Linking***

Another final aspect of the role of facilitating development is helping to link people to needed resources. The resources may include local materials, government goods and services, low-cost supplies, advice, expertise and counseling, information, pastoral care and spiritual resources.

Even in this area, Jesus left us with examples. When He sent the disciples out for ministry, (Matthew 9:35,10:20), He linked a resource — the disciples — with the needs of the people of the towns and at the same time the people of the towns had to use their resources to supply the disciples' needs.

The direction of development is always toward completeness. It is not enough to improve only one dimension of a person's life and leave other dimensions in inadequacy. To treat parasitic infection is noble. But if a treated person is left in an unsanitary environment with contaminated water, the intervention is incomplete. If a family's economic situation is improved but a debilitating health problem is not solved, the intervention is incomplete. If a person receives an education but social structures prevent him from getting a job, the intervention is incomplete. If a person is introduced to faith in Christ and enjoys spiritual freedom but is left in poverty and oppression, the intervention is incomplete. The scope of development is toward completeness.

Holistic Development releases people to exercise responsibility for themselves. The bonds and restraints of poverty, ignorance and oppression are broken and people are free to take charge of their own lives.

Holistic Development leads people to options. They can make choices. A range of opportunities opens up to them. All of this is therapy to the mind and soul. People feel better about themselves. Their confidence and self-esteem rise; defeatism dies and hope blossoms.

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE COMPASSION³⁶

We conclude this lesson with some reflections on the nature of “True Compassion” adapted from the work of Dr. Marvin Olasky. In his important work called “*The Tragedy of American Compassion*,” Dr. Olasky provides a useful discussion of the characteristics of “True Compassion,” (or True Development) in a helpful “A, B, C” sequence:

Affiliation: True compassion takes place in the context of the family, church and community (Genesis 2:18 says that it is not good for the man to be alone). The objective of true compassion is to restore natural affiliation with the immediate family, extended family and mediating institutions — church, organizations and clubs. Disaffiliation occurs when we hand out food, clothing or other assistance indiscriminately.

Bonding: True compassion requires a personal connection to the individuals (John 1:14 states that “The Word became flesh . . .”). It is demonstrated in knowing their names and “walking in their shoes.” (In Compassion International, our sponsorship encourages a kind of bonding between sponsor and child). This significant relationship is important to both the sponsor and child. The well-known James Yen poem says it well: “Go to the people, live among them, learn from them, love them. Start with what they know, build on what they have . . .”

Categorization: The Bible distinguishes between deserving, laboring and undeserving poor:

1. Deserving Poor: orphans, elderly, incurably ill, accident victims (Zecharias 7:10; Matthew 19:21).
2. Laboring Poor: Those who are able and willing to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
3. Undeserving Poor: Those who are intemperate, shiftless, anti-social or criminal (1 Timothy 5:3-8).

Categorization demands the tough love we see in 2 Thessalonians. 3:6-10: “Keep away from

every brother who is idle . . . for you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you . . . we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’”

Discernment: Not everyone is deserving of assistance. True Compassion sometimes means we have to say “No.” Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that “The heart is deceitful above all things. . . .” Well-intentioned and warm-hearted indiscriminate aid breeds dependence and poverty. Compassion without discernment is foolish compassion.

Empowerment:³⁷ True Compassion involves empowerment. Empowerment is providing education and job opportunities which will lead to restoration of dignity, self-worth and independence. Everything we do should have a learning component. To work brings dignity (Genesis 2:15). “I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work . . .” (Ecclesiastes 3:22). Nothing creates dependency faster than to deny education and work.

Freedom: True compassion requires freedom to become what God wants a child to be. Olasky says, “We are a world of 169 countries, and only about 25 of them have ‘made it’ economically. They were able to do so because the citizens (rather than government) had control of their energy and creativity. It boils down to one word: Freedom.”³⁸

God: True compassion nurtures the spirit as well as the body. As we have already seen, true Compassion springs from the heart of God. “the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Exodus 34: 6, 7). It is said that people and cultures become like the gods they worship. Truly, a world without Christ is a world without compassion.

**SUMMARY:**

- The Old and New Testament reveal that God has always been concerned for the poor and oppressed.
- There is nothing wrong with wealth by itself. God is against the wealthy only if they oppress the poor, are not willing to share from their abundance, or if they set their hearts on their wealth.
- Holistic Child Development is a ministry and must include the whole person.
- A healthy self-reliance is an important goal of holistic child development.
- Facilitation of Holistic development involves raising awareness, increasing knowledge, skills and attitudes, relationship building, modeling, and resource linking.
- Christian Holistic Development is a journey which is “centered” on Bible truths.
- Holistic Child Development is therefore helping the child to become more and more what God wants him or her to be.
- According to Olasky, seven characteristics of true compassion are affiliation, bonding, categorization, discernment, empowerment, freedom and God.

**READINGS:**

- Ronald Sider, “God and the Poor” in *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), chapter 3, pp. 39-64.
- Marvin Olasky. *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 101-115.
- Daniel Brewster and Gordon Mullenix, “Development: Bounded, Centered, or Fuzzy?” *Together* 50 (April-June 1996), 10-13.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Give your personal definition of Christian Holistic Development from your Asian, African, or Latin perspective.
- In your own words, describe why the work of Holistic Development is a *Ministry*.
- Look up the following passages: Amos 2:7, Amos 8:4-7, Amos 4:1, Amos 5:10-15. Write a paragraph comparing the kinds of abuses Amos saw with what is common in your country today.
- Reflect on the discussion in this lesson on promoting self-reliance. How is self-reliance manifested in your culture? Is self-reliance in childhood or youth perceived positively or negatively?
- In your own words, how does “facilitating” development differ from “managing or directing” development?

³⁴ Dewi Hughes, *The God of the Poor* (UK: OM Publishing, 1998), 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 101-115. Except for “empowerment,” all the subtitles from “affiliation” to “God” were taken from Olasky.

³⁷ “Empowerment” is used to replace Olasky’s “education;” Empowerment gives a broader meaning.

³⁸ Marvin Olasky, *Renewing American Compassion* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 115.

LESSON FOUR:

A Spiritual Understanding of Poverty



OBJECTIVES:

- Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:*
- Understand poverty as fundamentally a *spiritual* problem.
 - Show how and/or why worldview may either create tendencies toward wholeness and life or toward destruction and poverty.
 - Contrast key aspects of a biblical worldview with those of animistic and secular worldviews and show the implications of each.



KEY VERSE:

John 10:10

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (or “more abundantly” in the KJV).

THE NATURE OF POVERTY

What are the causes of poverty and why are children poor? These are important questions. Anyone involved developmental work must ask these questions because developmental work seeks to alleviate both the causes and effects of poverty. Jesus tells us that “the poor we will always have with us” (Mark 14:7). He also made it clear that we must do what we can to aid them in accordance with Deuteronomy 15:11 — “For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your impoverished and poor in your land.’” The “Great Commandment” — to love our neighbors as ourselves — demands that we try to do something about poverty. To do so effectively requires that we first understand something about the nature and causes of poverty.



Clearly Jesus was right. We see the poor all around us. You can see it in the skinny children whose parents cannot feed them, in the boys and girls trafficked into sexual exploitation or sold into bonded labor to pay a parent’s debt, and in the eyes of the street children and child beggars

at the traffic lights. Even in a world of unprecedented progress and technological innovation, more than half the world still lives with inadequate financial resources. The World Bank estimates that 55.6 percent of the world's population lives on less than two U.S. dollars a day.³⁹

Seeing the effects of poverty is unpleasant but not too difficult — it is all around us. But to address the problems of poverty we must have a good idea of what it is.

Child poverty cannot be defined solely in terms of the hunger, malnutrition, trafficking, exploitation or the child's parent's financial or economic situation. These things give us a partial understanding. It is not simply a lack of material things that makes a person poor. Poverty is a complex issue. When searching for the solution it is important to address the nature of the problem. So what exactly is poverty? And what are some of the causes of poverty, especially among children?

WHAT IS POVERTY?

Many people, when asked to define poverty, will cite things like the following:

■ *Poverty as Deficits*

Poverty implies that there is some kind of a deficit. The poor lack things like food, shelter, land and clean water. Or they lack ideas, skills or knowledge. It is true that deficits and shortages, ineffective economic or distribution systems, ignorance, warfare or ethnic conflicts and other evils all contribute to much suffering and misery of the poor. Viewing poverty in this way suggests that the work of development should be viewed as a matter of providing what is lacking. However, taken to an extreme this view of poverty can lead to development workers being viewed as a kind of "Santa Claus" providing what the poor lack. And we must note, to keep the *child in the midst*, that children are often the innocent victims who suffer most.

■ *Lack of Options*

Others suggest that poverty is mostly a lack of choices or options. The lives of the poor are dictated for them. Impoverished children of this world are denied opportunities that can contribute to their complete development. Many do not have access to schooling, the option of receiving medical care or access to adequate nutritional materials. Children who grow up without options turn into adults without options as basic as adequate employment.

Without sufficient education, well-paid and reputable jobs are out of their reach. Business owners know their desperation and offer unskilled and low-paid jobs in frequently appalling conditions. In many cases, the desperation of a family is so bad that even the children are forced to work and are even sold.

Governments and those with power often make decisions on behalf of the poor. Since the poor do not own land or businesses, they are not seen to contribute in significant ways to the development of a country. Consequently they are overlooked in the decision-making processes.

The debilitating message of poverty is, "You have no options and there is nothing you can do to change your situation." This sense of powerlessness chips away at self-esteem in the poor. If one repeatedly faces a life seemingly without options and time and again hears that he cannot do anything about it, hope is abandoned and a spirit of fatalism sets in. Poverty is the thief of hope.

■ *Poverty as a Lack of Wholeness*⁴⁰

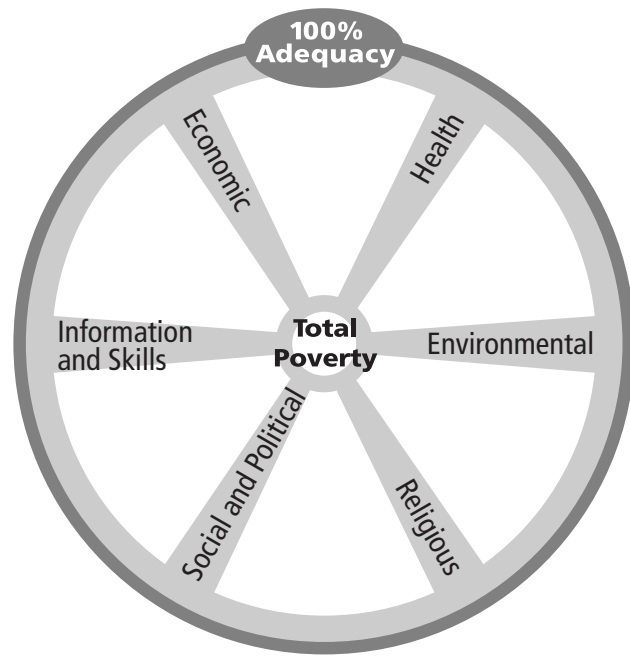
Life is an integrated whole — an existence in many domains simultaneously. Poverty may be best viewed as a lack of wholeness, not just a lack of money or other necessities.

Poverty can be represented like a wheel that is inadequate for the load it is supposed to carry. It may be either totally broken or just out of balance. Either condition renders the wheel inoperable.

This poverty wheel has six spokes (it could have more or less): Spiritual, Physical, Economic, Social/political, Mental/ emotional and Environmental. Each section must be adequate in relation to others in order for the wheel to be balanced and run smoothly.

In some places, children grow up in conditions where virtually every section of their “wheel” is inadequate. That is extreme poverty. In other places, children have the appearance of being better off but in fact are equally poor because of a serious inadequacy in one or more sections of their “wheel.” They are not whole or complete. They will grow up to be less functional as adults than they might if they could develop more holistically during their childhood.

The continual struggle of daily life can breed an attitude of fatalism among some of the world’s poorest people. It is easy for them to believe that there is nothing they can do to alter their personal situations. The lives of the poor are dictated not by the plans that God has for them but by the plans that the world has for them. These flawed plans prevent the perfection of communion with God. As they lose hope, they also lose their capacity and will to change. Alcoholism and drug abuse can become chosen escape routes for those in the grip of poverty-induced depression.



The Poverty Wheel

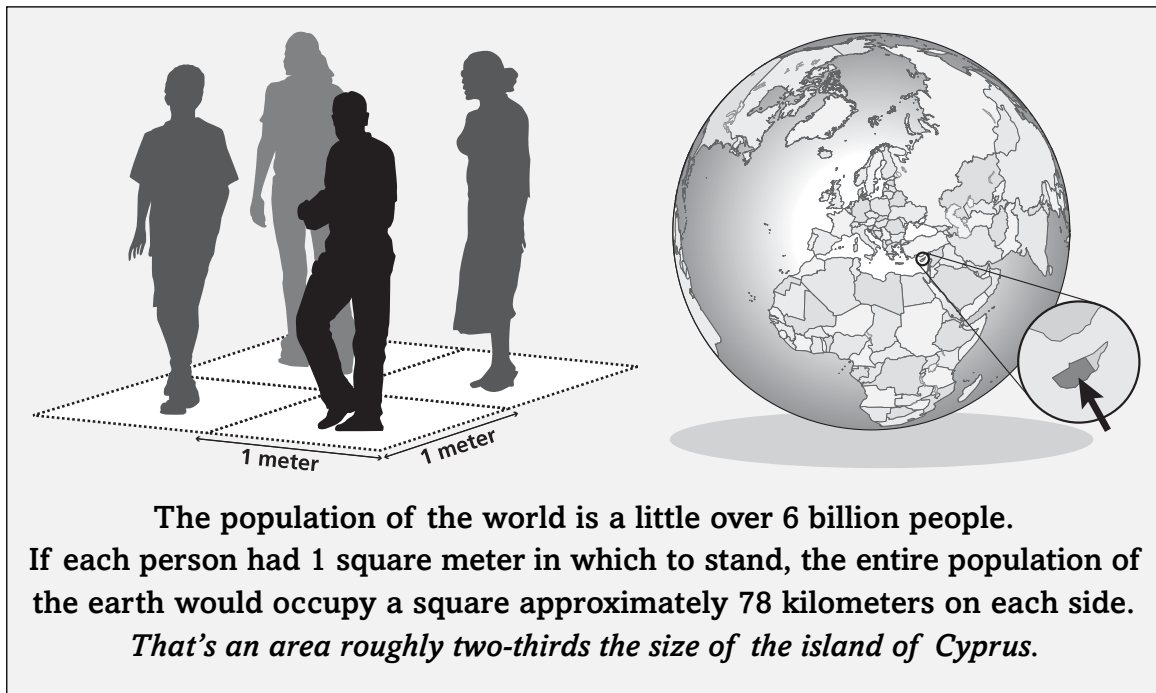
THE CAUSES OF POVERTY: ALL THE USUAL SUSPECTS

■ *Overpopulation*

For many years, development strategists have pointed to the looming problem of overpopulation and the inability of the world’s resources to keep up with the food and employment needs of growing masses of people. Visiting the massive, polluted major cities of the world or walking the crowded, filthy slums of any major city in the world will certainly lead one to agree that overpopulation, at least in the major cities of the world, may be a significant cause of massive poverty.

Without a doubt, overcrowding in the major cities of the world, especially in the developing nations, overwhelms the capabilities of these cities. This causes shortages in water, sanitation and power systems, unfairness in political and justice systems, inadequacies in the provision of education, jobs, and other services. Further, population stresses cause complications in infrastructure maintenance, traffic, pollution, and a whole host of other ills of the world’s urban centers.

Many of us have grown up on the negative forecasting of the 1970s about the world’s population skyrocketing exponentially, and soon to overtake the world’s sustaining capacity, causing massive starvation worldwide. There is no denying that the problems caused by local overcrowding are immense. To be sure, the distribution and concentrations of large populations are definitely problems,



as a visit to any teeming metropolis will attest. But that overcrowding is, in fact, a *result* of poverty — not a major *cause* of poverty. The truth is that global population is even now beginning to level off. A much bigger problem for the future of many countries is not overpopulation but not having enough people!

In fact, fertility rates are decreasing rapidly and projections of future populations are shrinking. To maintain the same population, a nation needs to have a 2.1 children per woman. This is called the “Total Fertility Rate” (TFR). Ben Wattenburg, in a new book called *Fewer*, notes that TFRs have dropped dramatically not only in the more developed countries but in the less developed countries as well.

For example, due to China’s One Child Policy, the country has a TFR of around 1.8 in China. Egypt has dropped in half in the last 40 years to slightly above three. Brazil is now below the replacement level of 2.1. India has seen its TFR dropped from 6 to just over three in only a few decades and the trend is decidedly down, especially among the new Indian middle-class. In total, there are 63 nations with TFRs below 2.1.⁴¹

Surprisingly, Wattenburg predicts that if, as seems likely, TFR rates continue to fall throughout

the world, it is possible that total world population will peak at slightly fewer than eight billion people in the middle of the century and then drop to 5.5 billion by the end of the century⁴² — fewer people than are on our planet today! Clearly overpopulation is *not* a major cause of poverty in the world now and it may be less of a problem in the future.

Wattenburg notes countries with growing numbers of women with no children at the end of their childbearing years:

- Germany 26%
- Finland and the United Kingdom 21%
- Italy and the Netherlands 19%
- The United States 16%

■ ***Ineffective Economic Systems and Poor Distribution of Goods and Services***

Another commonly cited cause of poverty is ineffective economic systems and poor distribution of goods and services. Whether it is the “survival of the fittest” and avaricious aspects of capitalism or the inefficient characteristics of communism, or the many shortcomings of a variety of other systems in between, the effect is that many of the poor are left out. Development theorists used to argue for wealth-creating strategies for the rich and powerful so that the benefits would “trickle down” to the poor. In the same way eliminating the class structures in the communist systems was supposed to eliminate inequalities and bring prosperity, or at least adequacy, to all.

Somehow, though, both systems tend to lead to a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. The poor get left out. Again, there is no doubt that inherently unequal and often unjust economic systems contribute significantly to a great deal of poverty.

■ ***Corruption and Exploitation***

Corruption and exploitation in any of their many forms also contribute substantially to the poverty and misery of many people. There is always a correlation between high levels of corruption and poverty. Undeniably, corruption, which inevitably includes or leads to exploitation of the powerless, is a significant cause of poverty. As discussed in lesson three, the Bible has much to say about God’s anger at corrupt people who take advantage of others.

■ ***“Structural” Causes of Poverty***

Related to the above are the various structural analyses of poverty. This approach looks at the role of structures — unfair judicial and political systems, oppressive or unjust economic policies, the negative effects of globalization, the way the rich manipulate governmental policies and other “structures of sin” in causing poverty.

Often these analyses focus on perceived oppressive class structures, the lack of access to and the fairness of judicial systems for the poor, and the manipulation, corruption and ruthlessness of landowners, merchants, money lenders, monopolistic industrial producers, “foreigners” and other systems and structures in positions of power. Such analyses are the basis of much radical political thinking and theological reflection, and led to, for example, the rise of Marxism and communism, of various kinds of “liberation” theologies and much effort on the part of many activist NGOs.

There is no doubt about the very significant adverse effect these structures have on the poor. And there is no doubt about the need for effective advocacy, political and social action toward

Annual Estimate of the Cost of “Structures of Sin”

Money Laundering	U.S.\$ 1.5 trillion
White Collar Crime. . . .	U.S.\$ 1.5 trillion
Financial Fraud	U.S.\$930 billion
Gambling	U.S.\$ 815 billion
Organized Crime	U.S.\$750 billion
Tax Cheating	U.S.\$250 billion
Drug Traffic	U.S.\$200 billion
Shoplifting.	U.S.\$100 billion
Computer Crime	U.S.\$51 billion
Pornography	U.S.\$25 billion
Arms Black Market	U.S.\$5.8 billion
Electronic Warfare	U.S.\$5.8 billion
Credit Card Fraud	U.S.\$1 billion

—Bryant Myers, *Exploring World Mission*, 47.

comprehensive redress of these systems and structures. A weakness of the structural view of poverty is, however, as pointed out by Jayakumar Christian,⁴³ the tendency for this view to place all the blame on the “outside” other. This tendency “to focus on the outside, without a commensurate critique of internal factors, can cause the poor to take on a victim posture.”⁴⁴ This “victim posture,” which says “My problems are someone else’s fault,” often leads to a kind of *pauperism* — a mindset of poverty, and a failure or even refusal to do anything to help oneself or deal personally with one’s problems or challenges.

In this and other analyses, it is important to keep in mind the personal responsibility for problems, and to understand as well that these are all rooted in sin, a matter we shall shortly address.

A SPIRITUAL VIEW OF POVERTY

In fact, dealing with poverty demands a perspective that goes beyond mere economic matters straight to issues of the heart. All of the above factors are significant in causing and perpetuating poverty. All of the above reflections on the causes of poverty — corruption, exploitation, overpopulation, deficits, entanglements, and the like — contain elements of the truth. All of the above warrant attention from the careful development worker.

However, as Christians, we must be aware that these and other “causes” are, in fact, primarily the *results* rather than the *causes* of poverty. As we study the Bible, we will begin to understand that poverty is not just a lack of material wealth or other shortages. It is not only corruption or calamity or disempowering entanglements. We should not make the mistake of thinking that the problems of poverty and under-development have only material roots.

The fact is that at its most basic level, the problem of poverty is a **spiritual** problem. Or, to be even more blunt, most poverty is, at its core, a problem of **sin**. This is why, as we will see, the work of holistic development — the kind of development that addresses the problem of the whole person — must be the work of Christians. It is Christians who, through the Bible, have the answer to the problem of sin.

To understand why this is so, we need to begin our reflection on the causes of child poverty by looking at the concept of worldview.

■ **Worldview — A Key to Holistic Child Development**

Worldview is an essential key to understanding how holistic development takes root in people’s hearts and minds. Worldview is like a pair of colored glasses or lenses which “color” or influence how a person understands the world around him. Dr. Charles Kraft of Fuller Seminary defines worldview as “all the assumptions, values, and commitments/allegiances underlying a people’s perception of reality.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Darrow Miller puts it this way: “A worldview is a set of assumptions held consciously or unconsciously in faith about the basic makeup of the world and how the world works.”⁴⁶

“How the world works,” includes our understandings of everything about us — including why things are the way they are, our personal answers to mankind’s basic questions — things like “Does Truth exist?” “What is real?” “Is there a God?” “What is the nature of evil?” “Is there right and wrong?” “What is good?” “What is beautiful?” and “Where did evil come from?”

Worldview, then, is the mental map that all people have which helps them make sense of an often confusing and unpredictable world. Consider the basic human questions “Why do bad things happen to good people?” Or, “Why do bad people prosper?” All people in the world, at all times, have puzzled about these seeming injustices. (See, for example, the cry of Habakkuk, or that of Job in Job 24:1-12 in the Old Testament). For some, these seemingly unfathomable “wrongs” in

the world are enough for them to conclude that there is no God. “How could a loving God,” they ask, “allow such suffering and injustice in the world?”

A person’s or a society’s worldview helps people come to grips with such imponderables. Indeed, as Darrow Miller points out, an individual’s worldview can affect his or her destiny — can tend to lead to hopefulness and sufficiency, or to despair and deprivation:

All people ask basically the same questions. The answers they give, however, are radically different, depending on their worldviews. The way people and societies answer these questions determines the types of cultures and societies they create. Some answers to these questions lead to poverty and barbarism; others to development and civilization.⁴⁷

Miller identifies three basic broad categories of worldviews which encompass in broad strokes the worldviews of most of the people in the world. These three *macro* worldviews are: ⁴⁸

1. **Secularism** — Secularism is the worldview of modern Western societies. Secularists deny the existence of God and anything spiritual. They believe that “life is the result of the interactions of matter and energy, time and chance.” For secularists, matter, (or the material world) is the ultimate reality. Secularists do not believe in any universal Truths or absolute morals.
2. **Animism** — A second major worldview is animism in all its various forms. “Spirits animate everything, and everything moves toward oneness of spirit. The real world is unseen, truth is hidden and irrational, all is mystery ... filled with evil ... [and] amoral.”
3. **Theism** — Miller defines this biblical worldview in the following way:

In the Old Testament the word *salvation* can be translated *wholeness* or *completeness* — it’s not just about a salvation decision that puts us in right relationship to God so that we can enjoy Heaven forever. It is talking about a completeness of life that is aligned with the principles of the law and thus there is good that we enjoy in our life. That good is not just a spiritual good. It is a physical good, an economic good, a social good, a good in every aspect of our life.

In Deuteronomy 5:10 God says, “I’m a jealous God showing love to a thousand of those who love me and keep my commandments.” How do you enjoy the full blessing, the full provision of God? By aligning yourself with this law.

Verse 16 says that the law for children to honor their father and mother has a consequence. It says, “Honor your father and your mother, that you may live long and that it may go well with you.” How do you help kids get to the place where their lives are going to go well? By following God’s laws. God says, “This is one of the principles I’ve built into the way this world works.”

Again, in Deuteronomy 5:29: “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always.” Why? “So that it might go well for them and their children forever.” What’s the foundation for wellness? Compliance with alignment with the will of God.

And in 5:23, “Walk in all the ways that the Lord your God has commanded you so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land you will possess.”

Theism “sees ultimate reality as personal and relational. God exists. He created a universe of physical and spiritual dimensions, seen and unseen worlds. Truth, as revealed by God, is objective and can be known by man. God’s character establishes absolute morals. Theism holds to one personal infinite God, the great ‘I AM’ of Scripture.”⁴⁹

All Bible-believing Christians should hold to some form of this worldview.

■ **Consequences of Worldviews**

Believing and living out the basic assumptions of each of these worldviews leads to more or less predictable consequences. Of course, neither animism nor secularism will lead *automatically* to material poverty, hopelessness and despair. The “live for the present” aspects of both of these worldviews may, in fact, lead to material wealth through greed, avarice and a focus on accumulation. But these two fundamental worldviews *do* lead to moral ambiguity, to fatalism, to spiritual poverty and often to material poverty as well.

Likewise, people with a theistic (biblical) worldview will not always be materially wealthy or self-sufficient. In the first place, such people may, because of their biblical worldview, tend to be very generous and more focused on spiritual resources than material wealth. They may happily have only enough to get by. Or, due to persecution or harassment, they may be deprived of their possessions and live in poverty.

However, believing *and consistently acting on* the assumptions and understanding of the theistic (or biblical) worldview will *inevitably* lead to biblical wholeness, spiritual well-being (in spite of circumstances), material adequacy and resourcefulness in using one’s own talents and available resources. How do we know this? As we have seen, there are ample biblical promises to this effect.

But from a human standpoint, the biblical worldview contributes to a wise stewardship of the resources that God provides and often an accumulation of material blessings as well. Most often, at the very least, a biblical worldview will lead to an “adequacy” of material resources and to a sense of well-being, and an experience of the “abundant life” which Jesus desires for all people.

■ **Jesus Comes to Give Abundant Life**

This “abundant life” is in fact what Jesus desires for all people. We might say that this was His “mission” in coming to earth. Let us look closely at this important passage.

The declaration from Jesus “I am come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, KJV), is set in the context of a shepherd’s care for his sheep. The good shepherd, Jesus says, will care for the sheep, protect and provide for them. The sheep hear His voice and know that they are free from danger. The sheep will “come in and go out, and find pasture” (John 10:9b).

The picture here is one of security and peacefulness. It is a picture of the sheep being what they are designed to be. The analogy of the Good Shepherd is, of course, a picture of Jesus’ desire for His followers. His intention is that everyone will live in the same peace and security and, as it says in Psalms 23, “goodness and mercy” (KJV) will follow all the days of their lives.

However, *abundant life* does not primarily refer to material wealth or excesses of accumulation and acquisition. We are not preaching here of a “prosperity gospel.”

D*id you ever wonder what language Satan speaks? John 8:44 says that he speaks the language of lies. “When he lies, he is speaking his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

What it *is* about is at least a life of adequacy, a life free of exploitation wherein children are healthy enough to be productive, have adequate education, enough resources to be healthy, well-nourished, and educated, close and satisfying family relationships, joy, (even in the midst of difficult circumstances), hope and peace and contentment with whatever God has provided.

■ **The Thief Comes to Steal**

In contrast to God's plan, there is also a "thief" who has exactly the opposite intentions for the sheep. That is why at the beginning of this same verse Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10a). Who is this "thief?" Obviously, it is Satan. Satan does not want children or their families to have that abundant life. Satan is a liar. In fact, lying is his native tongue! And Satan will lie and do anything else he can to kill, steal and destroy.

The apostle Paul in Romans also talks about people exchanging the Truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:18-22). Ignoring God and believing Satan's lies leads to a downward spiral of poverty, death and destruction. This is what we see all around us. Walking in a desperate slum, it does not take long to see that Satan is often successful in stealing and destroying. For so many hurting children around the world, Satan has stolen their abundant life. They are left with ugliness, mistrust, corruption, exploitation, suffering and misery.

The apostle Paul also warns us to "See to it that no one takes you captive through *hollow and deceptive philosophy*, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8). As we will see, non-biblical worldviews are characterized by "hollow and deceptive philosophies." They are not based on Truth. Rather, they are rooted in the lies of Satan.

Satan wants children and families to believe his lies and to be enslaved. Are we going to believe the truths of the Bible or the lies of Satan? Having a biblical worldview — that is, believing the truths of the Bible — leads to freedom (John 8:32), wholeness and abundant life. But both the animistic and secular worldviews — that is, *believing and acting* on the lies of Satan — will always ultimately lead to misery, death and destruction.

BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO HOLLOW AND DECEPTIVE PHILOSOPHIES

So then we ask the question again, "Why are people poor?" Or rather, we might ask, what are the "hollow and deceptive philosophies," or the lies of Satan, which tend toward entrapment and enslavement in poverty? Here are four examples:⁵⁰

1. **There is no absolute Truth.**

Both **animism** and **secularism** say there is no objective Truth. Animists also argue that there is no Truth, or that Truth is unknowable. Indeed, they value ignorance. To the animists, there is not much point in searching for true life principles for they see the universe as "mysterious, unknowable, and irrational, a cosmic lottery driven by randomness, luck, or fate. . . . Very little development can take place when such thinking predominates."⁵¹

Secularism does no better. Western secularists say, "Believe anything you want." What is truth for you may not be truth for me. There is no objective right and wrong. What is right for you may be wrong for me. Satan has secular Westerners thinking that there is no God at all and that material things are all that exist and all that is important. Both Western

Occasionally in this text I will use the word "Truth" with a capital "T." This is to emphasize that this is divine, biblical, non-relative Truth, for all people.

Once in the course of three or four days in Nepal the traffic was repeatedly stopped for wedding receptions. I finally asked, “Why are there so many weddings going on?” I was told that the dates were very auspicious because the stars or planets were lined up in a certain way. These people didn’t know that they have dominion over creation. They think that the stars and planets have dominion over them!

secularism and Eastern animism say that the universe is amoral, irrational, and without compassion.

What the Bible Says: You will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free.

The biblical mindset understands that the universe is rational, understandable and orderly. “We can know [T]ruth because God has revealed it by his works and by his words.”⁵² Jesus said, “I am the way, the Truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Further, He said that when people know the Truth, “the [T]ruth will set [them] free” (John 8:32). The way we carry out our lives depends on how we think.

2. Nature Has Dominion over Mankind

A second lie of Satan has to do with Man’s dominion over all of creation. Both animists and secularists believe that mankind is ultimately at the mercy of the stars or of nature. Again, especially for the animist, this can have a devastating impact on material well-being. The animists in Asia spend fortunes seeking signs in the stars and the alignment of the planets. Neither the animist nor the secularist sees the Truth of man having dominion over creation and with a God-given responsibility for stewardship and nurture.

What the Bible Says: We Are Created to Have Dominion.

The Bible shows us that God made creation for our benefit. The Psalmist asks, “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:4), but then goes on to marvel at the fact that “You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet” (Psalm 8:6).

In Genesis 1:28, we learn that God has given to mankind “dominion” or control over all of creation. We have seen that creation is inherently good and worthy of our study and care. We are to be stewards of all creation, subdue it, and use it for our benefit. This may sound obvious or unimportant but the fact is that most people of the earth (those with an animistic worldview) believe that creation has dominion over mankind. Miller says that “Once man has discovered creation’s order through science, he can improve his life through technology.”⁵³

Darrow Miller taught me to occasionally ask people, “What is the difference between ‘astrology’ and ‘astronomy’?” We all know that both have to do with understanding the stars and planets. However, both worldviews are very different and so are their consequences. The astrologer thinks that the stars have dominion over him and his clients. People spend precious resources trying to discover some auspicious time or sign in the stars. The belief is that somehow the alignment or some other peculiarities in celestial line-ups have a day-to-day impact on our lives or well-being.

Astronomers know that the planets move about in predictable and understandable orbits. They know too that, though the stars may be too distant and magnificent to understand fully, we have an idea of their composition and their gravitational influence on other celestial bodies. We

seek to understand these relationships not because they have power over us, but rather because that understanding gives us power to explore creation and use it to our advantage.

Scientists can use their telescopes, mathematics and other skills in creative and useful ways. They can use their understanding of gravitation and other information to put satellites in orbits and even send a man to the moon. More down to earth, they can use that information to combat the destructive forces of nature and fight diseases, suffering, hunger, poverty and death. And God expects us to do that. These things are crucial for the ministry of holistic child development.

This difference in worldview has profound implications for child and family development. From the unique Truth of our dominion over creation, we understand that we are not at the mercy of a mysterious and unknowable universe. This reversal of the Truth has devastating consequences for holistic child development. Nature is not to be worshipped or feared but to be tended, nurtured, stewarded and explored. “People are to have dominion over nature rather than be dominated by it,” and “God gave man the rational ability to discover the design behind nature, (science) and then use those laws to intervene and harness nature for his or her own benefit (applied technology).”⁵⁴

The delightful verse in Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.” This reminds me of doting parents who wrap up gifts for their children in colorful paper and bright ribbons. Why? They know that the child will quickly rip the paper and ribbons to find the surprise inside. The real joy for the parents is in watching the bright-eyed excitement and anticipation of the child. Similarly, I get the feeling that it might be the same for God. He has hidden remarkable secrets in His creation and he is no doubt delighted as we use the abilities he has given us to uncover those secrets.

3. Some Children Are Born Better Than Others

For the animists, some people are born with higher status (worth) than others, usually because of what they did in their previous lives. Therefore, it is not only allowable but expected that people will be treated differently. Some will be given respect and dignity while others will be despised and discriminated against. The Caste System in Hinduism is one of the worst examples. In Hinduism, your “karma” says you are who you are because of your deeds in your past life. Your “dharma” says, in effect, that the way you may improve your lot in the next life is to accept without questioning (and without seeking to alter) your present status or condition.

There is no greater impediment to development in India than this evil animistic system. Millions of people in the lower rungs of the caste system are condemned to lifelong poverty. Tribalism, ethnic prejudice, racism and other “isms”, often leading to warfare, discrimination and abuse, are other examples of this lie.

David’s treatment of Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9:3-8 is a good example of preserving and restoring dignity. The king asked, “Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God’s kindness?” ...

When Mephibosheth looked into the mirror he saw a cripple (2 Samuel 9:3-8). He had forgotten WHO he was and WHOSE he was. When David looked at him, he saw a prince.

— Dr. Wess Stafford, President, Compassion International,
Compassion Asia Area Conference
(Chiang Rai, Thailand, August 2003).

What the Bible Says: We Are All Created in the Image of God.

This remarkable Truth is found in Genesis 1:27 which states that “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” I say this is a remarkable truth for the idea of being created in the image of God is *unique to Biblical Theism* — that is Judaism and Christianity. No other faith has a hint of this profoundly important Truth. Hinduism has hundreds of millions of gods. Obviously there is no concept of humans being made in the image of any of them. More than any other faith perhaps, Hindus create gods in their own image. Islam has a high view of God but a low view of man (“How could God come down and live among ‘dogs’ like us?”).

Satan loves it when we make *worth* distinctions between people such as caste, race, gender, age, ability or other distinctions between people. However, the fact that all children are made in God’s image means that all are precious — even girls. It means no infanticide of female babies. It means no untouchability of people born into “backward” castes in India. It means that all children are worth the investment of education and training to help them become all God wants them to be.

This Truth is profoundly important in our consideration of the Child, Church and Mission. It is this Truth that affirms the uniqueness of human beings and distinguishes us from the animal kingdom. More important, it is the Truth which affirms the worth and dignity of every human being, including every child. This inherent worth and dignity provides the foundation for ministry to all people without distinction. Moreover, it provides the basis for a self-worth which says “I *do* matter.” “I *do* have gifts, talents, abilities.” “I *can* put these to good use to defend my rights and better my life.”

The majority of the response to the needs of children and families in India is done by Christians. Christians know that all, regardless of circumstance, have inherent dignity and are worthy objects of our love and care. This is the reason Compassion supports projects which rescue girls from the railway platforms in Kolkata.

This is also the reason we support projects to help insure Northern Thai girls will not be tricked and sold into the brothels of Bangkok.

I Matter to God! I was once visiting a project in Cebu in the Southern Philippines. A few others and I were told that a nine-year-old boy was going to sing for us. I have heard nine-year olds sing before and so did not expect a spectacular performance.

However, this little guy had a marvelously mature voice and we were amazed at his poise and confidence as he picked up the microphone and sang. This young lad could SING! It was the finest singing I have ever heard from a person that young. What really impressed us was the awesome truth of the song he chose. He sang about being a small, poor little boy who wasn’t very influential. Yet he knew he was special because he mattered to God!

That is the beautiful point. The little child matters to God. In spite of the way the world may fail to recognize the value of a poor boy from the slums of Cebu, he and other children can hold their heads up high for they know that they matter to God and are made in His image.

Once children know *who* they are and *whose* they are, then they can begin to understand that they can make a difference. Their future doesn’t have to have all the same limitations of their past. “If God even knows my name and how many hairs I have on my head, then I must matter.” They begin to realize that they don’t have to accept injustices. They can begin to say with confidence, “I am going to fix that. I am going to change that. I am going to be different.”

4. Life is insignificant or has no meaning.

A final crushing, hollow and deceptive philosophy of Satan is the lie that life has no meaning. Many animists believe that there is no life after death. To them man’s existence is simply an end-

less cycle of birth and reincarnations. Worse, many believe that their situation in this life is the result of their *karma* — their *fate* or their actions in a past life. How they will fare in their next life depends, to some extent, on their acceptance of their fate now. It is best then to just accept life as it is, and not try to better themselves, and accept their position in life. This “life on a wheel” means a life of complacency and fatalism. Ultimately, the best they can do is to escape altogether into “non-existence.”

On the other hand, Western secularists believe that this life is all there is or ever will be. This life is all there is. Again, pessimism reigns. The secularists’ response is that the best we can do is enjoy life (i.e., eat, drink, and be merry). Or, as one writer has named his book in the despair of the absurdity of life, we might as well “amuse ourselves to death.”⁵⁵ But for both the animist and the secularist, the result is the same. Their existence has no larger meaning or purpose. For both, survival becomes the only goal of life and pessimism, rather than hope, rules both in this life and their expectations of what is to come.

What the Bible says: God wants children to have a future and a hope.

Again, this may seem obvious or unimportant but this Truth has profound implications for holistic child development. Seeing life as an endless cycle of rebirths and reincarnations can have devastating consequences. Consider Houn (not her real name). She is an eight-year-old Cambodian girl. She was raped by a man well known to her mother. However, her mother did not want to prosecute the man. She said he would get his punishment in the next life. Worse still, she believed that what happened to her daughter was just her “karma” — retribution for a bad deed the daughter must have committed in one of her previous lives. What could be more devastating for her development, self-esteem or her hope?

The Truth is that life should be purposeful and hopeful. Children and families can take control of their lives, not mastered by unseen and incomprehensible forces or by a harsh and unbending environment, but rather taking charge, and purposefully making their lives better. Human beings, including poor families and children, with God’s blessing and guidance can be active and ambitious on their own behalf. Life does not have to have the same hardships and limitations that it has had for generations. Poor families do not have to be complacent or fatalistic, accepting things the way they are. Poor children can hope for a better future. That is the work of holistic child development.

■ **Experiencing God’s Truths Can Set People Free**

So why are people poor and hungry? “Except for catastrophic events such as war, drought, or flood, physical poverty doesn’t ‘just happen.’ [To a large extent, it may be] the logical result of the way people look at themselves and the world . . . Physical poverty is rooted in a culture of poverty, a set of ideas . . . held corporately that produce certain behaviors which in turn yield poverty.”⁵⁶

How can children and families break the chains of Satan’s lies? Most basically, through a change in worldview and by learning about and following biblical truths. The biblical worldview says that we don’t have to be deceived by hollow and deceptive philosophies — philosophies which:

E*phesians 6:10-17 tells us that our struggles are not against “flesh and blood” — that is, just physical things, “but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

- Deny objective Truth and result in ambiguity and confusion
- Deny that we have control over either our environment and our fate, and worse, we must not seek to alter our condition, for fear of adversely affecting a future life
- Condemn some to discrimination and lack of opportunity solely due to caste or race
- Have no vision or hope of a future, resulting in fatalism, passivity and pessimism

Children and families no longer have to be enslaved by Satan's lies. Jesus says, "You will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free" (John 8:32). God has "disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15).

Fundamentally, poverty is not a matter of a lack of resources or a result of man-made problems but is in fact a *spiritual* problem. See also 2 Corinthians 4:4: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

God's intent has always been that His people, including children, be "whole" and complete in all aspects of life. This involves helping children and families understand biblical Truths. Are material and physical assistance still necessary? Of course. They still have needs, and we are commanded to provide help with nutritious food, education, health care and other interventions. But if the children and families we work with come to believe and follow biblical truths, they will have true freedom, release, wholeness, a future and a hope.

Also, since the root problem is spiritual rather than material, a holistic approach to the problem of poverty requires spiritual as well as physical responses. It is the Church — not governments, secular NGOs, the UN or other secular bodies that has an adequate response to the real causes of poverty. Therefore, effective Holistic Child Development must be done from a Christian standpoint. **Holistic Child Development is the *particular* challenge and opportunity for Christians and the Church.** While our non-Christian friends do very good work, from which we may learn a great deal, and while much of our work may be very similar to that of non-Christians, it is Christians who can respond most completely and effectively to the problem of poverty. We will look at this reality more in the following section.



SUMMARY:

- Poverty is complex and its conditions are exacerbated by corruption, exploitation, overpopulation, ineffective economic systems and poor distribution. But most fundamentally, the problem of poverty is a *spiritual* problem.
 - Non-biblical worldviews (e.g., animism and secularism) are characterized by hollow and deceptive philosophies (Colossians 2:8). Being taken captive by such philosophies can lead to pessimism, fatalism, hopelessness and poverty.
 - The key to true holistic child development is having and consistently living with a biblical worldview.
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**READINGS:**

- Darrow Miller, *Discipling Nations* (Seattle, Wa.: YWAM Publishing, 2001) chapters 1-3, pp. 33-76.
- Jayakumar Christian, *The God of the Empty-Handed* (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC, 1999) chapters 2 and 3, pp. 44-74.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Do you agree or disagree that a non-Christian worldview has a tendency to lead to poverty and destruction? Defend your position.
- Show with examples from your own life/church/society how and/or why a biblical worldview will create tendencies toward wholeness and life.
- Discuss at least three examples of “hollow and deceptive” philosophies in the non-biblical culture/society/worldview of which you are a part. How do (or might) these have a tendency to lead to poverty? How might they hinder the development of children and families in your culture or place of work? Contrast these philosophies with biblical understandings.

**ACTIVITY:**

- Interview the elders or pastors of your church. How do they answer these questions?
 - Why are people poor?
 - What does the Church do for the poor?
 - What is the difference between a poor Christian and a poor non-Christian?

- ³⁹ *The Millennium Goals* (World Bank Development Indicators 2003), 5. www.worldbank.org.
- ⁴⁰ I am indebted to my late colleague, Dr. Don Miller in an undated and unpublished paper called “Child Development” for this analysis of poverty as a lack of wholeness.
- ⁴¹ Ben Wattenburg, *Fewer* (Chicago, Il.: Ivan R, 2004).
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Christian Jayakumar, *The God of the Empty-Handed* (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC, 1999), 30.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁴⁵ Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (New York, Ny.: Orbis Books, 1996), 52.
- ⁴⁵ Darrow Miller, *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures* (Seattle, Wa.: YWAM Publishing, 1998), 38.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 40 ff.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ⁵⁰ I am indebted to Darrow Miller for most of the insights in this section, from his book *Discipling Nations*, as cited above.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 96-7.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 95-6.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 111.
- ⁵⁴ Darrow Miller, “The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty” in *Christian Relief and Development*, ed. Edgar Elliston (Dallas, Tx.: Word Publishing, 1989), 99.
- ⁵⁵ The implication of this phrase was taken from the title page of Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, Ny.: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985).
- ⁵⁶ Darrow Miller, *Discipling Nations* (Seattle, Wa.: YWAM Publishing, 2001), 67.

SECTION TWO:

The Child and the Church



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing the lessons in this section, the student will be able to:

- Show from Scripture God's intention for holistic redemption of *all* Creation.
- Defend a position on the relationship between evangelism and social action.
- Discuss the structure and function of two key structures of the church — modalities and sodalities.
- Show from Scripture why care for children is the *particular* responsibility of Christians and the Church.

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we begin to examine the role of the Church in doing holistic child development. We begin with a lesson that is as close as we will get to doing any actual theology in this course. We will look at some biblical and theological foundations for the Church's mandate to care for, redeem, and reconcile *all* of creation. It is this mandate that provides the basis for the role of the Church in doing holistic ministries including holistic child development.

We will follow that with a look at the ongoing debate on evangelism versus social action. We will then look at two important *structures* which are common in the Church and which are uniquely suited to carry out the various ministries and functions of the Church as a whole. Finally, in lesson six, we will examine some important passages of scripture which demonstrate why care for impoverished children is the *particular* responsibility of the Church.

LESSON FIVE:

The Role of the Church



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Discuss from Scripture some theological foundations for holistic development, including and integrating such concepts as creation, the covenants, and God's redemptive intent for all of creation.
- Show that God's agenda includes salvation, redemption, and reconciliation of *all* creation.
- Defend a position on the relationship between evangelism and social action.
- Discuss the structure and function of two key structures of the Church — modalities and sodalities.



KEY VERSE:

John 3:17

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."



SOME THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Bible tells us that God's intention is to love and redeem all of His creation. This is the central message of the entire Bible. Holistic child development is a theological response to the Truth of a good but fallen creation and of a God wanting to redeem not just individuals but whole cultures and societies. God has used many people and instruments to further this intention — from creation itself to the covenants He made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Abraham's descendents, the nation of Israel and ultimately through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross to redeem the whole world (the "cosmos").

As we will see, He has entrusted the Church with the responsibility to bless and redeem all of Creation. In this lesson we will look briefly at some of these theological insights — Creation, the

Covenants, and Christ's redemptive work on the cross — in relation to holistic development, and then more closely at the responsibility of the Church to carry out this intention.

■ **Creation and Child Development**

Creation includes the physical universe, as well as all of God's laws and institutions. God's designs for the world and the regulation of human life are part of His creation. The 10 Commandments (and other decrees) are for all people, in all times and in all places. Marriage, for example, is among the things which, according to Paul, "God *created* to be received with thanksgiving." Albert Wolters puts it this way: "Human civilization is *normed* throughout. Everywhere we discover limits and proprieties, standards and criteria: in every field of human affairs there are right and wrong ways of doing things. There is nothing in human life that does not belong to the created order. Everything we are and do is thoroughly *creaturely*."⁵⁷

Creation Is Good and Worth Redeeming. From the Genesis narratives on creation, we understand that God created *all* things. Hence, *all* of His creation has value. God called it "good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:10).

The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:12).

God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:16-18).

God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:25).

The essential goodness of Creation is important. The early heresy of Gnosticism (which is still with us today) denied the goodness of creation. It taught that those seeking salvation should shun the creation and (like some mystics today) seek to distance oneself from the material world.

Wolters reminds us that "God does not make junk, and we dishonor the Creator if we take a negative view of the work of His hands when He Himself takes such a positive view. In fact, so positive a view did He take of what He had created that He refused to scrap it when mankind spoiled it, but determined instead, at the cost of His Son's life, to make it new and good again. God does not make junk, and he does not junk what He has made."⁵⁸

The point is that it is not only *people* who are to be redeemed and led to fullness in Christ but also *all* of God's creation. It is this reality that provides the foundation for things like community development work — providing development assistance to increase income, improve economic systems, political systems, and all other aspects of human life and relationships.

It is clear that yes, creation is now fallen through human moral irresponsibility. Wolters continues:

The practical implications of [this] are legion. Marriage should not be avoided by Christians, but sanctified. Emotions should not be repressed, but purified. Sexuality is not simply to be

*shunned, but redeemed. Politics should not be declared off-limits, but reformed. Art ought not to be pronounced worldly, but claimed for Christ. Business must no longer be relegated to the secular world, but must be made to conform again to God-honoring standards. Every sector of human life yields such examples.*⁵⁹

Creation Has Order. We observe that the Creation has order. The same God who created the universe and all that is in it *keeps* it all in existence and functioning order all the time. “Long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water,” writes the apostle Peter, referring to the creation story in Genesis 1, and “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept” (2 Peter 3:5, 7).

The orderliness of Creation makes possible the free and healthy functioning of the created beings. An ordered creation leads to optimism about social change. Things don’t always have to be like they have been in the past. People don’t have to continue in grinding poverty or relegated to misery and subjugation to the disorder of human societies. Impoverished children and families can be restorers of that good created order. All can hope for a better future and work to build it.

Humankind — Including Children — Have a Special Place in Creation. As we have seen, humans are created in God’s own image, imparting special worth and dignity. Moreover, God has empowered us to be co-creators with Him and to participate in His redemptive relationship with the rest of creation.⁶⁰ The work of holistic child development participates in empowering children to fulfill their divinely ordered role of creating cultures.

■ ***The Covenants and Child Development***

God’s intention is that all of His creation should reflect His own goodness and glory. As the Psalmist said, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). Even after the Fall, His intention was to protect and restore His Creation. He first began to do this through His covenants. The first was with Noah after the flood. “Though speaking with Noah, God clearly made His covenant not only with Noah’s descendents, but with *all* other surviving life, and with the earth.”⁶¹ Here is a part of that Covenant:

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth” (Genesis 9:8-10).

Later, God made a more extensive Covenant with Abraham, saying not only that He would bless Abraham but that He would bless all the nations and peoples of the world through Abraham:

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you (Genesis 12:2-3).

This blessing of the nations is a central theme of all of the Bible. (The word *nations*, or in the Greek *ethnos*, and its derivatives occur more than 1,000 times in the Bible). It was also God’s intention that His chosen people Israel would be a blessing to the nations:

Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peo-

ples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor (Isaiah 55:3-5).

What implications do the covenants have for holistic ministries to children? At least the following:

- God's intention to bless *all* the peoples and nations *includes* children.
- As we saw in section one, from the start of God's covenant with His chosen people, God expects that the children will be included so that they too will learn to fear the Lord: "Assemble the people — men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns — so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 31:12).
- Scriptures show that children were often included in celebrations and remembrances. There was a high level of confidence in the ability of children to understand and participate in the faith development of the community: "And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away" (Nehemiah 12:43).

■ ***Redemption, Reconciliation and Child Development***

The Bible tells us that the first Man failed in his responsibility to "fill, subdue, and rule the earth on God's behalf" (Genesis 1:26-28). Adam chose his own self-interests and with his disobedience — the Fall — his relationship with God and the right relationship of all creation with God was broken. Even today, our lives, families, societies and the environment suffer the consequences of this rebellion.

God's response to the Fall was His plan to redeem and reconcile all of that fallen creation back to Himself. God wants to redeem not just individuals but whole cultures and societies. Both the words *redemption* and *reconciliation* imply going back to an original state. Reconciliation is concerned with the relationships that people and all elements of the creation have with each other. God's redemptive relationship with the creation, through the church, is designed to restore creation's order. Reconciliation implies that creation is so good that God intends to purge it of its infirmities and bring it to perfection.

Albert Wolters puts it this way:

[T]heologians have sometimes spoken of salvation as recreation — not to imply that God scrapes His earlier creation and in Jesus Christ makes a new one, but rather to suggest that He hangs on to His fallen original creation and salvages it. He refuses to abandon the work of His hands — in fact He sacrifices His own Son to save His original project. Humankind, which has botched its original mandate and the whole creation along with it, is given another chance in Christ . . . The original good creation is to be restored.⁶²

This active work of redemption culminates in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus and His death on the cross. Every evangelical Christian is familiar with John 3:16. It is central to our understanding of the salvation available to all who believe. Fewer evangelicals, however, are as familiar with (or as comfortable with) the next verse, John 3:17, or of its implications for holistic ministry: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

The Greek word used for *world* in both verses is “cosmos.” It refers to the *whole of creation*, all the human social structures and relationships, as well as individuals. It is the global matrix of human cultures that serve as the arena in which people live their lives. The construction and redemption of the cosmos highlights the need for Christians to hold salvation and redemption together. Modern evangelicals are susceptible to reading John 3:16 and ignoring John 3:17 because we limit the atonement to personal salvation. Our emphasis on personal salvation influences us to ignore the redemption of the cosmos.

Paul’s towering passage in the first chapter of Colossians affirms that salvation and redemption are intended not just to save souls but rather to reconcile all of Creation to Himself:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:15-20).

Quietly, numerous [Christians] around the world have become involved, investing time and money often at great personal cost, and have gained valuable expertise. Collectively, a huge body of experience and skill has been accumulated. If all this scattered expertise could be consolidated, it could be a potent resource. Projects have grown and developed, ideas and methodologies have been tested and valuable lessons have been learned.

—Patrick McDonald,
Reaching Children in Need, 62-3.

“Seven times, this passage reminds us that God’s agenda is as big as *all creation!* Paul was making a point! Jesus’ blood was shed for the restoration of *all things*. Why? *All things* were broken in the Fall. God loves His creation and He wants *all things* reconciled to Himself.”⁶⁴

From these verses we see that God not only loves people but He loves His whole creation, even though it is fallen as a result of sin. Holistic development, including holistic *child* development, is a way we Christians participate both in God’s work of salvation (through spiritual ministries) *and* in His redemptive work (through acts of physical kindness). Salvation (meeting spiritual needs) and redemption (addressing physical and societal needs) then are two key components of holistic ministry.

THE MYSTERY OF THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH⁶³

From the New Testament onward, God’s chosen instrument for His redemptive work has been His Church. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul calls this a mystery that God would entrust the reconciling to Himself of all Creation to us, His people, His Body, the Church, is mysterious to us as well.

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Paul explains in Ephesians chapter three that he was given the grace to reveal to us the mystery of this role of the church:

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:8-11).

In reality true holistic development can *only* be done by Christians or the Church. It is *only* Christians who have the understanding of the nature of sin, of God's intention for His people and His creation and of the power of the gospel to bring substantial holistic healing to the whole person.

For whatever reason, God has chosen the Church to be His instrument in redeeming all of His creation back to himself. The *already* aspects of the dawning kingdom began to transform societies throughout the ancient world, often at the cost of much persecution and individual sacrifice.

God's new way of doing things⁶⁵ was a totally new paradigm for people in Jesus' day, just as it is in ours. Christianity introduced surprising new ideas and understandings of relationships and behaviors which were unheard of in other religions and societies and provided a compelling new vision of humanity, transforming individuals and changing societies.

Rodney Stark⁶⁶ identifies some revolutionary aspects of God's way of doing things that were so different than what was commonly understood or practiced, that they astounded the Roman world.

1. The idea of a loving God. Before, the gods had their own agendas and spent their time fighting one another and competing for allegiance and dominance. Those *gods* had little interest in the people who worshipped them.
2. The loving Christian God expected that His followers would also be loving. Up to then, people did not generally love anybody except their own families or those whom it was politically or economically advantageous to love. "Pity was a defect of character unworthy of the wise and excusable only in those who have not yet grown up."⁶⁷ This new God even said, "I want you to love those who are poor and hurting. I want you to love, especially, those who are in a humble position in the world."⁶⁸
3. It was also shocking that this new God said that there should be no rank or status differences among believers. This was different! The rich and poor, humble and powerful were all equal in His sight. This was a new vision of human relationships!
4. God is merciful and requires mercy. Rome was well known for its casual cruelty. "Since mercy involves providing unearned help or relief, it was [viewed as] contrary to justice."⁶⁹

They could not understand why anyone would care for the poor, but that was a central belief and practice of Christianity.

Later the Gospel helped to transform Europe from barbarism to leadership in civil societies. Throughout the centuries, the Church has always been at the forefront in doing good works and showing love for mankind.

As powerful and pervasive as were the ideas of the New Way, however, and as radical as it was for the Church to respond to the needs of the whole person, it was in fact not uncommon for the Church to fall short in doing good. Even as the Church grew and the New Way spread, the *not yet* reality of the kingdom often compromised the willingness and effectiveness of the Church in holistic ministry. In fact, some questioned whether the Church should be involved in doing good works at all. Indeed, the role of the Church in doing social action has been questioned in recent years, and evangelicals have often been especially negligent in following through on this biblical responsibility. One reason for this is an understanding among some that the Kingdom of God was not for the present but for the future (i.e., after Christ's return).

The struggle for relief and development ministries in general, and for holistic child development in particular, is in understanding the relationship between social action and evangelistic ministries.

EVANGELISM OR SOCIAL ACTION: THE GREAT DEBATE

We understand that the Church *should* make a profound difference in the lives of all people, including the poor. The work of Christians among the poor is in fact extensive. The Church is the largest movement working on behalf of children at risk today in terms of children reached, ministries established and workers on the ground. Much of this work is little known. The scale of the Church's work in the field of children at risk is often a surprise to people, even to those within the Church.

Viewed in another way, however, we can also see that the Church often has not had the impact that it should. The poor are still with us. Indeed, often the Church is ignorant of, or chooses to ignore, its responsibility — and unique ability — to care meaningfully for hurting children and families.

The historical performance of the Church in carrying out its role in the redemption of *all* of God's creation has not always been exemplary. The reality is that the Church has not done nearly all it could have and should have done on behalf of the impoverished.

The Evangelical segment of the Church has, at times, particularly failed in its responsibility to care for the impoverished. Indeed, an important debate arose between the various Christian sects — Liberal or *Mainline*, Evangelical Charismatic — regarding the legitimate functions of the Church. In some ways, this was a debate between the churches affiliated with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the "evangelical" churches — those more affiliated with the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF, now World Evangelical Alliance, WEA). At a WCC conference in Uppsala, Sweden in 1966, "the emphasis shifted from God speaking to the world through the Church to God speaking to the Church through what he was doing in the world."⁷⁰

Betray the Two Billion? This position was consolidated in Bangkok WCC meetings in 1973 where it was argued that "salvation today was to be determined by what we perceive God to be doing in the world today, whether within the Church or not. . . . [E]vangelism received very little attention and no mention was made of the unreached."⁷¹ Among the various programs set up to implement this new understanding of mission was the "Programme to Combat Racism," which

included financial grants to guerilla groups in Zimbabwe.

“Most evangelicals reacted strongly against these changes in the understanding of mission. Even before the Uppsala Assembly, Donald McGavran had written an article asking ‘Will Uppsala betray the two billion?’”⁷²

It was partly in reaction to this direction by the WCC churches that many evangelicals moved to a greater emphasis on evangelism. Many evangelicals were dismayed at what they understood to be a total betrayal of evangelism and mission to the unreached. So many, while understanding biblically the responsibilities implied in “The Great Commandment,” abandoned caring ministries altogether.

The debate, however, goes back much further. “In the 1850s, a theological movement called Higher Criticism in Europe coined the term “Social Gospel.” Robert Moffitt explains:

There were two basic tenets of the social gospel. One . . . that the Kingdom of God will come to earth as the church engages in good works. . . . Another tenet was a belief . . . that all people will be saved, regardless of their personal response to Christ. In summary, the social gospel said that the Kingdom of God would come to earth as a result of good works, without the necessity of a personal conversion to Christ. Believing this, the liberal church began to focus on the horizontal — not the vertical — aspect of the Gospel.⁷³

■ **The Social Gospel**

It is easy to see why evangelical Christians would distance themselves from this kind of a *Social Gospel*. In fact, in reaction to this emphasis, many evangelicals began to reject *good works* as a legitimate function of the Church. Conservatives began to focus primarily on evangelism and spiritual conversion, rather than the whole of God’s concern.

A second factor that caused many evangelicals to turn away from holistic ministries was the argument that the world would inevitably get worse and worse until Jesus returns, regardless of what anyone did about it. One evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, put it this way: “The world is like a sinking ship, and God has put me in a lifeboat and given me a life preserver and said, ‘Moody, go out and save all you can. Don’t worry about the ship. It’s sinking anyway.’”⁷⁴

■ **The Poor Are Still With Us**

It is clear that sometimes the Church has not valued children. Sometimes it has had no idea about their physical or even their spiritual needs. More ominously, all too often the Church has been unaware of, or even denied, that holistic care for the needs of children falls within its sphere of responsibility. This “great omission” is to some extent rooted in historical misunderstandings and theological differences about the fundamental role of the Church. In this lesson we’ll explore these understandings and differences in this lesson, and reflect on the consequent impact on the welfare of children.

Whatever the reason, or reasons, historically, the Church has not done nearly all it could or should do to show Christ’s love through acts of kindness. In fact, one person has said “Evangelicals have retreated from the Kingdom of God to soul saving.”⁷⁵ This is despite the fact that the conditions of poverty and injustice have worsened. “Despite all the theorizing and the actions that have flowed from it, we have to face up to the fact that the problem of poverty is as great as it ever was. . . . The rich have gotten richer and the poor have gotten poorer. . . . The poor are still with us in greater numbers than ever.”⁷⁶

■ *The Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Action*

As is obvious from earlier sections of this book, I believe that both evangelism and social action are essential aspects of the role of the Church. Indeed, doing both is another way of doing the holistic development that this book is all about. However, since this debate has not gone away, it may be useful to explore the various possibilities and positions that have been taken concerning the relationship between evangelism and social action.

Tokumboh Adeyemo, former General Secretary of the Africa Association of Evangelicals, has listed eight possible options as to the relationship between social action and evangelism.⁷⁷ These options include:

1. **Social action is a distraction from evangelism.** Evangelism is the exclusive mission of the church; social action ministries might be necessary for Christians to engage in but they do so only to meet the “felt needs” of the people whom they are serving.
2. **Social action is a betrayal of evangelism.** This position carries social action as a distraction to an extreme. It demands that Christians protect themselves from the betrayal of social action ministries and focus their efforts exclusively on saving souls.
3. **Social action is a means to evangelism.** Christians engage in social actions ministries to create opportunities for evangelism. Social action ministries, though, do not have a place in Christian missions.
4. **Social action is a manifestation of evangelism.** Christians engage in social action ministries as a demonstration of God’s love. Social action is a tangible expression of the Gospel.
5. **Social action is a consequence of evangelism.** Christians engage in social action ministries because social action ministries empower Christians to live abundant lives.
6. **Social action is an unequal partner in evangelism.** Social action and evangelistic ministries are distinct expressions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and are in partnership with each other.
7. **Social action and evangelism are equal partners of Christian ministries.** Social action and evangelistic ministries complement each other like two wings of a bird; one wing is not more important than the other — they need each other to fully function.
8. **Social action is part of evangelism.** This position argues that social action ministries have a central place in Christian mission because the Gospel of Jesus is concerned with redeeming every aspect of human life.

■ *The Great Commandment and the Great Commission Are Both Valid*

My position is that God’s intention is to use the Church to transform society in holistic ways. But is evangelism important? Of course. Is social action important? Yes, it is also very important. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission are both valid. The Lausanne Covenant (1974) said “the two are like ‘two blades of a pair of scissors, or the two wings of a bird.’ This partnership is clearly seen in the public ministry of Jesus, who not only preached the Gospel but fed the hungry and healed the sick.”⁷⁸

The Manila Manifesto, drafted during the second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization declared that God's intention was for the "Whole Church to take the Whole gospel, to the Whole World." This declaration was a specific response to the fact that different parts of the Church had tended to emphasize different parts of the gospel. As we have seen, the reality was that *parts* of the Church took *parts* of the gospel to *parts* of the world.

Evangelicals might hope that their main-line counterparts would have a greater concern for evangelism. Evangelicals on the other hand must also take more seriously the demands of the Great commandment, lest we preach only half the gospel and dishonor God's compassion for those who suffer physically. In fact however, each has played its role. Meg Crossman reminded us that "The liberal Church show[ed] us the need. The evangelical Church show[ed] us the plan, and the charismatic/Pentecostal church remind[ed] us that God is in it!"⁷⁹

It is my contention that development ministries are theological responses:

- To the Truth of a good creation.
- Of a God wanting to redeem not just individuals but whole cultures and societies.
- Of a God who wants to reconcile a fallen world to Himself.
- To the towering passages of Scripture (such as Isaiah 65, Colossians 1:15-20 and Luke 4:16-18) about God's love and His redemptive purposes for humankind.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. . . . I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. . . . They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear (Isaiah 65:17-25).

TWO STRUCTURES, ONE FUNCTION

We have established, I believe, that the Church *ought* to care for impoverished children. But a few words are in order about *how* the Church is to care for children.

It is, of course, quite often true that the local Church has the vision to carry out effective, long-term, innovative holistic child development, but may lack the personnel, skills, facilities or other key resources. Surely it is not only the larger, well-established, talent-laden churches which should carry out such development. More clarity is needed about the common *structures* of the Church.

In this we can learn from the way the Church has traditionally done Mission. Throughout church history, there have always been two kinds of church structures. One is the *gathered* Church — the local congregations, nurturing and caring for people of all ages and gender. But from the beginning of the Christian era, the gathered Church has frequently spun off more specialized "appendages" which have carried out new outreach or the more specialized ministries of the Church.

The well-known missiologist, Dr. Ralph Winter calls these two structures *modalities* and *sodalities*.⁸⁰ A modality is the congregational fellowship with a settled membership. A sodality is an arm or extension of the Church which is established to carry out more specialized outreaches or caring ministries. The modality — the church on the corner — has a well-defined role: welcoming and nurturing the whole of the Body of Christ. It provides a settled membership, authority,

overall unity, continuity, and insures stability in the Body. The sodalities enable the Church to carry out specialized ministries not possible or feasible for the gathered Church.

These two structures exist at both the macro (global Church) and micro (local Church) levels. At the macro level for example, the Catholic Church has been well known for spinning off sodalities — the Jesuits and Franciscans — for specialized mission activities. Protestants too have created mission societies, youth movements, specialized ministries like Campus Crusade, and other well-known para-church organizations like Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) and Compassion International.

The same thing takes place at the micro level. Local churches — the modalities — may have the vision and desire for specialized ministries such as child development programs, church-based schools, hostels, or homes for orphans or handicapped children, but lack the ability or expertise to carry them out. Churches often then establish a committee, or other special department or structure — a sodality — to actually run the programs. This sodality is given the mandate to acquire the necessary staff, skills, facilities and specialized expertise to carry out the ministry.

An example of a church-based sodality is the church-run residential schools or hostels for Hill Tribe children who have to live away from their homes because there simply are no schools in their home villages. Many micro sodalities like this provide a wholesome living environment, house parenting, and *lots* of holistic development possibilities for children who must live away from home in order to have any chance for an education. The local Church alone, even if it existed in their home villages, could not provide this opportunity for these children.

■ ***Holistic Child Development Reaps Strategic Results***

Here are some of the many benefits to the Church which takes ministry to children seriously.

Church Growth. There is much evidence that children's ministries are very effective ways to grow the church. Compassion has numerous examples of whole churches being revitalized and experiencing significant church growth, by first paying attention to the needs of children. One church I know of in Chennai, India had 70 members when Compassion began a sponsorship program with them. That church now has a membership of over 1,700. The pastor attributes that growth to first giving attention to the needs of the children in his community.

Future Leadership. Ministry to children, of course, is essential to growing the leadership for the next generation. In Compassion's programs there are now scores, perhaps hundreds, of formerly assisted children who are now staff in our offices and projects and many hundreds more who have taken leadership roles in churches, missions, and other ministries.

National Development. Ministry to children and youth is crucial for national development. UNICEF says that child health and education are the most significant interventions that can be made to develop a nation.⁸¹ Such interventions are vastly more important than infrastructure or the many other investments that governments often make to develop their economies and increase national welfare and productivity.

Children as Resources for Health Education and Family Development. Children are important resources to improve the well-being of parents and other adults. In many societies a great deal of primary learning takes place first in the children who help to transmit information and life-style improvements to adults in the community. National development strategies should look on children not only as recipients of health and education efforts, but also as very effective community health and education resources. The Child-to-Child initiatives around the world rec-

ognize the role that children play in dissemination of information. Children often have major responsibilities for the care of their younger siblings:

We know someone who is a teacher and a health worker. She looks after two children. One is four and one is two. She keeps them safe. . . . She helps them when they are sick. . . . She helps them to grow up healthy. . . . Who is this teacher who does so much for her pupils and does it so well? She is their elder sister — and she is eleven years old.⁸²

Outreach to the Nations and Peoples. As we will see in greater detail later, ministries to children and youth are also very significant in ministering to the nations and peoples.



SUMMARY:

- Biblical implications of the goodness of creation on children's ministry:
 - Creation is good (and worth redeeming): We must continue to invest in it to make it a better world for children.
 - Creation has order: we can be optimistic about social change which in turn can give hope for a better future for children.
 - Humankind (including children) has a special place in creation.
 - Children are good, though they have a fallen nature. We need to empower children to fulfill their divinely ordered role of creating cultures.
 - God's love for the *cosmos* (whole of creation — both social structures and individuals) in John 3:16-17 provide the biblical basis for believers to participate in holistic development.
 - God has entrusted to His Church the mystery of reconciling all of creation to Himself.
 - The Church has often not fulfilled its mandate for holistic ministry, because of a debate about the role of the Church in evangelism and social action.
 - Two traditional structures within the Church — *modalities* and *sodalities* — have specialized functions and enable the church to be holistic in all its ministries.
 - Relief, development and child development ministries are responses to God's call to empower others to realize their full potential in Christ.
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**READINGS:**

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- Timothy Chester, “The Debate Begins” in *Awakening to a World of Need*, ed. Timothy Chester, (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1993), chapter 2.
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- “Evangelism and Social Action” in *Lausanne Occasional Papers* (No. 21), Grand Rapids Report. A joint publication of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship. 1982.
- Winter, Ralph, *Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission* (USCWM Series No. 01 –995, 1995).

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Give some examples of how your ministry participates in the redemption of all creation.
- In your own words, what implications do the Truths about the goodness of creation have for children’s ministries?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement: “Evangelicals have retreated from the Kingdom of God to soul saving?” Why or why not?
- Review Adeyemo’s eight different possibilities for the relationship between Evangelism and Social Action.
 - Identify a position that you believe is most suitable to your theological convictions.
 - What worldview assumptions do you think influence your position?
 - List at least five scriptural verses which influence your position.
 - Do any of these possible positions influence you to understand your ministry differently? If so, how?
- Give examples of *modalities* and *sodalities* with which you are familiar.

- ⁵⁷ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 22.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.
- ⁶⁰ Arthur F. Holmes, "Toward a Christian View of Things" in *The Making of a Christian Mind*, ed. Arthur Holmes (Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 20.
- ⁶¹ Bob Moffitt, *If Jesus Were Mayor* (Phoenix, Az.: Harvest India, 2004), 55.
- ⁶² Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1985), 58.
- ⁶³ I am indebted to Bob Moffitt and his fine book *If Jesus Were Mayor* (Phoenix, Az.: Harvest India, 2004) for some of these thoughts on the "mystery" of the role of the Church.
- ⁶⁴ Moffitt, *If Jesus Were Mayor*, 61.
- ⁶⁵ My friend, Dr. Keith White, has a simplified definition of the Kingdom of God. He suggests that substituting the phrase "God's way of doing things," when we see "kingdom of God" in Scripture helps to make the meaning clear and simple.
- ⁶⁶ I am indebted to Rodney Stark and his fine book *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco, Ca.: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997) for some of the ideas that follow. Dr. Bob Moffitt, in his Harvest notes, first drew my attention to these.
- ⁶⁷ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 212.
- ⁶⁸ Moffitt, 38.
- ⁶⁹ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 212.
- ⁷⁰ Timothy Chester, *Awakening to a World of Need* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 62.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 63.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ Robert Moffitt, "The Role of the Church in Society," 41.
- ⁷⁴ Moffitt, *If Jesus Were Mayor*, 106.
- ⁷⁵ Bong Rin Ro, "The Perspectives of Church History from New Testament Times to 1960" in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Paternoster, 1985).
- ⁷⁶ Hughes, *The God of the Poor*, 13-14.
- ⁷⁷ Tokumboh Adeyemo, "A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Perspectives" in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, ed. Bruce Nicholls (Paternoster, 1985), 48-57.
- ⁷⁸ Lausanne Covenant, (International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland, July 1974), 23.
- ⁷⁹ Meg Crossman, quoted in Moffitt, *If Jesus Were Mayor*, 114.
- ⁸⁰ Ralph Winter, *Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission* (USCWM Series No. 01-995, 1995).
- ⁸¹ See, for example, "The Child in South Asia" and "Issues in Development as if Children Mattered," UNICEF (New Delhi, 1988). Also see "World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children" in *World Summit for Children*, UNICEF, 1990.
- ⁸² Audrey Aaron, Hugh Hawes and Juliet Gayton, *Child to Child* (London, UK: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), 6.

LESSON SIX:

Why Caring for Children Is the Particular Responsibility of the Church



OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Show from Scriptures why care for children is the particular responsibility of the Church.



KEY VERSE:

I Kings 17:23-24

“Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, ‘Look, your son is alive!’ Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.’”

We have seen from a theological standpoint that the Church has a unique responsibility to care for the impoverished. The Church is God’s instrument in redeeming all of His creation. And we, His people, are the hands and arms of Christ.

We appreciate all that the secular world — governments, the UN, secular NGOs, etc, do in caring for the impoverished. Christians can learn a great deal from their methods and approaches. However, there is ample support from the Bible that that the Church has a particular responsibility to help families to care for children. We will explore this Truth in the form of four Bible studies. In this lesson we will look at several biblical passages which demonstrate that it is only Christians — the Church — which can, in fact, do holistic child development.

We begin each Bible study with the question, **“Why is care for children the particular responsibility of the Church?”** Each study will be a response or answer to that question.



**KEY VERSE:****Luke 2:52**

*“Jesus grew in wisdom and stature
and in favor with God and men.”*

STUDY ONE:

“Why is care for children the *particular* responsibility of the church?”

**BECAUSE ONLY THE CHURCH CAN RESPOND
TO THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE PERSON**

We return first to this now familiar verse from Luke 2:52. As we have seen, this short verse provides a marvelous model for any child’s development. Compassion International has long used this verse as the foundation for its fourfold model: All the programs we support are to have wisdom (educational), stature (i.e., anything having to do with physical growth), favor with God (spiritual) and favor with man (social development). Our expectation and prayer is that all the children with whom we work will also grow in these four areas.

These four areas provide remarkable programmatic scope for ministry:

- **Growing in wisdom** suggests virtually anything related to providing learning opportunities for the child, whether formal, non-formal or informal. However, it is much more than just education. It is also related to discernment, good judgment and wise decision-making based on biblical principles. Knowledge alone won’t help children be able to discern what is true, right and lasting.

Bill Gothard⁸³ says that wisdom is: “Seeing life from God’s point of view.” I like that. One thing is for sure — children in most of the educational systems around the world won’t learn to see life from God’s point of view. Rather, they will see it from the point of view of the secular world, from the media and from their peers. Maybe this is why Peter tells us to add goodness to our faith, and *then* knowledge (2 Peter 1:5). Without goodness first, we don’t really know what to do with knowledge!

I believe holistic child development programs need to provide much more significant and profound opportunities for children to grow in wisdom.

- **Growing in stature** can mean anything directly related to improving a child’s health, proper nourishment, disease prevention and ability to care for his or her own health, and the need for clean air and water, clothing, shelter, food, sanitation, etc.
- **Spiritual growth** can involve virtually anything related to spiritual nurture and growth, prayer, worship, and a child’s need for God and salvation, as well as concepts of beauty, goodness, etc.
- **Growing in favor with man** has to do with our relationships with other human beings, including our needs for friendship, sharing, and laughter, and the learning opportunities which increase a child’s sense of security, self worth, understanding of giftedness and creativity.

It is interesting to reflect on *how* Jesus grew in these four areas. Robert Moffitt points out that Jesus’ environment was not affluent, His family did not have running water and electricity and He probably didn’t have the best secular education. Jesus was also growing up in a hostile political climate. Does this sound like some of the environments children grow up in today?⁸⁴

**KEY VERSE:****Genesis 21:17**

“God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.’”

STUDY TWO:**“Why is care for children the particular responsibility of the church?”****BECAUSE GOD HEARS
THE CHILDREN CRYING⁸⁵**

We all know that Abraham is one of the biblical heroes of faith. See Hebrews 11 for details. However Abraham was a frail human being just like we are and did not always use faith or good judgment. The story of the birth of Ishmael to his wife’s maid Hagar is an example of a poor decision in his life. Yet God

redeemed even this poor decision and worked out His plan despite Abraham’s lack of faith. Still, Hagar and her son Ishmael had to go through some very difficult circumstances. This interesting passage from Genesis 21 is instructive about how God hears the children crying and gives us instructions about caring for needy children.

We pick up the story at Genesis 21:17. Hagar and Ishmael are in the wilderness after Abraham has sent them away. Before long, whatever food and water they carried is finished, and they have no more resources. They are about to die. Understandably Hagar cannot bear to see her child die, so she puts him in the shade of a bush and goes off some distance, knowing that she and the child are doomed. But God had other plans!

“God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying. . . . Lift the boy up and take him by the hand. . . .’ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. . . . God was with the boy as he grew up” (Genesis 21:17-20).

What can we learn from this story about God’s care for children?

■ **God Hears the Children Crying!**

Even today we can be sure that God hears the children crying, and He wants to respond to those cries. But God not only hears; He speaks.

■ **God Speaks from Heaven**

- God sends His messengers (the angel — verse 17).
- Who does God send today? (The Church has the responsibility to love and care for children today.)

■ **God Asks About the Problem: “What is the matter, Hagar?”**

Just as the angel asked Hagar why her son was crying, I believe God is asking the Church today, “Why are the children crying?” Too often the Church lets UNICEF or the NGOs, or governments ask why the children are crying. Those in most churches have little idea about the circumstances in which the poor children live and know little about the exploitation which traps children and families in poverty. The church itself needs to find out why the children are crying.

1. They cry because they hurt. They suffer from:

- Hunger
- Illness
- Discomfort — lack of appropriate clothing or shelter
- Neglect
- Abuse; exploitation
- Fear
- Lack of education
- Anger
- Lack of security

2. They cry for human dignity:

- God created them with dignity (Genesis 1: 26, 27).
- He restored dignity through redemption (John 3:16).
- Jesus' own development is a model for all children (Luke 2:52). Jesus grew in:
 - Wisdom
 - Stature
 - Favor with God
 - Favor with man

3. They cry for respect and love. God showed His respect and love for children by:

- Using them to do His work (Samuel, the girl with Naaman, the boy with the fish, many others)
- Taking time to bless them
- Taking time to heal them and even raise them from the dead
- Valuing them (Matthew 18:6)
- Accepting their worship (Matthew 21:16)
- Protecting them (Luke 17:2; Matthew 18:10)

■ God Encourages Those Who Care for Children

The angel sent by God not only asked about the problem but offered comfort to Hagar. One thing the Church should understand is that caring for children — especially children in difficult circumstances — is stressful work. Caring for children in *normal* environments is hard enough! Yet too often church leaders fail to understand the stresses and challenges of caring for, teaching, and nurturing children. Churches often forget to encourage and support busy mothers, Sunday school workers, daycare workers or the social workers in church-based child development programs. Churches need to care for the caregivers!

- Caregivers also need encouragement.
- What kind of encouragement or affirmation do the caregivers need in your church?

■ God Gives Instructions on Caring for the Children

The angel gave instructions to Hagar as to what to do for the boy. She had no further ideas or inspiration. The angel told her what to do: “Lift up the boy. Take him by the hand.” Interestingly, these two commands seem to correspond to the ministries which today we call *relief* and *development*.”

- “Lift up the boy.” Physical, emotional and moral support. This corresponds to the relief
-

activity of many Christian NGOs today — do whatever is necessary so that the boy doesn't die.

- “Take him by the hand.” Walk with them, encourage, support, disciple, be a friend. This corresponds with the long-term development work of many Christian NGOs, including Compassion — providing the longer-term training, nurture, and care necessary to grow and thrive.

■ ***God Makes Promises about Children***

God also made promises to Hagar about her son. “I will make you into a great nation” (Genesis 21:18). There in the wilderness, Hagar certainly was in no position to have lofty thoughts about the future of her son. Her only expectation was that she and the boy were going to die of thirst in the desert. But notice:

- The promise was for much more than just the immediate need — God sees potential.
- It was given when all hope was gone.
- It was fulfilled in God's time.
- All children are a promise!

One of the challenges of the Church today is to see all children as a promise, and to “make promises” about its children. Are churches today willing to make promises to its children — and then do what's necessary to see that those promises become a reality?

Did God keep His promise to Ishmael? Yes! Ishmael's progeny became a great nation that still exists and prospers today. Dr. Beeftu suggests that the presence of oil under all the “Ishmaelite” lands of the Middle East may be the on-going fulfillment of the promise God made to Hagar concerning Ishmael.

■ ***God Opens Our Eyes to Resources (Genesis 21:19)***

Hagar was sure that she and her son would die of thirst in the desert. But God had other ideas! He opened her eyes to a well nearby! He didn't send a water truck or a relief agency from another country but rather met her need by providing natural resources nearby.

- God showed Hagar possibilities she didn't know existed.
- One of the challenges of the poor is in seeing what is available.
- Not seeing resources leads to discouragement, hopelessness, despair, and frustration.
- Opening the eyes of adults is one way God responds to the cries of children.

This is one of the key lessons of this passage. Too often the Church feels that it simply does not have the resources to respond to the needs of the children in the midst. But I believe that God will do for the willing, resourceful church exactly what He did for Hagar. He will open the church's eyes to resources — to precisely the resources that are needed — and that they didn't know existed. Often those resources are right under our noses!

■ ***God Becomes a Friend (Genesis 21:20)***

Not only did God meet the immediate need of Hagar and Ishmael but God was with Ishmael for the rest of his life. The presence of God brought life and hope in the desert.

- God is the friend and protector of the poor.
 - How can we make sure that children know that God is their friend?
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■ **God Hears the Children Crying!**

- He is challenging the church to respond.
- He is asking about the problem.
- He wants to meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.
- He will make resources available.
- He is making promises about *all* children (Isaiah 54:2-3).
- He is the friend of *all* children.



KEY VERSE:

1 Kings 17:24

“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.’”

STUDY THREE:

“Why is care for children the *particular* responsibility of the church?”

**BECAUSE CARING FOR CHILDREN
DISPELS DISBELIEF**

■ **A Miracle Every Day**

Now we look at what the Bible says about children in the story about the widow of Zarephath found in 1 Kings chapter 17. The first thing we hear about the ministry of Elijah is when the ravens are feeding him at a place called Kerith Ravine. We see that the water there dries up, and he is sent to Zarephath far to the north. There, he asks a widow for food and drink but she says she is at that moment using the last of her flour and oil. In fact, she has no idea how she will survive when that is used up.

Elijah asks her to exercise faith and first make a meal for him. She does so (God had instructed her to supply him with food) and her faith provokes a miracle, for just as Elijah promises her, the food and oil in her home do not run out. She invites Elijah to stay in an upper room. He does, and every day for perhaps the next two years (see 17:1 and 18:1) while he is there, she experiences the miracle of the flour and oil.

At some point in his stay something goes terribly wrong with the son of the widow. His condition gradually worsens until finally he stops breathing. At first the woman lashes out at Elijah, expressing both her guilt and her grief: “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son” (v. 18)?

Elijah too is grief stricken, and cannot imagine why God has allowed the woman’s son to die while he is there. “Then he cried out to the LORD, ‘O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die’” (v. 20)?

But then Elijah takes action: “He stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, ‘O LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!’ The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, ‘Look, your son is alive’” (verse 21-23)!

We may make a number of observations about the story so far:

- Notice that God often selects the poor to be His servants. (Why didn’t God send Elijah to live with a wealthy person?)
- God asks everyone to exercise their faith.
- Elijah stays in “her upper room.” The “upper room” in Scripture always signifies a place

of prayer and Elijah was a man of prayer.

- When her son dies, she feels guilty and lashes out. Perhaps she had not become a “believer” even with the prophet staying in her house and seeing a miracle every day.
- Elijah says, “Give me your son.” This is what the Church should be saying to people today — “Give me your son. Give me your daughter.” It is certainly what the world is saying. It is what the drug dealers on the corners are saying. It is what MTV is saying. The Church should be saying to parents, “Let us help you with your child.”
- Elijah takes the boy to the upper room — where he was staying.
- Elijah stretches himself out over the boy. Perhaps the most effective way of empathizing with the impoverished is through what is called “identification” — that is, taking on the problems or burdens of those with whom we empathize. This is what Elijah did. Elijah is not just an unconcerned boarder. He takes action and makes the woman’s problem his problem.
- Elijah has faith. Elijah is also persistently stretching himself out on the boy three times.
- God responds to his faith and persistence and restores the boy’s life.

However, it is the last verse to which our attention is drawn most powerfully:

*“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘**Now I know** that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth’” (verse 24).*

Remember that the woman has seen a miracle take place in her home every day for perhaps nearly three years! But it is only when the prophet addresses a need closest to her heart — the life of her son — that she sees and understands that Elijah is truly a man of God and that he speaks the truth. Many of us involved in ministries of caring for children have experienced much the same thing. Christians often have a variety of ministries to try to reach a community. But often it is only when we care for what is most precious to people that they will respond to God’s truth. It is often only when we address the need closest to their hearts — their children — that they begin to realize that Christians need not be feared or chased away.

In caring for their children, many adults of all faiths have made the same awe-inspiring discovery. NOW I KNOW that you are speaking the Truth and that you really are a person of God.



KEY VERSE:

Malachi 4:6

“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

**STUDY FOUR:
“Why is care for children the particular responsibility of the church?”**

**BECAUSE ONLY THE CHURCH
CAN REMOVE THE CURSE**

It is interesting that the very last *word* in the Old Testament — in Malachi 4:6 — is the word “curse.”

As we walk among the poor around the world, we see that many of these places have been “stricken with a curse.” We also see that the hearts of the children are not turned toward the fathers, or the hearts of the fathers are not turned toward the children. And a curse is not removed by providing

food, medicines, blankets, clothing, school supplies or learning opportunities.

A curse is a spiritual matter. Only the Church and Christian believers can turn a curse into a blessing. Only the Church and Christian believers can address the problem of sin — the true root cause of poverty.

So it is only the Church and Christian believers who can do true Christian, Holistic Child Development.



SUMMARY:

- Four reasons why care for children is the particular responsibility of the Church:
 1. Only the Church can respond to the needs of the whole person.
 2. God hears the children crying.
 3. Caring for children dispels disbelief.
 4. Only the Church can remove the curse.
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READINGS:

- Roy Zuck, “The Children the Lord Has Given Me” in *Precious in His Sight* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Books, 1996), chapter four, pp. 45-70.
- Roy Zuck, “Bringing Up Children” in *Precious in His Sight* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Books, 1996), chapter seven, pp.105-126.
- Bob Moffitt, “God’s Big Agenda” *If Jesus Were Mayor* (India: Harvest, 2004), chapter four, pp. 51-74.
- Bob Moffitt, “The Church and Today’s World,” *If Jesus Were Mayor* (India: Harvest, 2004), chapter six, pp. 99-128.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Jesus’ growth “in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and man” provides a model for the growth of all children. Give at least three ways your church can help children grow in each of these three areas.
- Read the story of the Shunemite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-37. Do an exegesis of that passage similar to the ones in this lesson. What does it tell you about the role of the church (and of fathers) in caring for children?
- Reflect on Malachi 4:6. What are the “curses” that have afflicted children in your country today? What part can you and your church play to remove them?

⁸³ Bill Gothard, *Advanced Seminar Textbook*, (Oakbrook, Il.: Institute in Basic Life Principles, 1986.), 358.

⁸⁴ Moffitt, Harvest notes.

⁸⁵ The thoughts in this portion are drawn from the booklet by Dr. Alemu Beefu called *God Heard the Boy Crying* (Colorado Springs, Co.: Compassion International, 2001).

SECTION THREE:

The Child in the Church



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing the lessons in this section, the student will be able to:

- Defend a position on the 4/14 Window and other issues related to faith development of children.
- Discuss and critique some *stages* of faith development in children and essentials of spiritual training.
- Rate one's church on child-friendliness and advocate for a wide range of child-friendly improvements in all levels of the national Church.
- Develop and apply appropriate child protection measures in one's own church or other care setting.

INTRODUCTION

In this section we leave the theology and look at practical matters relating to the child *in* the Church — the spiritual development of the child in the church, the ministry of the church to the child, and protecting the child in church environments. First, in lesson seven we will look at the fundamental matter of child faith development in one's own cultural/religious context. We will ask about the psychological maturity of children to make faith decisions, the long-standing question of the *age of accountability*, and if there is a window of receptivity between the ages of four and 14.

In lesson eight, we then turn to improving the Church's ministry to children. What should a child expect from the Church? What are the characteristics of "child-friendly" churches? How can we improve the programs, compound, and the staff of the church to make them more child-friendly? We will provide a sample Covenant which the Church at all levels in any country may use to identify commitments to make on behalf of children.

Finally, though it is tragic, we must discuss the issue of child protection and the Church. Specifically, in lesson nine, we will look at protecting children from ourselves — that is, from our own employees or volunteers who may participate with us in our programs for children in order to gain access to children for exploitation. We will then include the essential components of a child protection protocol for our churches and child development projects.

LESSON SEVEN:

Faith Development in Children



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Defend a position on the 4/14 Window and other issues related to faith development of children.
- Describe how faith development in children is similar to how a tree grows.
- Discuss some “stages” of faith development in children and essentials of spiritual training.



KEY VERSE:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”



Up to now in our discussions of holistic child development we have given attention primarily to the child’s physical development. Most development workers can describe the process of mental, social or emotional development that we expect as children grow. However, what about the conversion of children and their faith development? Holistic child development is not holistic unless it addresses spiritual development as well. This is one important matter in the discussion of Christian holistic child development to which only the Church can respond.

However, the points raised in this lesson are mainly regarding the faith development of children *in the Church* — that is, the children who are growing up in the church who are primarily children of Christian parents, and who are growing up in primarily Western, historically Christian contexts. The matters surrounding evangelism to and conversion of children in primarily non-Christian contexts — interfaith evangelism or missions — are very different. These will be discussed in lesson 11.

Even in primarily Christian contexts, there are many serious theological questions surrounding the child that have important consequences for our view of holistic child development. Roy Zuck, in his book *Precious in His Sight*,⁸⁶ asks the following questions:

- Are infants born with a sin nature?
- What is the age of accountability?
- What should young children be taught before conversion?
- Will infants who die go to heaven?
- Should infant baptism be practiced?
- Are children of Christian parents in a covenant relationship to God?
- Are childhood conversions genuine?
- Should children from Christian homes be confronted with the need for radical conversion, or should they be encouraged to grow up as Christians with no need for conversion?
- Do children of believing parents differ in some way from children of unbelievers?

Most of these questions are beyond the scope of this book. However, we must be thinking about them since they are fundamental for the holistic development of children, the discussion of the Child *in* the Church and faith development in children.

IS THERE AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

In a survey done some years ago by Southern Baptists, many adherents felt that “it is practically impossible for a child under 12 or 13 years of age to have reached the mental, emotional or spiritual maturity which is necessary for experiencing a genuine repentance for sin and submission to Christ as Savior. . . .”⁸⁷ And yet among the same people, “practically everyone said that decisions to become a Christian were made by their children before the age of 12.”⁸⁸ There seems to be a disconnect between what adults think is possible or common and what is actually happening!

Perhaps a prior question should be, “Do children growing up in the Church and in Christian

families need to be converted at all?”

Not all would argue that they do. The Bible does not teach infant damnation but at the same time children are sinners in need of a Savior. And such discussions often lead to the question, “What then is the age of accountability?”

The term *age of accountability* refers to the time when individuals become mature enough to be morally responsible for their acts and consciously responsive to God’s grace. The term is not found in the Bible but is inferred from various Scripture about the early spiritual consciousness of children and their accountability before God.⁸⁹ No one who

P*erhaps the closest thing we see in Scripture to a reference to an age of accountability may be in Deuteronomy 1:37-40: “And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad — they will enter the land.” This does not mean that these children were innocent; but their level of accountability was directly related to their moral awareness.*

argues for an age of accountability will suggest what that age is. Clearly, it has no definitive biblical answer. It is a mistake to set an arbitrary age for conversion. Likewise, it is also a mistake to ignore the capacity of given age levels. Ultimately, it is wiser to place more emphasis on *accountability* than on age.

In this we can no doubt learn from the approaches of the Jews in ancient Israel. As Roy Honeycutt explains, in Israel the father had the primary relationship with God and the family members were included in the covenant on the basis of the father's covenant relationship. "For many in Israel the family centered nature of religion meant that the child not only was born into the faith but that the primary nurture he received was from the family circle, not the institution. . . . Also, religion was largely home centered in its personal development and nurture."⁹⁰

Honeycutt continues:

*"The child would never face the possible frustration of knowing the nurture of a Christian home and the loving guidance of church leaders, only to find that once he reached an accepted chronological age he was treated as standing outside the covenant faith by home, church, and God. He would never feel he must now do something to recapture the quality of love and joy that he had earlier known of God, home, and church within the covenant community. In essence, the Old Testament view of covenant theology would take seriously the presupposition that a child who is once within the saving grace of God is never abandoned."*⁹¹

There was no need for *conversion* of children and youths in the Old Testament. By virtue of being part of a Jewish family, all children and youths were already part of the faith community. As Honeycutt clarifies:

*[T]he only decision an individual ever faced within Israel was whether or not he would remain within the covenant, not whether he would enter the covenant, or share in the worshipping community. He, and the community with him, were already within the covenant faith. God had promised this for all ages. One's only decision was whether he would remain within the faith community."*⁹²

William Hendricks further observes that:

*... much of our theological anxiety about very young children is a projection of our own concern for them. There is no biblical reason one should not trust the compassion and mercy of God to extend to children until they can make meaningful and depth level decisions for themselves. In fact the covenant of grace between God and mankind expressed in Christ gives us every reason to presume that the young are kept by God in his compassionate concern."*⁹³

FAITH DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

Regardless of our understanding of the age of accountability or the necessity of dramatic conversion experiences in children growing up in Christian families and in the church, we do need to address the matter of faith development in children. There is no argument that the parents and Church must be primarily involved with developing faith in children from an early age. Just as we know that the physical, social, emotional and other aspects of a child's development happen over time, so we must understand that faith develops over time as well. Age-specific, insightful materials and instruction are essential to promote healthy growth. There is no more important role for the church than the careful, consistent and systematic program of religious training for children

and young people.

All children have some faith from the earliest months of life. The infant in her mother's arms shows faith, not by believing or doing but simply by trusting. We noted in lesson one the intriguing notion from Dr. Vinay Samuel that children have an inherent *transcendence* — a sense or sensitivity to the Divine, to “mystery” and to the touch of God in their lives. We suggested (following Katherine Copsey) that that transcendence included or was characterized by:

- A special openness to nature, to feelings, and to others, and a simple yet profound sense of awe and wonder.
- A sense of the present — the ability to live in the “here and now”; a tendency to be direct and in touch with their feelings, and a natural openness and welcoming spirit.
- An uncomplicated view of life, finding it easy to trust and accept the things of God.

We also noted that this transcendence can easily be snuffed out by the harsh realities of a secularized society. Their sense of openness and mystery can be, and usually is, crushed at an early age, and along with it their spiritual awareness and sensitivity. In effect, says Katherine Copsey, “the image of God in the child has been scratched or spoiled.”⁹⁴

Copsey continues:

*We want to be able to use a child's spirituality as a springboard to faith, but the degree to which this spirituality has been damaged (the image scratched) will affect the child's ability to move to faith. It is very difficult for a child to understand what it is to trust Jesus, if she has lost the ability to trust. It is very difficult to marvel at the God of creation if there has been nothing in the environment to nurture that sense of awe and wonder.*⁹⁵

It is very important, then, for us to begin thinking about faith development in children at a very young age. Attention to faith development must go hand in hand with all other aspects of development beginning soon after birth. How can we insure that faith grows in children right along with their physical, social, and emotional growth?

As we have seen from biblical examples, God sometimes grants a remarkably developed faith to some children. More often, however, faith grows more or less commensurate with a child's physical and psychological growth. By linking faith development to the other aspects of human development, those of us who are involved in teaching and leading others in faith can better anticipate how to reach them more effectively.

Steve Wamberg⁹⁶ points out that when the Bible uses an illustration to describe faith, it often uses an illustration that describes or refers to the process of growth. For example:

- Psalm 1 describes the faithful man as being like a growing and fruitful tree.
- Psalm 92:12-15 describes righteous people as people who grow and flourish in faith even into old age.
- In Mark 4:26, Jesus described the faithful in a parable as those like the seed sown on good soil, producing a good crop.
- In 2 Thessalonians Paul told the Thessalonians that he was grateful to God because their faith was growing.
- Peter told the early Church that growing faith required a process much like that of a growing child: begin with milk, and then take on more mature nourishment (1 Peter 2:2).

HOW FAITH GROWS

John Westerhoff III of Duke University uses an illustration of a tree to describe *how* faith grows. He uses four principles from the growth of trees to apply to the development of faith. Steve Wamberg, in a Faith Development training module prepared for Compassion International, provided this summary from Westerhoff.⁹⁷

- “First, a tree with one ring is as much a tree as a tree with four rings. A tree in its first year is a complete and whole tree, and a tree with three rings is not a better tree but only an expanded tree.” A child’s (or a new Christian’s) faith is developmentally whole according to the child’s total development. It is no less valuable a resource to God than the faith of a mature person. The goal of the “faith teacher” is to help each person fulfill his or her faith potential at every point.
- “Second, a tree grows if the proper environment is provided, and if such an environment is lacking, the tree becomes arrested in its expansion until the proper environment exists. ... Similarly, we expand from one style [stage] of faith to another only if the proper environment, experiences, and interactions are present ...” Westerhoff emphasizes the need for healthy relationships with other Christians and a healthy environment as crucial components of faith development.
- “Third, a tree acquires one ring at a time in a slow and gradual manner. We do not see that expansion, although we do see the results, and surely we are aware that you cannot skip rings. ... The same is true of faith.” Faith development cannot be rushed. It is not something you can see in a person at a glance. But over time, you can see how the process has brought growth to someone.
- “Fourth, as a tree grows, it does not eliminate rings but adds each ring to the ones before, always maintaining the previous rings as it expands. It is the same with faith. ... We do not outgrow a style [stage] of faith and its needs but expand it by adding new elements and new needs. Indeed, if the needs of an earlier style of faith cease to be met, persons have a tendency to return to that earlier style of faith.”

Continuing with John Westerhoff’s analysis of faith development in children,⁹⁸ he says that early in life, children tend to “catch” faith — they apprehend rather than comprehend. They sense a positive environment; they hear positive things about Jesus when they are welcomed and nurtured in places adults call “church.” The hugs and affirmation they get from adults are, at least in part, credited to the God the adults worship.

The absence of those hugs and affirmation will mean that children will have a difficult time developing faith at all. It should not, therefore, come as a surprise that Westerhoff encourages churches (and parents) to give even the youngest children a positive, proactive, and stimulating environment. If a church’s goal is to develop faith, children cannot be shelved in sterile and passive nursery environments. They have to be engaged in development through interaction.

Faith development is a process. The first faith experience of very young children is more experienced than understood. It is nurtured through affirmation, a caring environment, and the example and modeling of trust on the part of adults. Children learn that God loves them and that they are valued.

A further stage of faith development takes place when children and young people begin

to identify with the faith of their parents or peers. Of crucial importance at this stage is that the child senses that he/she is wanted, needed, accepted, and important in the Church and faith community.⁹⁹

As children grow older, faith is usually characterized by questioning, doubt, searching and experimentation. Westerhoff says that “[s]earching faith requires that we explore alternatives to our earlier understandings and ways, for people need to test their own tradition by learning about others. It is only then that they are able to reach convictions that are truly their own.”¹⁰⁰

Young people at this “searching” stage need to be allowed to explore while at the same time “encouraged to remain in the faith community during their intellectual struggle, experimentation, and first endeavors at commitment.”¹⁰¹

A final stage of faith development according to Westerhoff is “owned faith”:

*Due to the serious struggle with doubt that precedes it, owned faith often appears as a great illumination or enlightenment, but in any case it can be witnessed in our actions and new needs. Now people most want to put their faith into personal and social action, and they are willing and able to stand up for what they believe, even against the community of their nurture.*¹⁰²

Steve Wamberg notes that the apostle Paul was a prime example of “owned faith.” Once he came to faith in Christ, he was eager to put his faith into action. He took the opportunity time and again to stand up for his belief in Christ, even against the Jewish faith community that had nurtured him.¹⁰³

Parents and teachers can encourage and enhance “owned faith” by¹⁰⁴:

- Connecting Scripture with everyday life
- Asking open-ended questions that demand mature thought
- Addressing a broad range of relevant and current topics
- Challenging those with “owned faith” to express their faith in practical ways, daily
- Encouraging daily Bible reading and prayer
- Encouraging biblical action in response to social needs

IS THERE A “4/14 WINDOW” OF RECEPTIVITY?¹⁰⁵

We acknowledge that faith typically *grows* like a tree, and has many stages, growing along with the physical and psychological maturity of the child. However, we will also point out that if children are going to make significant, long-term, life-changing decisions to follow Christ, those decisions will almost always be made before the age of fifteen. Or, to put it another way, there is a *4/14 Window* of receptivity for children and young people to make a firm decision to follow Christ. If a young person has not made such a decision before the age of 15, it is highly unlikely that he/she will make such a life-changing “conversion” decision at any time in their future. (In Section Four I present the case for the 4/14 Window as a mission strategy.)

Recently, important confirmation that this is true, at least in the U.S.A., has come from the well-known Church researcher, George Barna. In a new book, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*,¹⁰⁶ Barna presents results of extensive research related to faith decisions in the U.S.

Barna reports that most 13-year-olds in the U.S., 93 percent, consider themselves to be Christian, though only about 34 percent of these really have an understanding of what it means to be a Christian.¹⁰⁷ However, if people are going to become a Christian, they are far more likely to make that decision by the age of 13 than after that age. Barna states that:

... the probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Savior was 32 percent for those between the ages of five and 12; four percent for those in the 13-18 range; and six percent for people 19 or older. In other words, if people do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior before they reach their teenage years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim.¹⁰⁸

Barna urges us to “Consider the facts. People are much more likely to accept Christ as their Savior when they are young. Absorption of biblical information and principles typically peaks during the pre-teen years. . . . Habits related to the practice of one’s faith develop when one is young and change surprisingly little over time.”¹⁰⁹

“The implication of these findings is clear,” says Barna. “Anyone who wishes to have significant influence on the development of a person’s moral and spiritual foundations had better exert that influence while the person is still open-minded and impressionable — in other words, while the person is still young.”¹¹⁰

CHECKLIST FOR SPIRITUAL TRAINING

I close this lesson with a *Checklist for Spiritual Training*¹¹¹ — a set of targets at which to aim prepared by Dr. James Dobson. The five Scriptural concepts should be consciously taught, providing the foundation on which all future doctrine and faith will rest. Dr. Dobson acknowledges that many of the items require maturity that children lack and we should not try to make adult Christians out of our immature youngsters. However, we agree with him that we can gently urge them toward these goals during the impressionable years of childhood.

ONE GIRL HAD BEEN to all four camps. Kathy — knew all the right answers, the gospel story, but never made any visible response. When she was asked, “If God said, ‘Why should I let you into my heaven,’ what would you say?” She didn’t answer the question or say anything about forgiveness and repentance. Instead she said, “Why should I have to say anything? He knows me. I’ll just run into his arms!”

Kathy understood what it means to be a disciple. We are the blind ones. She died last year. She didn’t have to answer silly questions — just ran into his arms (story told by Wendy Strachan).

CHECKLIST FOR SPIRITUAL TRAINING

- Concept One: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30)**
 1. Is your child learning of the love of God through your love, tenderness and mercy?
 2. Is your child learning to talk about the Lord, and to include Him in his plans?
 3. Is he learning to turn to Jesus for help when frightened or anxious or lonely?
 4. Is he learning to read the Bible?
 5. Is he learning to pray?
 6. Is he learning the meaning of faith and trust?
 7. Is he learning the joy of the Christian way of life?
 8. Is he learning the beauty of Jesus’ birth and death?

- Concept Two: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:31)**
 1. Is your child learning to understand and empathize with the feelings of others?
 2. Is he learning not to be selfish and demanding?
 3. Is he learning to share?
 4. Is he learning not to gossip or criticize others?
 5. Is he learning to accept himself?

- Concept Three: “Teach me to do your will; for you are my God.” (Psalm 143:10)**
 1. Is he learning to obey his parents as preparation for later obedience to God?
 2. Is he learning to behave properly in church — God’s house?
 3. Is he learning a healthy appreciation for love and justice?
 4. Is he learning that there are many forms of authority to which he must submit?
 5. Is he learning the meaning of sin and its inevitable consequences?

- Concept Four: “Fear God... for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)**
 1. Is he learning to be truthful and honest?
 2. Is he learning to keep the Sabbath day holy?
 3. Is he learning the relative insignificance of materialism?
 4. Is he learning the meaning of the Christian family?
 5. Is he learning to follow the dictates of his own conscience?

- Concept Five: “But the fruit of the Spirit is ...self-control.” (Galatians 5:22, 23)**
 1. Is he learning to give a portion of his allowance (and other money) to God?
 2. Is he learning to control his impulses?
 3. Is he learning to work and carry responsibility?
 4. Is he learning the vast difference between selfworth and egotistical pride?
 5. Is he learning to bow in reverence before the God of the universe?

In summary, your child’s first seven years should prepare him to say at the age of accountability, “Here I am, Lord, send me!”



SUMMARY:

- There is often a disconnect among well-meaning believers regarding the psychological maturity of children.
- Although it is inferred in various parts of Scripture, there is no definitive biblical answer on the age of accountability. Hence, it is wise to emphasize accountability rather than age for conversion.
- Most people make their first significant faith decisions between the ages of four and 14.
- Faith development is a process and takes place when children and young people begin to identify with the faith of their parents or peers.
- Owned faith* causes an individual to put their faith into action.



READINGS:

- George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, Ca.: Regal Books, 2003), 28-76.
- William Hendricks, "The Age of Accountability" in *Children and Conversion*, ed. Clifford Ingle (Nashville, Tn.: Broadman Press, 1970), chapter 6, pp. 84-97.
- G.R. Beasley-Murray, "The Child and the Church" in *Children and Conversion*, ed. Clifford Ingle (Nashville, Tn.: Broadman Press, 1970), chapter 9, pp.127-141.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Reflect on any two of the Scripture passages above relating to the development of faith. Do these passages affirm the idea of faith as a developmental process or not?
- Write a few paragraphs where you have seen faith development illustrated in your life experience. You may address your own faith experience or your observation of someone else's faith experience.
- Does your experience of faith development go along with Westerhoff's illustration of how faith grows like a tree? How?
- Do you believe that there may be special receptivity for faith decisions among children between the ages of four and 14? Why or why not?
- Give an example from your culture/experience of the first faith experience of very young children being more "experienced than understood."
- Give an example from your culture/experience of childhood faith being characterized by "questioning, doubt, searching and experimentation."

**ACTIVITY:**

Survey at least 50 Christians — members of your church or other Christian groups — over the age of 30. Ask them at what age they made their first significant decision to follow Christ. Present your findings below:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| • Between the ages of four and 14 | Number _____ | Percentage _____ |
| • Between the ages of 15 and 20 | Number _____ | Percentage _____ |
| • Between the ages of 21 and 30 | Number _____ | Percentage _____ |
| • Over the age of 30 | Number _____ | Percentage _____ |

Totals: _____

⁸⁶ Roy Zuck, *Precious in His Sight* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Book House, 1996), 21-2.

⁸⁷ Clifford Ingle, ed., *Children and Conversion* (Nashville, Tn.: Broadman Press, 1970), 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁹⁰ Roy L. Jr. Honeycutt, "The Child Within the Old Testament Community" in *Children and Conversion*, ed. Clifford Ingle (Nashville, Tn.: Broadman Press, 1970), 33.

⁹¹ Ibid., 35.

⁹² Ibid., 25.

⁹³ William Hendricks, "The Age of Accountability" in *Children and Conversion*, ed. Clifford Ingle (Nashville, Tn.: Broadman Press, 1970), 94.

⁹⁴ Copsey, 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 9, 10.

⁹⁶ Steve Wamberg, *Youth and Faith Development* (Prepared as a Continuing Education Training Module for Compassion International, January 2004.), 4. I am indebted to Mr. Wamberg for most of this discussion on faith development in children.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁸ John Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, revised edition (Harrisburg, Pn.: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 88-89. I am indebted to Steve Wamberg for this summary as well.

⁹⁹ Westerhoff, 92.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰² Ibid., 95.

¹⁰³ Wamberg, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁵ Dan Brewster, "The 4/14 Window: Child Ministries and Mission Strategies" in *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment*, ed. Phyllis Kilbourne (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC, 1996). This section on the "4/14 Window of Receptivity" is taken from a paper presented to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, October, 2004, by Daniel Brewster and Patrick McDonald called "Children: The Great Omission?" (Oxford, UK: Viva Network, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, Ca.: Regal, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 47.

¹¹¹ James Dobson, "Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions" (*Focus on the Family* 20(1):1966), materials from the book *Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions (Slightly abridged)*.

LESSON EIGHT:

Characteristics of Child-Friendly Churches



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Rate one's church on child-friendliness and advocate for child-friendly improvements in all levels of the national Church.
- Describe basic things a child should get from a church.
- Discuss ways to improve the church programs, compound, and staff to make them more child-friendly.



KEY VERSE:

Zechariah 8:4-5

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.'"



We have established in previous lessons that the Church has a biblical responsibility and mandate to care for children. And we know that the Church (along with the parents) has a biblical responsibility to teach the children.

We must invite the children to come to Jesus, to learn, to grow, to serve and then to go make disciples. As adults become disciples, He then sends us out into the world to serve others and make disciples, bring them back into the church so that they, in turn can become disciples and go out themselves. Thus the process is repeated and the church grows. This process is not only for adults but applies to children and youth as well.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me — do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven *belongs* to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). The children must be so well-nurtured and cared for so that, according to I Timothy 4:12, no one will look down

on them because they are young, but they must be examples to the believers in speech, life, love, faith and purity.

A CHILD-FRIENDLY WORLD WHERE A CHILD CAN LOVE AND BE LOVED

“The overriding need of every child,” writes Dr. Keith White, “is to be loved by, and to love, one or more significant adults.”¹¹² He goes on to list five basic needs of a child, which, if not met, will impair the capacity of the child to experience and express love. “If none of these are met over a substantial period of a child’s early years, the likelihood is that the child will be emotionally scarred and impaired.”¹¹³ These fundamental needs, summarized below, are to be met primarily in the home. However, the sensitive church, seeking to improve its ministry and child-friendliness, will also be an important resource in meeting these needs:¹¹⁴

- **Security** — The primal need of a child is a place for relationship, exploration, play and development. No intervention will have any effect unless children know they are safe.
- **Significance** — Children need to be assured as someone precious because of who they are. Every child needs to know that there is at least one adult who is committed to them unconditionally. Any program for child development/care is nothing if this is absent (treatment of persons and their relationship).
- **Boundaries** — Boundaries are needed to feel safe, to develop and to relate with others appropriately. We call these *rules*, *discipline* and *values*. “What is my space?” “What is your space?” Enabling children to understand and respect boundaries is an important aspect of our care. A firm approach and consistent example rather than rules should govern our boundaries.
- **Community** — Biblically, we are created for community and relationships. Are our churches providing that community?
- **Creativity** — Children are essentially creative and creators. As created in the image of God, they must be given opportunities to create, to make and to shape.

So what can the Church do to ensure that it is a place where the child may have all these five basic needs met, be nurtured and thrive? How can the Church enhance, increase and improve its overall ministry to children and create a more child-friendly environment?

Of course there are numerous ways — too many to elaborate on fully in this lesson. Nevertheless, this lesson provides suggestions of the characteristics of a child-friendly church environment and a checklist of actions a church may take to make it more friendly toward children. We will first look at the basic things a child ought to be able to expect from a church. Then examine ways to improve the friendliness of church programs, compounds, and staffs. Finally, we will touch on the responsibilities toward children of the church “hierarchies” — the national fellowships, the denominations and the local churches.

BASIC THINGS THAT CHILDREN SHOULD GET FROM THE CHURCH

We begin by asking ourselves, “What are the basic things that a child should expect from the Church?” The following would seem to be important for all churches and for all children:¹¹⁵

- **Teaching of the Word of God** — God demands from the Church that children grow
-

up hearing and learning about the love of God for them and worshiping Him in a way compatible with their age and capability. This should be a priority in any church.

- **Making Disciples of Children** — Each child shall be encouraged and given an opportunity to become a disciple of Jesus through the teaching from the Word of God, commensurate with age and capability. This should be one of the key objectives of any church.
- **Prayer** — Children must be supported by the regular prayers of the Church. The prayer items of the church should often include children's issues. Teachers should regularly pray for the children whom they teach. Further, the whole church should regularly pray for all of the children both corporately and individually. Parents should also be taught to pray for their children. And of course, the children themselves should pray regularly, giving thanks, and seeking guidance and provision for their needs and well-being.
- **Love and Care** — Children should be enabled to grow in love and care that the Church affords them. The Church should provide a "listening ear" to the children and they should be free to share their views, needs, hurts, hopes, and dreams.
- **Opportunities to Participate in Ministry** — The Church should enable children to serve in their homes, the church and in their community. Children should be viewed as resources for ministry and prepared for God's work by the Church. The Church should provide encouragement for children to find and express their spiritual gifts.
- **A Child-Friendly Church Compound** — The compound of each church should be safe and attractive to children and childhood. There should be safe places for children to play and be "childlike"— where possible in playgrounds or play areas.
- **Appropriate Classrooms** — Each church should endeavor to provide attractive classrooms for children's Bible studies and other activities. Where possible, churches should provide child-size tables and chairs and colorful things on the walls at children's eye level (preferably things that the children themselves have produced).
- **Qualified Children's Teachers** — Each church shall designate spiritually mature teachers to serve children and ensure that children's Bible teachers get regular and continuous training so that they remain qualified. Teachers should be monitored to ensure that their teaching is sound and age-appropriate.
- **Age-Graded Classes and Curricula** — The Church should ensure that children receive regular, sound and biblical education which is based on their age and capabilities.
- **Family Equipping and Preparation** — The Church should educate, encourage and follow up with parents to enable them to raise their children in accordance with the Word of God and in a way that protects children from harmful cultural influences and other things that defile their consciences and their faith. Where possible, the Church should provide resources for the home (books, videos, tapes, etc.).
- **Protection from Harmful Traditions** — The Church should make efforts to enable children to grow without being adversely affected by harmful traditional attitudes, beliefs and practices.

MAKING CHURCH PROGRAMS MORE CHILD-FRIENDLY

The above would seem to be the minimum that children should expect from their church. Beyond these, there are measures that the Church may take to make the programs and the compounds more nurturing, profitable, interesting and safe for the child. Again, these ideas are only a check-

list. They should be used as starting points for discussion with your church leaders. Your church may build its own more extensive checklist that will stimulate thinking and help it respond to children's needs in your own context and the particular environment of your church.

- **The worship services should be meaningful** to children and not just adult experiences in which children must conform to adult standards.
- **Children should be talked to and listened to** — before, during, or after church — about their worship experience. The children should be asked what they want to have done for them in the church, and they should participate in the decision-making.
- **The church *may* do a child's sermon** or provide other kinds of instruction in the worship service at the child's level and which include the children and help them to know that they are noticed and valued. I say *may* do a child sermon, but you may find that there are good reasons *not* to do a child sermon (see below).
- **The agenda items of the church** elders' meetings and annual church programs should include matters relating to children and how to improve the church's ministry to them.
- **The Bible classes and teaching materials should be age-graded** and suitable for the ages and maturity of the children.
- **The budget of the church** should provide funds for significant child ministries, including materials, teacher training, activities, and rituals.
- **The rituals of the church.** The church should emphasize rituals — Christmas, Easter, and other special church days, birthdays, Sunday school graduations, anniversaries and remembrances — and make them a big deal for the children.
- **The pastor should be a regular visitor** to the children's ministry and should know many of the children by name.
- The church should have **designated days and times to bless children** in its annual program.

■ **Should Churches do Child Sermons?**

Child sermons can be an important way to include children and insure they hear a story or message in an understandable way. However, churches should think carefully about children's needs. There may be other, better ways to include the children. Indeed, there are some good reasons *not* to do children's sermons.

The late James Montgomery Boice¹¹⁶ said that children's sermons might distract people from the worship of God. They are meant to involve children in the worship service by offering something appropriate to their age. But the effect may be to focus the attention of the adults on the children rather than on God.

Children's sermons may also contribute to "dumbing down" of the gospel message. As we have seen in lesson two, children have great capacity — far more than we often give them credit for — to understand the gospel. "The goal for our children," says Boice, "should be to bring them up to the level of the adults — that is, to enable them to begin to function on an adult level in their relationships to God. But what we have succeeded in doing instead is to bring the adults down to the level of the children."¹¹⁷

Boice continues:

In many churches the sermon is hardly suited to any genuinely adult mind, the praise choruses would fit better at a high school rally than in the worship of the Bible's God, and the children's sermons probably speak as much to adult immaturity as to the children. In fact, the children's ser-

mons are usually geared to the smallest children, and the older children are ignored.

The defense of this bad practice is probably that children cannot follow what goes on in church. But that is not true. They can. And even if they cannot follow what goes on at first, our task is to teach them so they both can and will. And why not? It does not require much more time to teach children to participate in the worship service than it does to prepare some of the children's sermons I have heard.¹¹⁸

Churches that are serious about ministering properly to children should carefully weigh the benefits and downsides of children's sermons. But however the children's needs are met, and whatever approach is taken, there are certainly many things that the child should expect from the church, and many ways to make the churches more child-friendly.

MAKING CHURCH COMPOUNDS MORE CHILD-FRIENDLY

I have been saddened at times when I visited churches that are hosting projects and activities for children, on Sundays or on weekdays, but they made no provision to make the compound a place where the child would want to be. I have seen churches with almost daily child activities but they do not have child-sized tables or chairs, nothing on the walls which is colorful or attractive to children. Worse still, I have seen compounds that are neither clean nor safe for children.

Many churches, of course, have limited space. But in any church, much can be done to make the church compound safe, attractive, and warm and welcoming. In churches where their facilities have multiple uses, perhaps on different days of the week, the appearance of the church can be modified on the children's days so that they feel welcome and at home. At the very least, the church should strive to:

- **Ensure that the compound is safe** for the children, with no exposed sharp corners or objects, no broken furniture, no rough edges, exposed wiring, open drains or other problems which endanger the physical safety of the children.
- **Have classrooms for Bible classes** for children that are decorated and equipped to appeal to children.
- **Have space specifically for children to play** (even playground equipment), work, color, build and have fun.
- **Seek to make its compounds and classrooms attractive**, clean, friendly and safe for children and childhood.

MAKING THE CHURCH STAFF MORE CHILD-FRIENDLY

A primary function of the church is to provide a place where adults can teach and disciple children to help them understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The success of the church in fulfilling this obligation is completely dependent on the quality and commitment of the staff, teachers and other caregivers. Sadly, the careless church will often assign its least qualified people to work with children — those who have little biblical understanding, no awareness of children's learning styles, no understanding of children's behavior, discipline or nurture. No church will have a meaningful program for its children unless its members recruit, equip and support caregivers for its ministry to children.

Here, briefly, are a few guidelines to help a church improve the child-friendliness of its staff:

- The church insists on the purity among leaders. First and foremost, all church leadership and staff are models for the children. They must understand that they are modeling all the time, whether their example is positive or negative. Children are always watching.
- The people assigned to teach children are trained and experienced. The church should have regular training courses for all its teachers and caregivers. Children's Bible classes should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis by a body set up for the purpose.
- The leaders and staff of the church should look at children's potential (not just their current behavior).
- The church should provide regular and varied parenting classes and support for parents in difficult situations (e.g. for the parents of rebellious children). The church should seek to provide resources for the home, in the form of classes, books, videos, tapes and other materials.
- The church should have regular family activities which encourage inter-generational interaction, and should avoid over-scheduling children's or youth activities at the expense of family time.
- The staff should be trained in child protection (see the section on child protection in this book), and should be able to recognize the symptoms of neglect and abuse among children.
- The church should seek to have trained people to help children who have been abused, mistreated or are homeless.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH AT ALL LEVELS

Mr. Michael Shiferaw, one of the fine representatives of Compassion International in Africa, has done much work with the churches in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa. Over a period of several months, Shiferaw brought the church leaders together at all levels — national fellowships, denominational leadership and local church leaders — and asked the question: What should a child expect from the Church?" One of the more significant outcomes of his exercise was what they called the "Covenant for Churches on Ministering to Children."¹¹⁹ This document detailed the responsibilities of each level of the Church and set out minimum standards which each level should seek to provide or achieve in order to better minister to the children and families they serve.

The document is done in the form of a signed covenant, in which all the signatories commit themselves to doing their part to ensure that the standards and provisions they agree to are in fact achieved. The idea is similar to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which we will look at in a later lesson. For the CRC, in principle, by their signature, all the State signatories are committing themselves to do the necessary in their countries to ensure that laws are passed, and other measures are taken, such that the protections and provisions for children become a reality. The annual *State of the World's Children* is, in a sense, a scorecard on compliance — the extent to which the provisions are being implemented.

The *Covenant for Churches on Ministering to Children* in Ethiopia works in the same way. By actually getting responsible church leaders to sign their names they created a higher level of commitment to actually do what they know they should. The covenant details specific actions that leaders at each level should take. By observing and measuring what the churches have agreed to do, responsible Christians working with children will be able to gauge the extent to which the provisions have actually been carried out at each level. It is hoped too that the leaders will allow

themselves to be held accountable to carry out what they have agreed in writing to do.

The obligations suggested for each level of the Church in its national hierarchies are a key part of the covenant for the churches.

COVENANT ON MINISTERING TO CHILDREN

■ *The objectives of the Covenant are:*

- To highlight the importance of and the biblical basis for ministry to children.
- To encourage the church to give attention to holistic child ministries.
- To call the Evangelical Fellowship of (Country Name), the denominations, local churches, Christian agencies and Christian schools to action on behalf of impoverished children.
- To create standards that will help the church to measure its ministry to children.

The following is an adaptation of Shiferaw's work on the responsibilities of the Church at each of these levels:

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL-LEVEL FELLOWSHIP(S) OF CHURCHES

■ *Focusing on Children*

The fellowship of denominations shall:

- Prepare its nationwide vision and mission for child ministry.
- Establish a Children's Commission that will give overall guidance and coordination on matters relating to children.
- Have a department responsible for children's ministry.
- Make provision for children's ministries in its plans, programs, budget, constitution and by-laws.
- Gather and analyze complete information regarding its children and disseminate the same to all concerned on a regular basis.
- Carry out studies regarding harmful cultures, attitudes and practices, and designate ways to eliminate them.
- Be an advocate for children among all its churches, in society, government and all other institutions.

■ *Training and Encouragement*

The fellowship of denominations shall:

- Organize training and encouragement programs to denominations to enable them to focus on children.
- Devise strategies and prepare materials for use by the denominations.

■ ***Preparing Children's Bible Study Materials***

The fellowship of denominations shall:

- Conduct and encourage the preparation of children's Bible study books and materials.
 - Produce, collect and disseminate writings, tapes, videotapes and other materials that help churches increase understanding of children.
-

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DENOMINATIONS

■ ***Focusing on Children***

Each denomination shall:

- Prepare its vision and mission for children's ministries throughout the denomination.
- Give high priority to children's ministries as required by the Bible.
- Establish a committee to give overall guidance and coordination on matters relating to children's ministries.
- Have a department responsible for children's ministries.
- Include children's ministries in its activities, plans, programs, budget and constitutions and by-laws.

■ ***Compiling Information on Child Needs and Resources to Address Them***

Each denomination shall:

- Gather and analyze complete information regarding its children and disseminate the same to all concerned on a regular basis.
- Carry out studies regarding harmful cultures, attitudes and practices, and designate ways to eliminate them.

■ ***Training and Encouragement***

Each denomination shall:

- Organize various training and encouragement programs with and for the children's workers in each of its churches.
- Assist its churches in the acquisition of studies, writings, videos and other resources to equip them in their ministries to children.
- Provide appropriate child protection training and protocols/guidelines in each of their churches.

■ ***Child Ministry Curriculum in Bible Schools***

Each denomination shall:

- Ensure that its own Bible schools include children's ministry in their curriculum.
- Ensure that its own Bible schools give training and consultancy to people serving children in especially difficult circumstances.

■ ***Children's Teachers***

- Each denomination shall ensure that the teachers of children have proper training to teach children.
-

RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL CHURCHES

■ **Focusing on Children**

The local church shall:

- Have a mission and vision statement for child ministry.
- Give the same focus to children as it gives to its other ministries.
- Establish a committee that will give overall guidance and coordination on matters relating to children.
- Include children's ministry in its activities, plans, programs and budget.

■ **Child-Friendly Church Compound**

- The local church shall seek to make its compounds and classrooms attractive, clean, friendly and safe for children and childhood.

■ **Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDCs)**

- Each local church shall take concrete action with respect to the care and protection of the rights of children in especially difficult circumstances in cooperation with the individuals and organizations in its area.

■ **Compiling Information about the Needs of Children and the Resources to Address Those Needs**

Each local church shall:

- Gather and analyze complete information regarding its children.
- Carry out studies regarding harmful cultures, attitudes and practices, and designate ways to eliminate them.

■ **Training of Parents**

Each local church shall:

- Educate and train parents/guardians and youth on their responsibilities regarding children.
- Educate and encourage parents to raise children in accordance with the Word of God and in a way that protects them from harmful cultural aspects that defile their consciences and their faith.

■ **Age-graded Classes**

Each local church shall:

- Ensure that children attend age-graded classes.
- Develop the syllabus for the ages and capabilities of children.

■ **Advocate for Children**

- Each local church shall be an advocate for children in its community.

Signed by the following members of the Evangelical Alliance

Signed by the following denominational leaders

Signed by the following local church leaders



SUMMARY:

- Five basic needs of child to enable him or her to love and be loved are:
 - Security
 - Significance
 - Boundaries
 - Community
 - Creativity
- Basic things that children should get from the church include:
 - Teaching of the Word of God
 - Making Disciples of Children
 - Prayer, Love and Care
 - Opportunities to Participate in Ministry
 - A “Child-Friendly” Church Compound
 - Qualified Children’s Teachers
 - Age-Graded Classes and Curricula
 - Family Equipping and Preparation
 - Protection from Harmful Traditions



READINGS:

- “If I were a Child Today, I’d Need . . . Developing Spiritual Kinship with Children” in *It Takes a Church Within a Village*, eds. H. B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman (Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), chapter four.
- “Family Traits of Child-Sensitive Churches: Boys and Girls Loved Here” in *It Takes a Church Within a Village*, eds. H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman (Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), chapter eight.
- “39 Ways to Improve Our Impact on Children. You Can Make a Difference” in *It Takes a Church Within a Village*, eds. H. B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman (Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), chapter 12.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

- Referring to the Covenant on Ministry to Children, state two things you can do to help your church be more responsive to children:
 - At the national level
 - At the denominational level
 - At your local church level



REFLECTION ACTIVITY:

Here is a checklist on the child-friendliness of your local church (adapted from separate sources by Robert Choun,¹²⁰ Michael Shiferaw,¹²¹ and H.B. London and Neil Wiseman¹²²). After reviewing the checklist, you will be asked to carefully rate your church and then choose five areas for improvement that you will work on.

Use the following scale for the ratings you will do below:
 3 = Very Good 2 = Average 1 = Poor or not at all

Church Checklist for Child-Friendliness

	SCORE
1 Worship services are meaningful to children, not just adult experiences in which children must conform to adult standards.	
2 Children are encouraged to visit, talk or play together at church.	
3 Children are viewed as resources for ministry and are prepared for God’s work by the church.	
4 The prayer items of the church usually include children’s issues.	
5 The budget of the church provides for child ministries.	
6 The annual program of the church contains matters relating to children.	
7 The pastor is a regular visitor to the children’s ministry and knows many of the children by name.	
8 Child classrooms are “child-friendly” — decorated and equipped to appeal to children.	
9 There are age-graded Bible classes and teaching materials for children.	
10 The teachers and other care-givers assigned to work with children are trained and experienced.	
11 The church has designated days and times to bless children in its annual program.	
12 The compound of the church is safe and has space for children.	
13 The Church provides training for parents and resources for the home (books, videos, tapes, etc.).	
14 The leaders of the Church look at children’s potential (not just their current behavior).	
15 The Church emphasizes rituals and includes children.	

Score _____ (*Highest possible = 45*)

Arrange a meeting with a representative of your church. Have him/her help you choose five of the above items to make priorities for improvement. Report back on your decisions.

¹¹² Keith White, "An Integrated Biblical and Theoretical Typology of Children's Needs" in *Celebrating Children*, eds. Glenn Miles and Josephine-Joy Wright (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 123.

¹¹³ Ibid., 123.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 123-6.

¹¹⁵ Michael Shiferaw. Some of these are an adaptation from the *Covenant on Ministering to Children*, an unpublished document used to help African churches understand their responsibilities toward children.

¹¹⁶ James Montgomery Boice, "I Don't Do Children's Sermons" in *Modern Reformation Magazine*.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Shiferaw, *Covenant on Ministering to Children* (Unpublished Compassion Africa Area document, 2002).

¹²⁰ Robert Choun and Michael Lawson, *The Complete Handbook for Children's Ministry* (Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 17-18.

¹²¹ Michael Shiferaw, *Rate Your Church on Child Friendliness* (Unpublished paper).

¹²² H.B. London and N. Wiseman, *It Takes a Church Within a Village* (Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 211-30.

LESSON NINE:

Child Protection in Church Environments



OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Understand child protection issues in church environments and develop and apply appropriate child protection measures in his or her church or other care setting.

It is a shame to have to discuss the question of child protection in the context of the Church's ministries to children. For some, it is almost beyond belief that some of the ugliness of sexual exploitation of children could happen in our church environments. The majority of people with whom we work hold the same core values we do. However, we must not be naive. It is possible that there are those who would seek to use involvement in a church-based child program for their own personal motives which may be perverted rather than pure. As I was writing this book, I saw a story about a convicted pedophile found working in an orphanage set up to care for children after the December 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka — apparently to gain access to the children. It does happen.



Concern for children is the cornerstone for this course in holistic child development. It goes without saying that we are opposed to all forms of child exploitation, including child labor, child prostitution and all other forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. As a fundamental commitment to the welfare of children, it is important that we be aware of, take a stand on, and take measures to ensure the protection of the children under our care or supported by our ministries.

These guidelines are intended to help us ensure that our own staff, donors, volunteers or other personnel are not involved in or contributing to child exploitation of any kind. As part of this process, all churches or organizations caring for children should develop training activities to ensure that all those in and around our program understand the critical nature of this problem and ways to prevent it. The emphasis here is on prevention of sexual abuse but the concern includes prevention of other kinds of abuse as well.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM OURSELVES

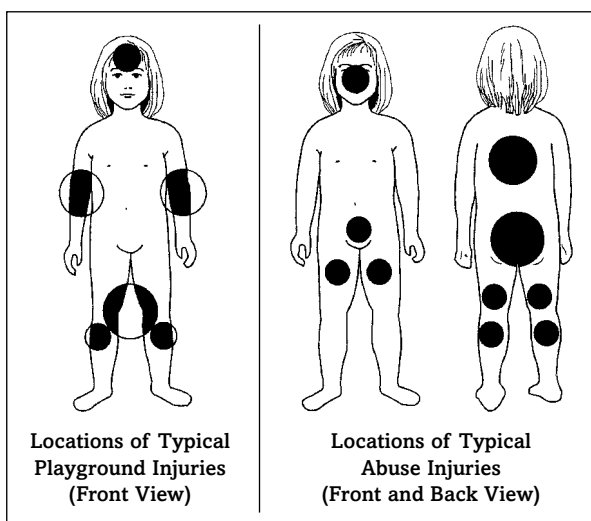
One of the most pervasive and offensive forms of child exploitation is the sexual abuse of children by adults. In Asia, a multi-billion-dollar sex industry has been spawned by the perverted desires of thousands of tourists who seek pleasure from prostitutes, including young children. In several countries, girls and boys age nine and younger are sold into prostitution by their parents. Homeless children, living on the streets, are recruited by pimps to sell their bodies for sex and survival. They are not only physically raped and plundered but also psychologically scarred for the rest of their lives.

Who are the pedophiles? The pedophile is rarely a stranger. He or she is usually someone who knows the child (e.g., a parent babysitter, or someone in authority, such as a teacher or youth worker). Pedophiles are often people who are respected in their communities, against whom the accusations of a child are seldom believed. Abuse by pedophiles is not usually the kind of violent, spontaneous acts one associates with sex bars and hotels catering to such tourists. Rather, the typical pedophile gains the confidence of youngsters and moves toward abuse very subtly and gradually, making it difficult to detect.

Even court judgments do not deter such people. If they fail in one organization, they join another one. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child urges all states to prevent:

- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity
- The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, and
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

The laws on child sexual abuse are different in every country. It may be necessary that the legal counsel review any policies and procedures so that they are consistent with the laws in your country. Law enforcement and child protection agencies in many countries may have materials that can be useful in adapting these guidelines to national situations.



RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE

(Note: This section on recognizing child abuse is from the Compassion Guidelines for Child Protection, entitled Protecting Children from Abuse, April 2003).

Physical abuse of children often leaves signs on the child's body. Caregivers will sometimes try to excuse injuries as the result of normal childhood accidents. There is a difference between the injuries that children get as a normal function of rough play and injuries often symptomatic of physical abuse. Child development professionals will learn to recognize the difference. The pic-

ture¹²³ here is an illustration comparing the location (on the left) of typical playground injuries and the location of injuries as the result of physical abuse.

The table below is a summary of the physical and behavioral symptoms of abuse.¹²⁴

TYPE OF ABUSE	PHYSICAL SIGNS	BEHAVIORAL SIGNS
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises or welts in various stages of healing or other visible injuries that appear on a child recurrently and cannot be explained by developmentally expected behavior. • Unexplained or multiple broken bones, especially a broken rib, severe skull fracture or other major head injury. • Burns or injuries in the shape of an object used to cause the injury such as bite marks, hand prints, cigar or cigarette burns, belt buckle markings. Burns from immersion in scalding water or other hot liquids. • Unexplained or repetitive dental injuries. • Failure to grow at the expected rate in a child who seems hungry and eager to eat when offered food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation for a physical injury that is inconsistent with the injury or the child’s developmental age. • Persistent or repetitive physical complaints of unclear cause, such as headache or belly pain. • The parent/caregiver reports that a significant injury was self-inflicted or the child reports being injured by a parent or other caregiver. • The parent/caregivers have delayed seeking appropriate medical care.
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, itching, bruises or bleeding around the genitalia. Stained or bloody underclothing. • Venereal disease. • Difficulty walking or sitting. • Discharge from the vagina or urine openings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bizarre, too sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior for the child’s age, such as asking others to do sex acts, putting mouth on sex parts, trying to have intercourse. • Child reports sexual abuse by a parent or adult.
Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed physical, emotional or intellectual development that is not otherwise explicable. • Habits such as rocking, sucking on fingers in excess of expectation for developmental stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impaired sense of self-worth, depression, withdrawal. • Extremes of behavior, such as overly aggressive or passive, apathetic, empty facial appearance, decreased social interaction with others, phobias, generalized fearfulness, fear of parent.

TYPE OF ABUSE	PHYSICAL SIGNS	BEHAVIORAL SIGNS
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant hunger, begging for food or hoarding food. Fatigue or listlessness. Poor hygiene such as dirty hair, skin and clothes. Inappropriate dress. • Malnutrition or failure to thrive not explained by physical illness. • Delayed seeking of professional attention for physical or dental problems. • Impairment of parent or caregiver due to substance abuse, physical or mental illness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of supervision for long periods of time, inappropriate to the child's age or developmental stage.
Any Type of Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance abuse. Unexplained absences from the childcare program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over and under compliance of the child. • Lack of selectivity in friendly approach to adults. • Developmental regression, such as a previously toilet-trained child reverting to incontinence. • Sleep and appetite disturbances. • Depression. • Self-destructive behavior. • Excessive/inappropriate fears.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

■ *Screening of Visitors to Your Child Activities or Projects*

Many church projects have local or foreign donors or sponsors who occasionally want to visit the program they are supporting. Visitors and donors should be informed of your church's concern to avoid exploitation of children and understand that the personal information we seek is for prevention purposes. The approach should be positive: "Here is what we are doing to protect the children you help us assist."

■ *Screening and Selection of Staff Who Work with Children*

Establish, review and reinforce recruiting and employment policies and procedures, particularly for your staff who work with children. This includes development of behavioral guidelines for all staff. A responsible staff member who has been trained to screen potential staff should interview individuals applying for positions. If permissible by law, the interviewer should ask direct

questions designed to identify applicants who may present a risk in this area and, therefore, should not work for a child-focused organization.

■ ***Staff Behavior Guidelines***

Even if organizations use reasonable care in selecting staff or volunteers, it is still possible that children might be harmed if employees who work with children are not properly supervised. The risk of harm to children and organizational liability can be reduced by staff observance of behavior guidelines.

■ ***Basic Principles***

- The suggested behavior guidelines and principles involved should apply to **all** staff and volunteers who work with minors and children.
- Staff should avoid any appearance of inappropriate conduct. For example, it may be culturally acceptable for an adult to invite a child or minor to his or her home for a meal or a visit; but this may be perceived by others as wrong and therefore should be avoided.
- More than one adult should usually be present at all times with children to make the child feel more comfortable and to protect the staff from false accusations of child abuse.
- Psychologists point out that it is natural for children, especially adolescents, to develop emotional feelings for adults they admire and respect. They often express these feelings by flirting, flattering, hugging, or even making suggestive comments. Volunteers or staff who encounter such experiences should be careful that they do not put themselves into a compromising or vulnerable position.
- If staff members feel uncomfortable about relationships with a minor, they should consult a peer, talk to their supervisor or seek professional counsel.
- Staff members should use good judgment, wisdom and caution in becoming personally involved with children and minors who have emotional and psychological problems.

■ ***Specific Do's and Don'ts***

- All volunteers, staff, sponsors and project workers must be entirely professional in their relationship with minors and children, while at the same time demonstrating Christian love and care.
- Volunteers, staff, sponsors and project workers must not stay overnight alone with one or more children whether in the staff member's home or elsewhere.
- Workers must not hire minors as "house help" or provide shelter for minors in the staff member's home.
- Volunteers, staff, donors, and project workers must not fondle, hold, kiss, cuddle or touch minors in an inappropriate way.
- Staff and project workers should notify the appropriate supervisor before spending time alone with a minor in an unsupervised situation.

■ ***Reporting Procedures for Alleged Sexual Misconduct***

An effective reporting procedure of alleged sexual misconduct enhances the effort to protect children from sexual or other abuse. Child abusers will not be prone to remain in an environment where workers are trained to report suspicious behavior.

All staff should understand that discreet and confidential reporting of suspicions of sexual abuse, suspected incidents of child abuse, or inappropriate behavior is critical to abuse preven-

tion and protection of children. Reporting represents a caring attitude and is not an act of disloyalty. Workers should be alert to physical signs of abuse and molestation as well as behavioral and verbal signs that a child may exhibit. In a situation of suspected child abuse or molestation in an activity or project, the following reporting procedures should be followed:

1. Internal Reporting Procedures

If a staff member knows that a child has been molested, or reasonably suspects abuse or hears allegations of abuse, he or she should:

- Immediately report the incident to the supervisor in charge of the activity or the most senior person at the project.
- Take careful notes of what has been observed or heard and any action taken. These notes should be dated, signed and kept securely.
- Do not, however, confront the accused or prejudge the situation.

2. External Reporting Procedures:

In many countries, there may be legal requirements which mandate reporting procedures to government or law enforcement authorities in suspected cases of child abuse. Except in emergencies, a report should be made first to senior management then to government authorities as required or as appropriate. With the exception of legally mandated reporting, no one outside the organization should be contacted or informed until formal internal reporting steps have been completed and until instructions from senior management are given for appropriate external reporting.

Under no circumstances should a staff member speak to the media concerning any allegations.

■ Responding to Allegations of Abuse

A church's response to any allegations of child sexual abuse should be based upon the following principles:

- All allegations will be taken seriously and will be handled responsibly by the appropriate person.
- Sexual abuse of children will not be tolerated. Volunteers and staff members should understand this basic principle at the time of their employment.
- Each situation must be handled forthrightly with due respect for the privacy of both the child and the individual whose behavior is at issue.
- Adequate care for the well-being of any child who has been abused or suspected of having been abused will be a primary concern.
- The child should not be held responsible, unless the facts indicate otherwise.
- Any staff member accused of child abuse will be treated with concern for his or her privacy and legal rights. Church leadership should act in ways that respect the dignity and worth of every person, including the children.

The following section summarizes the above. It also specifically details the kinds of things that must be included in any Child Protection Policy that you may implement in your Church or child-care programs.

NINE COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Statement of Commitment¹²⁵

This statement summarizes why you have a policy and places it in the broader context. It should include:

- Definitions of child abuse.
- An analysis of major child protection issues in your setting
- An analysis of the legal and cultural framework in your country

2. Communicating the Commitment

This component refers to:

- Talking about child abuse and breaking the silence.
- Awareness raising and training.
- Including this policy in other staff/board manuals.

3. Behavioral Protocols

General guidelines for staff, volunteers, interns, visitors, donors, sponsors, guests and partners include:

- Treating children with respect and dignity.
- Describing appropriate behavior with children.
- Following the two-adult rule. One adult should not be alone — i.e. behind closed doors — with a child. If counseling or other confidential matters are to be discussed, it should be with a door open.
- Signing a document saying the policy will be respected.
- Taking action in cases of inappropriate behavior.
- Acknowledging that adults are responsible even if a child behaves in a ‘seductive’ way.
- Breaking these protocols will be grounds for discipline including dismissal.
- No hiring minors as house help.

All visitors will:

- Be given a copy of the Behavior Protocols.
- Be informed of the organization’s commitment to protect children and know why it is an important issue.
- Sign a written agreement to abide by these protocols.
- Always be accompanied by project staff.

4. Child Protection in our Publicity and External Communications

This component refers to the statements and images in our media and fundraising that we use to reflect our work with children.

- All communication should preserve the dignity and value of children.
 - Pictures of children and stories should always be decent and respectful.
 - Pictures should not imply relationships of power.
 - Communications should respect the right to privacy.
 - Names should not be linked with specific locations.
 - Blur or block the face of certain children at risk (e.g., a child in prostitution).
 - Follow Internet protocols particularly related to sponsorship.
 - Follow behavior protocols for communications staff which include explaining to children who you are, why you are asking questions and taking photos, what will happen to
-

the photos and obtaining permission from family/community leadership for use of the images.

- Use pseudonyms for children at risk.

5. Ensuring Project Partners Share the Commitment

This component identifies the role of our project partners in protecting children.

- Partners need to know about our commitment to child protection and share that commitment, too.
- Written agreements with partners should reflect and include Child Protection Policy commitments.
- Encourage partners to create Child Protection Policies of their own.

6. Guidelines for Screening and Recruitment

This component makes statements about the importance of careful screening of potential candidates and recruiting procedures.

- Identifies procedures that reduce the risk of hiring someone who may abuse children.
- Requires intense attention to local law; local lawyers need to be consulted.
- This is for ALL staff, volunteers/interns, Board members and contractors.
- A signed agreement for background check will be obtained during the recruitment process (where legally possible, a criminal record check related to abuses against children).

7. Responses to Allegations

This component refers to specific actions related to any allegations of abuse by staff /visitors (and others). It involves:

- Creating a culture that expects the reporting of suspicious behavior.
- Treating both the victim and the alleged perpetrator with respect and dignity while an investigation takes place.
- Believing the child until proved otherwise.
- Developing reporting procedures.
- Taking a team approach (child protection worker, legal, personnel, management).
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Documenting facts related to the investigation and outcome (confidential file).
- Following local laws as required and extra-territorial issues if a foreigner is involved.
- Designating someone to deal with the media.
- Including in the policy a statement allowing disclosure to future employers information related to the dismissal for suspected abuse.
- Providing ongoing support to the child and offering support to the person accused.

8. Advocacy and Networking

Commitment to working with other groups interested in child protection to:

- Pray for wisdom and strength.
- Learn from other groups.
- Be involved in community, national and regional activities to lobby government, police and others.
- Encourage and support training initiatives.
- Network with others (e.g. VIVA and Coalitions).

9. Confidentiality

All applications, screening forms, reference forms, and any information obtained from the use of these forms must be treated as strictly confidential. Adequate measures must be taken to insure strict confidentiality.



SUMMARY:

- Recognizing Child Abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Neglect
 - Any type of abuse
 - Basic principles for staff behavior guidelines are:
 - Avoid any inappropriate conduct.
 - Make sure more than one adult is present at all times with children.
 - Be careful of inappropriate emotional expressions from children.
 - Consult a supervisor or seek professional counsel when in an uncomfortable situation with a minor.
 - Use wisdom in handling children with emotional and psychological problems.
 - Nine key components of an effective child protection protocol are:
 - Statement of Commitment
 - Communicating the commitment
 - Behavioral protocols
 - Child protection in our publicity and external communications
 - Ensuring project partners share the commitment
 - Guidelines for screening and recruitment
 - Responses to allegations
 - Advocacy and networking
 - Confidentiality
-

**READINGS:**

- “Guidance to Churches: Protecting Children and Appointing Children’s Workers” in *Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)* (Swanley, Kent, UK: 2001), 1-22.
- “Protecting Children from Abuse” (Colorado Springs, Co.: Compassion International, 2003).

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Consider the two general guidelines in protecting children from sexual exploitation from sponsors and children ministry workers. Describe any screening procedures that are used in your ministry setting.
- On reporting an alleged sexual misconduct in your ministry setting, what hindrances might a person in your culture face, both internally and externally. What measures can be taken to overcome these hindrances?
- Think through the nine components of an effective child protection protocol in your ministry setting.
 - Which of these are most effectively implemented and why?
 - Which of these are least effectively implemented and why?
- How would you respond to a church colleague who says, “We don’t need those kinds of policies here. We are *called* to this work. No Christian would ever hurt a child.”
- If your church or organization does not have a child protection policy, meet with them to discuss drafting something useful.

¹²³ Kostelnik, “Guiding Children’s Social Development” in *Child Abuse and Neglect: A Self-Instructional Text for Head Start Personnel* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977). Taken from Head Start Bureau and Children’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

¹²⁴ “Caring for Our Children” in *National Health and Safety Performance Standards — Appendix K* (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2002), 420.

¹²⁵ These nine child protection protocols are adapted from the presentation on the subject of Child Protection made by Dan Brewster and Heather McCloud at the Cutting Edge III Conference in Le Bron, Holland, March 2001.

SECTION FOUR:

The Child and Mission



OBJECTIVES:

As a result of completing the lessons in this section, the student will be able to:

- Apply key concepts relating to the historical development and current practices of missions in the ministry of holistic child development.
- Discuss and contextualize some cautions in missions regarding children in cross-cultural settings.
- Develop strategies that properly place children as both recipients of and resources for mission activities.

INTRODUCTION

We now introduce the “mission” component of our study on Child, Church and Mission. Just as we have done in previous sections, we now want to put the child “in the midst” in relation to Mission. In this section we ask, “How (if at all) does the child relate to Mission?” Or better, “How does Mission include the child?” Are children the “*Great Omission*” in mission strategies? How can cross-cultural ministry to children be sensitive, ethical, and effective? How can children be both “objects” of mission and resources for mission?

To explore these issues, we will first acquaint ourselves with some of the issues and concepts in historical and contemporary missions. Then we will apply these to the matters of cross-cultural (interfaith) missions to children. We will do some reflection on the ethics of child evangelism in a cross-cultural setting and then examine broadly the matters of children as agents for missions as well as child ministries and overall mission strategy, with special attention to the 4/14 Window.

LESSON TEN:

Mission — What the Church Is Called to Do



OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Apply key concepts in the historical development and the current practice of missions to the ministry of holistic child development.
-



Most churches give some attention to missions. Many have a “Missions Sunday” once a year and often invite a missionary to speak, usually showing pictures and challenging the church to give to missions. I have often been one of those speakers. Therefore, most churches believe that missions are important and that the church should occasionally spend a day or so focusing specifically on missions. Having done so, many churches will feel they can then get back to the real work of “doing church.” Have you ever thought that perhaps the main reason for the existence of the Church is to do missions or to be a missionary?

What is *Mission*? The word *mission* is not used in the Bible. But Andrew Kirk, in

his fine book *What is Mission?*¹²⁶ helps us understand the significance of Mission. Kirk’s definition of Mission is: “The purposes and activities of God in and for the whole universe.”¹²⁷ “No one,” he says, “falls outside its compass. It perseveres even when opposed, rejected and misinterpreted.”¹²⁸ God’s purpose has always been to redeem mankind and re-establish His rule on earth. His means for doing this is what we call “Mission.”

If we agree with Kirk, Mission is at the heart of “Church.” “The

Just as we used a capital “C” in referring to the worldwide Church, so we often use a capital “M” when referring to global Mission or the Mission of the Church. We will use the small “m” when referring to specific mission work or missionary activity.

Church,” says Kirk, “is missionary by definition. [R]ather than think of it as one aspect of its existence, it is better to think of it as defining its essence.”¹²⁹ Mission is quite simply, though profoundly, what the Christian community is sent to do.

If Mission is at the heart of Church, have you ever thought that perhaps the main purpose of the Bible is to be a Missionary Manual? Perhaps the whole of the Bible “is the story of God’s Mission — why and how lost humanity must and will be redeemed by a loving God.”¹³⁰ As we look at the Bible in that light, we see that to redeem all people is the center of God’s concern. And central to our purposes here, we may rest assured that “all people” includes children.

■ **Overview of Mission in the Bible**

Some people think that the foundation for Mission is the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19. But the rationale for Mission is found throughout the Bible. God’s choosing of Abraham was a selection of one nation to communicate His message to others. God’s covenant with Abraham was that He would bless Abraham and that all nations would be blessed through him: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; *and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*” (Genesis 12:2-3, emphasis added).

From the beginning, Abraham’s descendants had the responsibility of blessing the nations. Throughout the Exodus and the conquest of the Promised Land, through the Judges and all of the Kings, God continued to be faithful to His covenant. His purpose was that His name was being exalted among the nations. The blessing was never only for Israel but from the beginning, for the nations.

The word *nations* (or *peoples, languages, or tongues*) occurs more than 400 times in the Bible. Often, these words describe an aspect of God’s concern for or predictions about the fate of all the nations (or peoples) of the world. The book of Jonah is an Old Testament example of Mission.

A SHORT HISTORY OF MODERN MISSIONS

The Perspectives on World Mission¹³¹ identifies three “eras” of missions in the last 200 years. These years are the time frame of what is called “Modern Missions.”

The **First Era** of Modern Missions (1792-1810) began with the “Founder of Modern Mission,” William Carey. In 1791, William Carey wrote an article called “An enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use ‘Means’ for the Conversion of the Heathens.” He argued that in order for the missionary endeavor to be successful, mission societies or sending agencies were needed to provide prayer and financial support to send out missionaries (these societies were the “Means” to which he referred).

Soon after, “Means” were established. The Baptist Missions Society with William Carey as its first missionary was formed. Although it was weak and provided only the minimal support Carey needed to get to India, it inspired many other societies on both sides of the Atlantic.¹³²

Mission to the coastlands of Africa and Asia characterized the First Era. It saw the establishment of denominational agencies. Most of the missionaries were British or European. The era was characterized by an astonishing demonstration of love and sacrifice on the part of those who went out. Very few missionaries survived. It was also characterized by very high quality and holistic mission strategies. Some of the health and educational systems set up during that era are still bearing fruit today.

The Second Era, (1865-1974) featured missions into the interior of mission fields. The impetus was Hudson Taylor’s bold vision that the peoples of the interior of China needed to be

reached. The organization which he founded — China Inland Mission — eventually served more than 6,000 missionaries. Over 40 other interior mission agencies were formed — Africa Inland Mission and Sudan Interior Mission, among others. North Americans became more prominent in missions during this era. The idea of *faith* missions was common — that is, non-denominational missionaries who raised their own support.

In both the First and Second eras of missions, ministry to children figured prominently, though this aspect is often overlooked in mission writing. The respected historian Kenneth Scott Latourette documents the history of the spread of Christianity in a comprehensive and sweeping way, but one must look very hard to see discussions of credible missions efforts directed toward children and youth.

Interestingly, though, his work has frequent references to the impact of Christian schools in missions efforts. A large number of African political leaders came out of the Christian school systems set up in almost all African nations during the first part of this century. Presidents Kenyatta, Moi, Kaunda, Nyerere, Boigne, and scores of others — not to mention virtually all the leaders of the African Church — are among those whose lives were impacted by this early mission strategy in Africa.

To some extent, the same was true in Asia. For example, Latourette observes the importance of Christian schools in India:

*Protestantism's approach to India was varied. . . . Some of it was through schools. . . . They ranged from village schools in which members of the depressed classes were doors of hope to a world of larger opportunity, through secondary schools, to colleges of university grade.*¹³³

Latourette notes too that the leader “who did most to shape the ideals of revolutionary China between 1911 and the late 1940s was Sun Yat-Sen, an avowed Christian who owed most of his formal education to Christian schools.”¹³⁴ Other examples could be cited.

One can also get a sense of the importance of Christian schools by studying the history of communism. One of the first restrictions under communism was on Christian schools. Referring to the takeover by the communists in China, Latourette writes:

*Religious instruction of youths under 18 years of age in groups of more than four was forbidden ... Special theological courses were still allowed, but only by express permission of the state. No believer was permitted to teach in a state school.*¹³⁵

For a variety of reasons, the mission emphasis on schools was largely abandoned after the end of the colonial era. The relief and development focus of many evangelicals may have absorbed some of the energies formerly devoted to ministry through schools. These new efforts were not, however, normally targeted toward children and youth. Obviously, we cannot and should not try to start Christian schools — at least not on a national scale. But the questions we must ask are, “With what have we replaced the mission emphasis on children and youth in schools and how are we growing the next generation of Church and national leadership?”

The Third Era of missions (1974-present) like the previous two was inspired by a key visionary, Cameron Townsend. Townsend was a “second era” missionary working in Guatemala trying to distribute Spanish Bibles. He noticed that most Indians did not speak Spanish. One asked him, “If your God is so smart, why can't he speak our language?”¹³⁶ Good question! The problem inspired Townsend to start his own mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators. At first Townsend estimated that there were probably 500 or so unreached tribal groups in the world. Now we know that there are more than 5,000! Wycliffe has continued to grow, focusing particularly on tribal groups

and languages. Today Wycliffe has over 6,000 missionaries and the highest number of staff with Ph.D.s and other highly trained personnel.

As had happened in the earlier eras, the third era spawned many new mission agencies and organizations. This era saw the rise of many “Service Missions” like Missionary Aviation Fellowship and Gospel Recordings. In the early 1950s, it saw the first of the many Relief and Development organizations like World Vision and Compassion International.

SEVEN IMPORTANT MISSIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS¹³⁷

1. The Great Commission

The most important concept is the Great Commission found in Matthew chapter 28 — “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.” In view of the rapid secularization of the U.S.A. and Western Europe and the rapid spread of Islam, New Age and other false religions, it is difficult to believe that the Great Commission is any closer to being fulfilled than it ever was. However, that is a short-sighted view and a broader understanding of what God is doing throughout the world helps put things into perspective. It can also give us a much more positive outlook on the status of world Christianity and the prospects of fulfilling the Great Commission.

2. People Groups

A people group may be defined as an ethnic or racial group speaking its own language and having its own traditions, history, customs, and language. As missionaries and mission organizations have begun to think about people groups, instead of just national boundaries, they have been able to target their efforts much more specifically and effectively to individual groups within countries. The concept of looking at the world in terms of people groups instead of national boundaries has revolutionized the way missiologists look at the unfinished task of evangelism.

3. Evangelized and Unevangelized (or Reached and Unreached)

Another useful missiological concept is the distinction between evangelized and unevangelized peoples.

For missiological purposes, a group is evangelized if most people have had an “adequate” opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. This does not mean that all or even most of the individuals have accepted Christ. It does mean that there are enough churches, missionaries, radio programs, available Bible portions, translations or other Christian resources for them to become Christians if they want to. “Unreached” people are groups who have not had that opportunity, for whatever reason, to respond to the Gospel.

For example, the percentage of committed Christians in France and Thailand is low. However, France is an “evangelized” country and Thailand is not. Why? In France almost everyone has heard about Jesus. Anyone who wants more information about the faith, or who wants to become a Christian can find other believers to help, can find a Bible in his or her language and many other resources. But in Thailand many — perhaps most — have never heard of Jesus and the Church is not extensive enough to provide an adequate opportunity for an interested Thai to receive Christ.

4. Receptivity of People Groups

One thing that missiologists talk about frequently is the receptivity of people. That is, how receptive is a particular group to hearing the gospel and making a commitment to Christ? Many groups of people are unreceptive — militant Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists would be among

those least receptive.

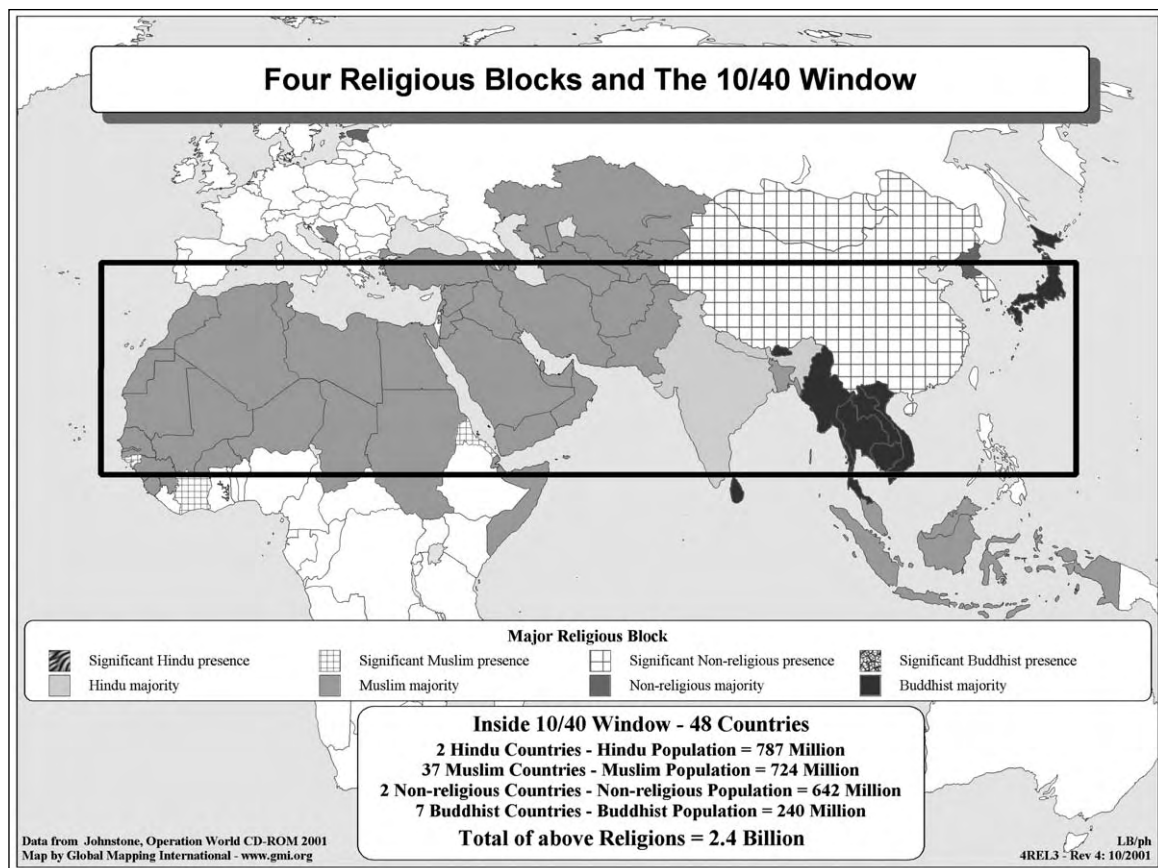
While children and young people are not a people group by the definitions we are using, as we will see later, they are the most receptive segment of the population in very many societies. Many missions have taken a short-sighted view of their evangelism efforts — Christ is coming soon; therefore we have to evangelize the adults. They often do not have time to evangelize the children and “grow” the Church.

However, if older populations are so unreceptive, serious mission organizations must certainly give more attention to the segment of the population that **is** receptive.

5. The 10/40 Window

The concept of the 10/40 Window is useful in viewing an area of the world that is largely unreached and poor. This *window* is from the 10th to the 40th latitudes, stretching roughly from West Africa across through the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia and including Indonesia. There are at least six reasons why the 10/40 Window is significant.¹³⁸

- **There is historical and biblical significance in this part of the world.** Ancient biblical history was worked out in territories marked by the 10/40 Window. In the 10/40 Window, Christ was born, lived His life, and died on a cross. Indeed, it was not until Paul’s second missionary journey — and toward the end of biblical record — that events of divine history occurred outside the territory identified as the 10/40 Window.
- **Most of the world’s unevangelized people live in the 10/40 Window.** In fact, while this is only one-third of the total land area of the world, almost two-thirds of the world’s people live in the 10/40 Window.



- **The 10/40 Window is the heart of the world's non-Christian religions.** There are 28 Muslim countries, one Hindu country with a population of over a billion people and eight Buddhist countries with a population of over 230 million people.
- **The poorest live in the 10/40 Window.** More than eight out of 10 of the poorest people in the 10/40 Window have a gross national product of under \$500 per person per year.
- **The quality of life for people is the lowest in countries in the 10/40 Window.** One way of measuring the quality of life has been to combine three variables: life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy. More than eight out of 10 of the people living in the 50 countries of the world with the lowest quality of life also live in the 10/40 Window.
- **The 10/40 Window is a stronghold of Satan.** As we look back through the pages of history, we discover in the record of the prophet Daniel evidence of a territorial stronghold by the spiritual forces of evil (Daniel 10:13).

6. The Growth of Christianity

When contemplating Satan's hold on so much of the 10/40 Window and other parts of the world, it's easy to get discouraged about the progress of global evangelism. Looking at the decline in committed Christianity in the Western world can also be discouraging. However, there is considerable reason for hope. Indeed, many Christians tend to have a narrow view of what God is doing. In fact, people movements are taking place around the world and the Holy Spirit is obviously winning battles in diverse places around the globe.

Revivals have been sweeping across the globe. Since the 1930s, the "center of Christianity" has been slowly shifting southward and eastward. The decades of the 40s, 50s, and 60s were times of massive revivals throughout Africa. In fact, now the majority of Africans south of the Sahara claim to be Christians.

The 70s was the decade of enormous increases in evangelicalism in Latin America. There are now more evangelicals in Brazil than there are in all of Western Europe. The 80s saw Christianity sweep through many parts of Asia. The Korean Church is now one of the most active and evangelical churches in the entire world, and the number of missionaries being sent out per capita is the greatest of any country. There now may be as many Asian Christians as there are Western Christians.

Also, the ratio of Christians to non-Christians in the world has been steadily decreasing, especially in the last few decades. In the time of apostle Paul, the number of Christians to non-Christians was astronomical: 1 to 50. Even in 1792, at the dawn of the modern missionary age when William Carey went to Asia, the ratio of Christians to non-Christians was still small.

Now, however, more than 30 percent of people worldwide call themselves Christians (one out of every three), and another 40 percent have been evangelized (i.e., they have had an opportunity to hear about Christ). This means that two out of every three people in the world are either Christian or have had an opportunity to hear the gospel. Looked at in this way, the remaining task of sharing the gospel with the unreached is less daunting than it has been at any time in history.

7. The Growth of Non-Western Missions

The above brief summary of mission history is decidedly Western. However, the global mission movement is by no means only Western. Over the past quarter century, the growth in the number of non-Western missionaries and mission organizations, while less well documented, has nevertheless been dramatic. In fact, it is now estimated that non-Western missionaries outnumber Western missionaries.¹³⁹ In Asia, it is exciting to see the enthusiasm and commitment of a huge

number of Indian, diaspora Chinese, Filipinos, Indonesians, Singaporeans, and other nationalities responding to the missionary calling.

Larry Pate¹⁴⁰ lists several essential mindsets which must be in place to ensure that this growth of global missions is encouraged and supported. These include:

- The Non-Western Church — Asian, African, and Latin American — must learn to understand itself in a global context.
- Global cooperation in missionary training is vital. Many two-thirds world missionaries are sent to the field with little or no training and others wait months or even years for a training opportunity.
- Global models of support must shift toward the Two-Thirds World. Western mission agencies need to incorporate many two-thirds missionaries into their organizations, allowing them complete international status and equal opportunities for leadership. Non-Western mission sending agencies and missionaries need to be supported.
- Informational resources must be decentralized. This is among the goals of such international agencies as Global Mapping International, DAWN Ministries, and OC International.
- Western missionaries must be prepared to shift roles. Many tasks in which Western missionaries have traditionally been engaged must increasingly fall into the hands of non-Western leaders.

The expansion of the non-Western missionary movement does not mean that there are no longer valid roles for Westerners in missions. Harold Fuller of SIM¹⁴¹ has outlined four “Stages” of missionary roles in relation to the mission church. These apply to Western and non-Western missionaries. The stages are:

- **Pioneer** — *Stage One*: Requires the gift of leadership along with other gifts. No believers; missionary must lead and do much of the work himself.
- **Parent** — *Stage Two*: Requires gift of teaching. The young Church has a growing child’s relationship to the mission. But the parent must avoid paternalism.
- **Partner** — *Stage Three*: Requires changing from a parent-child relationship to an adult-adult relationship. Difficult for both to change but essential to the Church’s becoming a mature “adult.”
- **Participant** — *Stage Four*: A fully mature church assumes leadership. As long as the mission remains, it should use its gifts to strengthen the Church to meet the original objectives of Matthew 28:19, 20. Meanwhile, the mission should be involved in Stage One elsewhere.

THE CHILD AND MISSION

Why this lengthy explanation of missions and missiology in a book about children? The reason is that children are (or should be) very strategic in reaching the unreached and furthering God’s Kingdom. Children figure prominently (or should do so) in each of the seven key missions concepts noted below:

1. The Great Commission applies to children as well as to adults.
 2. Children may not be a people group in the usual sense, but, as we will see in the next
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- lesson, viewing them as a people group helps us view them more strategically.
3. Many of the world's children are among the world's unevangelized.
 4. Children more than any other people group are receptive to the gospel.
 5. Nearly half the population of every country within the 10/40 Window is under the age of 18.
 6. Where the churches are growing, most of the new converts are under the age of 18.
 7. Children are both objectives of and resources for Mission in the non-Western world.

■ **An Organizational Example**

The strategic importance of children has changed how Compassion International thinks about growth strategies. Certainly there was no shortage of impoverished children to help around the world. We could use all our resources in places like Nairobi or Sao Paulo and still not solve all the problems. We needed more discriminating criteria to help us decide *which* impoverished children to help, where to grow, and what possible new countries to open. At the top of the list of criteria today is the “missiological” criteria. That is, “Where can we help impoverished children, the emerging Church and also be strategic in furthering God’s Kingdom?”

Compassion’s reflections on our role in furthering the Kingdom have changed us a great deal. The staff in each country knows the language of unreached peoples and evangelism and are more aware of what God is doing around the world and in the countries in which they work. Most of the new children enrolled into existing projects or children enrolled into new projects are from unsaved families and our overall growth is largely from unsaved populations. The directors and staff in each country know who the unreached peoples are.

Thus, we are not just helping the poor or even the poor within churches. Rather, we are challenging the churches to have a vision beyond themselves and further God’s Kingdom by deliberately enrolling non-Christian children so that they and their families can come to Christ.



SUMMARY:

- Some Important Statements on Mission by Andrew Kirk:
 - Mission is the purposes and activities of God in and for the whole universe.
 - The Church is missionary by definition.
 - Mission is simply what the Christian community is sent to do.
 - The main purpose of the Bible is that of a missionary manual.
 - The whole Bible is the story of God’s Mission - why and how lost humanity must and will be redeemed by a loving God.
 - Three Eras in the History of Modern Missions:
 - The First Era (1792-1810) — founded by William Carey; missions to coastlands of Africa and Asia.
 - The Second Era (1865-1974) — spearheaded by Hudson Taylor; missions into the interior of mission fields; formation of 40 interior mission agencies.
 - The Third Era (1974-present) — inspired by Cameron Townsend who started Wycliffe Bible Translators; began to identify tribal and language groups and spawned a large group of specialized missions.
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- Seven Important Missiological Concepts and Their Relevance to Children
 - The Great Commission
 - People Groups
 - Evangelized and Unevangelized (or Reached and Unreached)
 - Receptivity of People Groups
 - The 10/40 Window
 - The Growth of Christianity
 - The Growth of Non-Western Missions



READINGS:

- Donald McGavran, “The Bridges of God.” Excerpted from the chapter called, “To Reach All Peoples” in *Worldwide Perspectives*, ed. Meg Crossman (Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1995).
- Meg Crossman, “Today’s Global Human Need” and other pages excerpted from *Our Globe and How to Reach it*, Global Evangelization Movement: the A.D. 2000 Series, eds. David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson. (Birmingham Alabama: New Hope, 1990).
- “God’s Heart for the Nations.” Excerpted from the chapter called, “To Reach All Peoples” in *Worldwide Perspectives*, ed. Meg Crossman (Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1995).
- Luis Bush, “Getting to the Core of the Core: The 10/40 Window” (Wheaton, Il.: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 1996).



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Using Andrew Kirk’s thoughts on Mission, write a child-friendly definition of mission.
- We stated that the first and second era of modern Missions prominently focused on children but this is no longer the focus in the third era. It was further asked: “With what have we replaced the mission emphasis on children and youth in schools?”
 - How would you respond to this concern?
 - How is the Church in your country growing the next generation of Church and national leadership?
- If you are from a non-Western country, discuss emerging mission activity, especially that which relates to ministries to children. How specifically are you personally (or your denomination) involved?
- Review the seven important missiological concepts. For each one, give your own example of the application to holistic child development and mission to children.

- ¹²⁶ Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission?* (Darton, UK: Longman & Todd Ltd., 1999), 25.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ¹³⁰ Jonathan Lewis, ed. *World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1987), 2.
- ¹³¹ Meg Crossman, ed. *Worldwide Perspectives* (Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1995), 5-1.
- ¹³² *Ibid.*, 5-4.
- ¹³³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity (Vol. II): Reformation to the Present: A. D. 1500 to A.D. 1975* (San Francisco, Ca.: Harper Collins, 1975), 1353.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1317-8.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1397-8.
- ¹³⁶ Crossman, *Worldwide Perspectives*, 5-10.
- ¹³⁷ These seven missiological concepts are adapted from Daniel Brewster's unpublished paper from 1995 titled *Compassion's Role in Furthering the Kingdom*.
- ¹³⁸ Adapted from Luis Bush, *Getting to the Core of the 10/40 Window* (Wheaton, Il.: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 1996), 1-7.
- ¹³⁹ Larry Pate, "The Changing Balance in Global Mission" in *Worldwide Perspectives*, ed. Meg Crossman (Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1995), 15-14, 15-15.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15-15, 15-16.
- ¹⁴¹ Harold Fuller, "Stages of Missionary Roles" in *Worldwide Perspectives*, ed. Meg Crossman (Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1995), 5-6.

LESSON ELEVEN:

Practical Issues in Mission and Children



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Discuss and contextualize some cautions in mission to children in cross-cultural settings.
- Defend a position on the validity and strategic value of the 4/14 Window.
- Develop strategies which properly place children as both recipients of and resources for mission activities.

In lesson seven, we examined several matters pertaining to the conversion of children. Faith development was compared to the growth of a tree. However, in that lesson we were exploring issues related to the children in the Church and/or those primarily growing up in Christian homes. We now turn our attention more directly to issues pertaining to the child and Mission. The issues of conversion and faith development in cross-cultural or interfaith evangelism are very different from those in the Christian context. As we shall see, ministry to children may be a remarkably effective way to find sensitive inroads into unreached communities and people groups. But interfaith evangelism, and especially the interfaith evangelism of children, has very different issues and implications. Some of those issues will be the subject of this lesson.



A common argument presented concerning cross-cultural or interfaith child conversions is that children are not psychologically mature enough to make an informed decision about Christ or to choose their own religion. Hence, directing a child toward a particular religion is not ethically correct. Some Christians suggest that it is unethical to even evangelize children! Their view is that we should evangelize only parents and that they will then evangelize their own children. However, this position is not scriptural. The biblical pattern of evangelism is to proclaim the gospel to everybody. No one is excluded. It is neither ethical nor fair that only one large section of the population

hears the gospel if another section responds favorably to it.

Evangelism or providing Christian training to children of non-Christian parents is neither exploitative nor unethical. At the same time, we must be very clear about the special, particular sensitivities and ethical considerations involved in interfaith spiritual ministries to children.

CONVERSION OR PROSELYTISM?¹⁴²

Charges and accusations are sometimes made about *proselytizing* among children. There are laws in many countries prohibiting proselytizing. Further, some countries are now making laws against any conversion from one faith to another. Note the difference between conversion and proselytism. *Conversion* is a voluntary changing of one's beliefs and/or behavior or a change of religious allegiance. *Proselytism* is seeking a change of another's religion under the dominating influence of the stronger powers (under duress) or when it is economically or socially advantageous to do so.

In reality, it is impossible to force conversions. True conversion refers to a deep inner spiritual change within an individual that, by definition, must be voluntary. While this is true, it is also true that sincere, sensitive evangelism is often misunderstood.

We must remember too that most non-Western peoples tend to come to Christ as family groups or clans. All major decisions are group decisions — and no one decides until the whole group is ready to decide. A church worker in child evangelism efforts needs to understand these people movements. Seeking the conversion of an individual child may not only put the child at risk of ostracism, but may be culturally insensitive as it is contrary to the way any decision is made in that society.

WHAT ABOUT “BUYING” CONVERTS AND THE DANGER OF “RICE” CHRISTIANS?

Much legitimate criticism has been lodged against *buying* Christians and the dangers of creating *rice* Christians. People may be coerced into making a declaration of faith in response to receiving a bowl of rice or other attractive material goods. They may do this because they are desperate or simply want to ensure that the flow of *rice* is not interrupted. Children and families may reevaluate their declarations of faith when the need is alleviated.

In reality, however, it is impossible to *buy* a convert. No responsible Christian would insist on a decision under such circumstances or believe that any declaration under such duress truly reflects the change of heart that brings a person to faith.

On another level the motivation which pushes a person toward the threshold of faith is not nearly as important to God as the fact that the person is so motivated to place his or her faith in Christ. Many people's motivations for turning to Christ may be somewhat suspect. In the long run it is usually more appropriate to affirm and nurture a person who has made a decision to follow Christ than to critique the motivations which contributed to that decision.

EVANGELISM OR EXPLOITATION?

Christians engaged in meeting the spiritual needs of children are often criticized by non-Christians who see evangelism as a form of exploitation.

How do we respond to this accusation? What methods do we employ that make this accusation a legitimate one? How do we exercise a non-manipulative integrity and respect in our evangelism

without softening the gospel and the need of children for it? First we must be clear in our statements with non-Christian agencies that children have spiritual as well as physical, emotional and mental needs. If the child is to be treated holistically then the spiritual needs must also be met. While exercising sensitivity, we must also stand unapologetically firm in the gospel. Children need an authentic encounter with Christ to experience the fullness of life that God intended for them.

We must take an honest look at our methods and our motives. Is our evangelism rooted in the well-being of the child? Renita Boyle asks:

*Are we acting as brokers who baptize children into denominations or as ambassadors for the purposes and glory of God? Are we indoctrinating or revealing truth? Child-focused ministries must respect and involve the family, community and church as much as possible. Mission among the young needs to involve itself in contextualization to look for cultural factors that will help the child to understand and respond to the gospel in a way distinctive to them.*¹⁴³

I believe that evangelism or providing Christian training to children of non-Christian parents is neither exploitative nor unethical. In ministry to children, we must always be *particularly* sensitive to the proper time, place, manner, and approach for overt evangelism. Inattentiveness to the situation and circumstances may make overt evangelism *in that time, place and manner* insensitive or even unethical.

One common obstacle to child evangelism is the conviction that children belong to the religions of their parents. Most parents of any faith would share this sentiment. Thoughtful, ethical evangelists will acknowledge and support the absolute necessity for sensitivity in this important matter. At the same time, however, a distinction should be made between simply viewing children as property of their parents or treating children as people who have rights of their own. The most basic exegesis of the Great Commission, and indeed the foundation for any mission, is that we are to take the gospel to *ta ethne* — all the ethnic groups, with the intention and expectation that they will become followers of Christ.

CAUTIONS FOR CHILD EVANGELISM IN SENSITIVE SITUATIONS

Evangelism and providing Christian training to children of non-Christian parents, if done with integrity and transparency, is neither exploitative nor unethical. The presentation of the gospel, even to children, is legitimate and mandated by Scripture. However, there may be *circumstances* that may make overt evangelism improper or even unethical. The concerned cross-cultural worker must also be wise, sensitive, and compassionate. Here are a few principles which I believe are valid and important for those ministering to children in sensitive, non-Christian environments.

- Children should not be subjected to religious teaching and training without the knowledge and consent of the parents. In fact, some missionaries, including me, believe that in most sensitive situations, church leaders should not baptize a child until the parents are also ready to be baptized, in order to ensure that the child has support and encouragement in his or her new faith.
- Christians should not pressure children for conversion in situations where the children and/or their parents are completely dependent on the financial and/or material support of Christians. This may occur in orphanages, children's homes, daycare centers, refugee camps and social aid projects or communities heavily sustained by Christian development

efforts. Children are so conscious of their powerlessness that they are likely to accept any conditions attached to the support they are provided with. Surely the gospel may be presented to children in these situations but with sensitivity and caution.

- Christians should not seek the conversion of children with a patronizing attitude that distances oneself from the painful reality that the children are experiencing. The sensitive caregiver should relate empathetically to suffering children who are extremely vulnerable and have no control over their circumstances. The approach must be one of identification and compassion.
- It is improper to present the gospel to children in a way that undermines, despises or denies the validity of their culture. A common historical problem in missions is that of confusing Christianity with culture. Christian conversion sometimes becomes synonymous with cultural conversion. God created cultures. Just as every culture has aspects that must be rejected or redeemed, so every culture has aspects that can be affirmed and celebrated. We must be aware of cultural factors while at the same time not allowing them to undermine the power of the gospel.
- It is improper and may be unethical to guide children to become Christians in instances where they do not have a proper understanding of what it entails. Especially in circumstances where a commitment to Christ may involve ostracism, rejection, persecution, or suffering, the consequences of a commitment to follow Christ must be clearly presented in a manner commensurate with the maturity level of the child.

■ ***An Organizational Example***

The organization that I represent, Compassion International, includes Christian training as part of all the programs and projects it supports. We deliberately enroll children from non-Christian families. However, our expectation is that all our actions, intentions and objectives and those of the churches with which we partner should always be transparent and obvious. We make it explicit that Christian training will be provided to all enrolled children. We will never enroll a child, from any background, without the consent of the parents or primary caregivers. Sometimes the consent is in writing; other times it's only verbal.

There are many instances in such programs where children give their hearts to Christ. Again, parents should always be made aware of what is happening. Parents of all children are encouraged to participate in Christian training themselves so that they know exactly what their children are learning.

However, more than just parental consent is needed before we would encourage our church partners to baptize new young believers. I support the position that children living in non-Christian contexts should not be baptized unless their parents are also prepared to make that declaration of their new faith. It is not surprising, though, that many parents of these children themselves do make decisions to follow Christ.

STRATEGIC MISSION TO CHILDREN

In lesson seven, I alluded to an idea called the 4/14 Window. The 4/14 Window refers to the reality noted earlier that most people who make decisions for Christ do so between the ages of four and 14. From what you learned in lesson 10, you now know that the idea of the 4/14 Window is

connected to the better-known concept of the 10/40 Window. This is intentional, of course, and I believe that both concepts are important for mission strategists today.

The idea of the 4/14 Window was created in a presentation done by Dr. Bryant Myers, a Director in World Vision International. In an eye-opening presentation to the EFMA Executive Retreat in 1992 called “The State of the World’s Children: A Cultural Challenge to the Christian Mission in the 1990s,” Dr. Myers painted a sobering picture of the numbers and conditions of children and youth throughout the world today and noted some of the implications that this huge and often suffering people group presents to mission strategists today. In his presentation he noted that in the U.S.A. nearly 85 percent of people who make a decision for Christ do so between the ages of four and 14!

As noted in lesson seven, this startlingly high percentage has been confirmed by the respected George Barna Research group.

A WINDOW WITHIN THE WINDOW¹⁴⁴

The 4/14 Window may be just as significant as the 10/40 Window. Each time I have spoken to non-Western groups about this subject, I have conducted my own unofficial survey and it has overwhelmingly confirmed this important missiological fact: Generally 50-60 percent of the people I ask say that they became Christians between the ages of four and 14.

Obviously it depends somewhat on how becoming a Christian is defined, and many Christians have more than one experience, the second often as an adult. But what then shall we say? Perhaps only 60 percent of Christians make their decision for Christ during these pliable years. Or perhaps only 50 or 40 percent. What should this say to mission leaders today?

The reality of the 4/14 Window was once again confirmed at the recent Lausanne Conference held in Pattaya, Thailand. There, Paul Eschelmann, (the person primarily responsible for the *Jesus Film* worldwide), asked the 1,700 participants of the consultation to stand if they had made their first decisions to follow Christ before the age of 15. At least 60 percent of that group rose to their feet.

■ ***Children as a People Group***

The category of children is of course much too broad to fit the normal definitions of a people group. People groups are typically defined along ethnic, geographic, habitat or social affinity lines. Nevertheless, children as a group are always identifiable and warrant not only ministry to address their physical needs but the attention of missiologists as well in development of effective mission strategies. Strategic consideration should be given, for example, to the children who have migrated to cities in search of employment or education. Within the 4/14 Window are children in many such situations providing gateways to their people.

■ ***The 4/14 Window and Church Growth***

Experience also suggests that one of the most significant interventions that can be made to encourage church growth is to assist the Church to develop child health, education, and spiritual nurture programs for children. If child assistance programs are done right, if non-Christians are enrolled and if parents are included, those churches will invariably grow.

The importance of ministry to children has been frequently recognized by church planters. All too often, however, the recognition is given because ministry to children is believed to evangelize their parents. It often does, but when ministry to children is done for this reason, it is manipulative and lacks credibility. Ministry to children should be done because of the value of children as chil-

I shall never forget the day I received a call from Dr. Gene Daniels. Dr. Daniels was researching people coming to Christ in India. In one area, he found that approximately 6,000 Banjaras (an ethnic group in central India) had made decisions to follow Christ. He found that about 30 evangelists — mostly young people who had formerly been sponsored by Compassion — had been most influential in whole groups of Banjaras deciding to become Christians.

dren in the eyes of God. In the process, many of those families — both the children and the adults — will come to Christ.

We know that children are the Church of the future. However, we must understand that children and their parents are also the Church of today.

■ ***The 4/14 Window and Leadership Development***

Further evidence suggests that most mature Christian leaders came to Christ as children or young people.¹⁴⁵ In their enthusiasm for development of global evangelism strategies, Christians have at times acted as though we did not have time to wait for young Christians to mature into their place of leadership. This is a shortsighted approach. Clearly we must affirm that we can still afford to grow the Church.

Today's children are still tomorrow's leaders. Child development is a long-term process. Just as we as parents know that it takes at least 18 years to "develop" our own children, so likewise, child development is a long-time proposition. Maturity in future Christian leadership requires strategic and sustained investments in the Christian nurture of children today.

■ ***Don't Stereotype Ministries to Children***

There is a tendency to stereotype ministries and missions to children as work for the less able or creative missionaries. If child ministries are a very effective way to achieve Church Growth, to develop new

Christian Leadership, and an effective way to reach adults and unreached peoples, it is important that mission groups and mission thinkers do not ignore children and youth. They must also not stereotype ministries to children. Children are not insignificant. Mission groups should re-examine mission strategies which suggest a bias toward ministry to adults only. They should practice a holistic mission which includes the children and youth.

CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF MISSION

The reality of the 4/14 window means that including children in mission strategies is important for serious mission work today. However, children must not be thought of only as possible objects of evangelism and mission. As we have also seen, both Scripture and experience show us that children have far more spiritual capacity than they are often given credit for. They can hear and obey God's Word in their lives and they can minister to others. They participated fully in the Jewish festivals and are included in the Commandments. Also, they are chosen again and again as God's instruments when adults or adult institutions fail.

Pete Hohmann writes:

“Kids have a tremendous spiritual capacity. They can bring joy to God’s heart. They can hear and obey God. They can minister to others. However, children are dependent on adults to equip them to do these things. Our lack of vision for the spiritual capacity of children can cause us to do things that actually harm or stunt the spiritual growth of children. Children are dreamers. They are idealists; they always have faith in a better tomorrow. No wonder Jesus told us to be like little children. God often accomplishes His greatest purposes through children.”¹⁴⁶

■ **God Often Uses Children to Accomplish His Mission**

As we have seen, God was not hesitant to use children as His messengers or instruments seemingly when the task is so important it can’t be entrusted to adults. We think that great movements must come from adults. But God often uses a child to accomplish His greatest purposes. Perhaps God knows that children will not rob His glory. Perhaps He just knows they are listening. Consider these:¹⁴⁷

- When God needed great faith and great courage to kill a 9’6” giant that was ridiculing His people, who did He choose? A young boy with nothing but faith and a very dangerous slingshot. “You come to me with a sword of steel,” David said, “but I come to you in the name of the Lord” (1 Samuel 17).
- When the voice of the Lord had not been heard in Israel for a long time, God could not even talk to Eli and his sons. He needed a pure, clear, channel and chose a little boy named Samuel. Notice that He did not say, “Oh, well it’s just a child. I’ll give him an easy message. ‘Go tell Eli that I really, really love him.’” No, He said, “Go tell Eli that he and his sons are finished.” Would you trust that message to a child? God did (1 Samuel 1).
- When God needed vision — vision like His people had forgotten for many years — He chose an eight-year-old little boy named Josiah to be king. His grandpa was wicked, his daddy was wicked, but Josiah ruled with righteousness. God needed vision that only a child could bring (2 Kings 22).
- When God needed great creative genius, Moses’ life was at risk. His mother built a little basket, put it in the marsh and sent his sister, Miriam, to watch him. When Miriam saw her brother get picked up by the princess of Egypt, she ran up to the princess and (thinking of her own mom), said, “Can I find someone to take care of that baby for you?” Miriam ran home and got her own mom to take care of her little brother!
- When God needed great generosity, He chose a child. Throughout Scripture, we see that nearly every time a child is mentioned, God is doing something important. For example, feeding 5,000 people. He could have done it in any number of ways but He did it for that little guy just to show, I think, His respect for children and that He can multiply someone’s gift far beyond his or her expectations. Can you imagine when the little boy got home? Surely his mother said, “How was your lunch? And don’t make up one of your wild stories again!”
- When God wanted to test commitment He chose a child. When Peter was in the courtyard the first person to come to him and to test his faith was a servant girl. The Lord must have said, “I’m going to give Peter every opportunity to succeed.” If you cannot share your faith with a child, *who can you share it with?* This little girl said, “Aren’t you

Our vision for children is often so future oriented that we fail to see the tremendous spiritual capacity children have today. God has placed within children the same Holy Spirit that He has placed in adults, and He wants to powerfully touch and anoint kids.

—Pete Hohmann, *The Great Commissionary Kids*, 6.

one of his followers?” And Peter said, “No. No, little girl, I am not.”

■ **Children Need to Be Challenged**

But children need to be challenged. A look at the resources for Sunday school teachers will reveal many topics about how God will bless believers but virtually nothing on equipping children for outreach or challenging them for service or missions. I am told that on the day I was born my father carried me in his arms and prayed that I would someday be a missionary. Our family tradition says that he did the same for all of his six children. Occasionally when I speak in Asian mission conferences, I ask how many of the Asian parents carried their young children in their arms praying that they would become missionaries. Only very rarely has anyone been able to say that they had. More often people are shocked by my question. But children who are prayed for in that way, and then have that dream nurtured throughout

their childhood very often may make such a commitment.

Children (as well as adults) usually live up (or down) to our expectations of them. Many children and young people become bored with Christianity. The problem for some may be that they have not been given opportunities to put their faith into action. Their ideas and beliefs remain untested and, therefore, are not integrated into their own faith in a meaningful way.

■ **Giving Children a Missionary Worldview**

Pete Hohmann talks about giving children a missionary worldview. The idea is to help children view the world around them through the lens of God’s purpose. “We can give children no greater purpose,” Hohmann writes, “than God’s mandate to all believers: to make His name known in all the world. This is the purpose stated in the Bible. This is the purpose we need to impart to our children.”¹⁴⁸

How might we impart a missionary world view to children? How can we communicate concepts about missions to children in a way that they can understand and see how they fit in? How can kids come to know they really can make a difference in God’s global purposes? Hohmann suggests a number of ways. As only one possibility, Hohmann recommends teaching children the 10 “P” words developed by Jan Bell of Kids Can Make a Difference. He says the words are “the irreducible minimum to understanding missions. The 10 “P” words are:¹⁴⁹

1. **Purpose:** God’s purpose is to make His name known in all the world.
2. **Power:** God makes His name known by demonstrating His power to people.
3. **People:** God wants all people to know Him.
4. **People-Moving:** People are moving all over the world and this creates needs in their lives.
5. **Passport to the World:** God has always told His people to go into all the world but we need to know what the world looks like.
6. **Preparation:** Before we can go into the world we need preparation.
7. **Possessions:** Possessions are time, talent, money, and material things. We need to use

them for God's mission, not just for ourselves.

8. **Projects:** We need to mobilize for action now.
9. **Partnership:** We are in partnership with God in the task of making His name known.
10. **Proclamation:** Half the world still does not know about Jesus.

There are other resources to teach children about missions. An excellent web site with many resources listed is <http://www.missionresources.com/teachkidsr.html>.

■ ***How Can Children Be Involved in Missions?***

- Children can be effective in praying for others. Because of their sincere faith and believing hearts, children may be uniquely able to make a difference through prayer. One of the most powerful moments at the Congress on World Evangelization in Pretoria, South Africa in 1997 was the children praying confidently and competently for all the conference participants. "Because of their sincere faith and believing hearts, children are uniquely able to make a difference through prayer. . . . Since children think concretely, God often communicates His will to them through pictures in their minds as they pray."¹⁵⁰ Esther Inisky and her Esther Network details and documents the role of children as prayer warriors.¹⁵¹
- Children can share their faith. They often have a greater boldness in sharing than many adults.
- Children can make a difference through community outreach. Outreach in the community is the perfect "classroom of life" that builds character in children. Outreach is where children test their ideas and beliefs and discover what is real and who has power.
- Children can make a difference through involvement in world Missions. Unless we impart a biblical worldview to our children, society will impart its default worldview — self-gratification. God's purpose in the Bible is to make His name known to every tongue, tribe and nation."

*"Equipping kids to minister requires a lot of effort," writes Hohmann. "But, can we afford not to? Kids who minister to others are excited about their faith. They acquire a proven knowledge of God through real-life (classroom of life) experiences. These experiences become the building blocks of character. Children who minister to others also find a purpose in life that is greater than themselves."*¹⁵²

**SUMMARY:**

- Conversion Versus Proselytism:
 - *Conversion* is a voluntary changing of one's beliefs and/or behavior or a change of religious allegiance.
 - *Proselytism* is seeking a change of another's religion under the dominating influence of the stronger powers under duress or when it is economically or socially advantageous to do so.
 - It is impossible to "force conversion" because true conversion refers to a deep inner spiritual change and, therefore, by definition, must be voluntary.

 - Five Cautions for Cross-Cultural Child Evangelism in Sensitive Situations:
 - Children should not be subjected to religious teaching and training without the knowledge and consent of the parents.
 - Christians should not pressure children for conversion in situations where the children and/or their parents are completely dependent on the financial and/or material support of Christians.
 - Christians should not seek the conversion of children with a patronizing attitude that distances oneself from their reality or suffering.
 - Christians should not offer a gospel that undermines, despises or denies the validity of their cultures.
 - Especially where a commitment to Christ may involve ostracism, rejection, persecution, or suffering, the consequences of a commitment to follow Christ must also be presented in a manner commensurate with the child's understanding and maturity level.

 - Strategic Mission to children should consider the following:
 - The 4/14 Window refers to the fact that most people who make decisions for Christ do so between the ages of four and 14.
 - The 4/14 Window is so valid and strategic that serious mission groups must give more attention to people in this age group.
 - Targeting the 4/14 Window results in strategic church growth and leadership development among children.
 - Children are not only objectives of mission but also resources for missions.
 - Children can be involved in Mission in the following ways:
 - Praying for others
 - Sharing their faith
 - Community outreach
 - Involvement in world Mission
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**READINGS:**

- Vishnal Mangalwadi, “Conversion as Revolution” in *The Quest for Freedom and Dignity* (Chennai, India: South Asian Resources, 2001), chapter 6.
- Sujitha Siri Kumara, *The Ethics of Conversion in the Sri Lankan Context* (unpublished paper, June 2003).
- Willowbank Report. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Lausanne, 1974.
- Daniel Brewster, “Children ‘at Risk’ Because They Have Not Heard the Good News: The 4/14 Window,” Glenn Miles and Josephine-Joy Wright eds., *Celebrating Children* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 175-181.
- Daniel Brewster and Patrick McDonald, *Children: The Great Omission?* Booklet prepared for Lausanne III in Pattaya, Thailand, 2004 (Oxford, UK: Viva Network, 2004).
- Peter Hohmann, *The Great Commissionary Kids* (Springfield, Mo.: Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade, 1997), chapters 1-5, pp. 3-40.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Discuss and contextualize some cautions in mission to children in cross-cultural settings.
- Reflect on the definitions of conversion and proselytism. Do you agree with these definitions? Why or why not?
- Reflect on the five cautions of child evangelism in cross-cultural settings. Which of these are commonly violated in your culture and why?
- State at least two other cautions relating to the appropriateness or ethics of sharing your faith cross-culturally with children that may be necessary in your cultural context.
- Have you noticed that ministries to children have low priority in missions thinking? Give examples. Are ministries to children “stereotyped” (e.g., considered less important, considered to be only women’s work, not really strategic in mission, etc.)? Give examples.
- What are the implications of the 4/14 Window for your church, mission or agency?
- Discuss your experience of children and young people as *resources* for mission. How have you seen or heard of children being involved and making a contribution?
- Discuss at least three ways you will challenge your church and the children in your church to be involved as resources for mission.

- ¹⁴² I am indebted to Sujitha Siri Kumara, a Sri Lankan working with ESCAPE in Colombo. His paper, "The Ethics of Conversion in the Sri Lankan Context," presented in my class on Child, Church and Mission at the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary in June 2003, shaped several of the points in this lesson.
- ¹⁴³ Renita Boyle. 1997. "A Liturgy of Hope: A Summary of the Consultation Proceedings," *Transformation* 14:2-3.
- ¹⁴⁴ Portions of this section are adapted from Daniel Brewster's "The 4/14 Window: Child Ministries and Mission Strategies" in *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment*, ed. Phyllis Kilbourne (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC, 1996).
- ¹⁴⁵ In a "stand-up" survey of Asian Evangelical leaders at the Global Conference on Church Ministry and Mission at Pattaya, Thailand, in October 2002, nearly 80 percent had made their first decision for Christ before the age of 18.
- ¹⁴⁶ Pete Hohmann, *Kids Making a Difference*, from correspondence regarding a pre-publication manuscript.
- ¹⁴⁷ As told by Wess Stafford, President of Compassion International.
- ¹⁴⁸ Peter Hohmann, *The Great Missionary Kids* (Springfield, Mo.: Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade, 1997), 21.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24, 25. Homeschool curriculum originally from Jan Bell, "Kids Can Make a Difference," <http://www.missionresources.com/teachkidsr.html>.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵¹ Esther Ilnisky, *Let the Children Pray* (Ventura, Ca.: Regal Publications, 2000).
- ¹⁵² Peter Hohmann, *The Great Missionary Kids* (Springfield, Mo.: Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade, 1997), 21.

SECTION FIVE:

Avenues for Advocacy



OBJECTIVES:

As a result of completing the lessons in this section, the student will be able to:

- Contrast confrontational and non-confrontational advocacy to develop appropriate advocacy strategies within one's own ministry setting.
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the Christian context and apply key portions to one's own ministry to children.
- Discuss and defend at least five benefits of networking and apply networking principles to current ministries.

INTRODUCTION

In this final section on the Child, Church and Mission we begin by looking at the concept of advocacy. Advocacy is important to Compassion International. Indeed, at our most basic level, we view advocacy as fundamental to who we are. Our Mission Statement asserts that "In response to the Great Commission, we exist as an advocate for children, to release them from their spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty and enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults."

In improving the ministry to children, the Church needs to be aware of the primary secular initiatives and tools relating to protecting and providing for the child. The main such tool is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, in lesson 13 we will examine the useful aspects of this and other tools. but we will also raise some of the questions asked by some Christians from a biblical standpoint.

Networking is also important. We have shown the importance of the Church worldwide of responding to the needs of children. But many of the churches and ministries caring for children operate largely on their own. Effective and extensive networking can help ministries encourage one another, combine efforts and avoid overlap.

LESSON TWELVE:

Non-Confrontational Advocacy



OBJECTIVES:

- Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:*
- Contrast confrontational and non-confrontational advocacy.
 - Develop appropriate advocacy strategies for one's own ministry setting.



KEY VERSE:

Proverbs 31:8, 9

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”



ADVOCACY: THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

Advocacy takes its roots from the legal profession. It means speaking up for or pleading on behalf of another.

It is part of the role of the Church to advocate through speaking out against injustice, defending the cause of the poor, holding those in power accountable and empowering people to speak out for themselves. It is clear from the Bible that God expects Christians to be concerned about — and raise their voices on behalf of — the poor:

“Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street” (Lamentations 2:19).

“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

■ Abraham on Behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah:

“Then Abraham approached him and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing — to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ The LORD said, ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake’” (Genesis 18:23-26).

■ Moses on behalf of the Israelites:

Moses frequently had to intercede for the grumbling Israelites as God was leading them out of captivity in Egypt:

“But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. ‘O LORD,’ he said, ‘Why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened” (Exodus 32:11-14).

NON-CONFRONTATIONAL ADVOCACY

Anyone can be an advocate; he or she doesn't have to be a professional or an expert. An advocate is someone with a strong opinion, someone who actively strives to influence others in the same way. Advocacy is done directly by those affected by injustice or on their behalf. Most child advocacy organizations specifically target public policy or governments to change or enact laws to benefit children. This is a viable and important component of child advocacy and much good has been done for children worldwide through such advocacy.

Non-confrontational advocacy involves speaking out or enabling others to find their own voices to raise awareness. It includes actively challenging people with not just facts and figures but a distinct call for change. It may involve enabling others to make changes and using experience to train and equip those willing to make those changes. Almost always it involves prayer, education, research, training, encouraging, networking and other means of highlighting and addressing issues. We will see more characteristics of Compassion's non-confrontational advocacy approach in the discussion that follows.

A more aggressive form of advocacy involves action or activism. Methods often include lobbying government officials or those who make laws and policies. It's done through demonstrations, marches, holding placards and raising voices in public places. Sometimes advocacy is done through actions like obstructing access to facilities, through sabotage or other kinds of disruption.

ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPMENT GO TOGETHER

You have heard it said, “Give a child a fish, feed him for a day; teach a child to fish, feed him for a lifetime.” But what if the child has no access to the pond? What if the water has been polluted?

What if someone who is wealthy forces the child to give him the fish? What if other things keep people from using the skills and abilities they already have? Often development does not get to the root of the problem. Advocacy often deals with the structural aspects of poverty, exploitation and injustice that address more directly some of these issues.

■ **Advocacy Can Be a Forerunner for Child Development**

John the Baptist was a forerunner of the ministry of Jesus. In the same way, advocacy can prepare the way for your church to do significant child development work — work which is grounded in a deep understanding of the needs and issues facing children. Michael Shiferaw writes:

“John the Baptist acted like “a bulldozer/grader” and heavy construction equipment for Jesus: “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, make straight the way for the Lord.” He went before Jesus and prepared the people to receive, respect and follow Jesus. John the Baptist’s ministry helped the ministry of Jesus. In a way it also served as a foundation for it. The advocacy intervention can be made to prepare our would-be church partners the same way bulldozers, graders and heavy construction equipment prepare the ground for construction. Our Christian Child Sponsorship Program can be greatly facilitated and helped to have depth and readiness for fast growth and ensured sustainability if it were made to follow our advocacy intervention. It can have a solid foundation on which to grow and prosper. Advocacy can be to our core program what John’s ministry was for the ministry of Jesus.”¹⁵³

■ **Advocacy Can Strengthen Child Development Programs**

You cannot share what you do not have. Many churches doing development work struggle with the issue of ownership. Some have not caught the mission and vision of ministry to children. This is partly due to sowing the seed before properly preparing the seedbeds. Advocacy activities can help church members understand how they are part of a very significant harvest.

■ **Why Advocacy Is Needed for Children**

- Needs, neglect, abuse and threats
- Lack of services, healthcare, education, sanitation
- Bribery and abuse/misuse of power
- Discrimination and mistreatment
- Child pornography, child prostitution
- Black Market abduction and adoption
- Failure of the legal system; abusive police and military
- Products or practices that may be harmful to children
- Abortion or infanticide
- Cultural practices which may be harmful or not supportive of children

ADVOCACY IN COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL

While Compassion International shares the common definition of advocacy and agrees with the basic components listed above, we seek to distinguish ourselves in our advocacy practice. We intentionally do not define our child advocacy as being in the public policy realm. We do not lobby governments, seek legislative changes in the courts, or join the many United Nations groups working to do the same throughout the world. First and foremost we define ourselves as child advocates.

Whatever we do and say is for the defense of and intercession for children.

There are numerous child advocacy organizations. How is Compassion different? Perhaps the biggest difference is found in how we define our objectives. Since advocacy is about influencing change, we must advocate to those within our sphere of influence. Compassion is an evangelical Christian organization and therefore our greatest opportunity for influence is to the evangelical Church worldwide.

■ **Advocacy Is Our Mindset**

Compassion International views advocacy as a mindset that can influence all the ministries in the church. We often view an advocate as someone who is a champion for children. God's heart and hope for children contrasted — with the realities of their daily life and a keen awareness and understanding of where the Christian community is in its response to these realities — provide more than sufficient motivation for the church to be a champion for children.

Advocacy as a mindset allows us to be in regional and global discussions on child and mission issues and positions us to take our place in a variety of forums on child issues. Viewing ourselves as advocates encourages us to lift up our eyes and to view our ministry not just as administrators on behalf of children but as advocates for children — speaking out and acting on their behalf. As such, advocacy allows us to multiply our ministry rather than just add to it. It also enables us to improve and increase the ministry of other Christians on behalf of the impoverished children around the world.

As advocates for children we're compelled to speak to those within and outside the Compassion family to encourage and equip them in effective ministry to children. Advocacy is an integral part of staff, donor and partner development.

For Compassion advocacy is really about championing the cause of children through mobilizing the worldwide Christian community on their behalf. This involves using our voice and experience to educate, motivate and bring about changes in the hearts, minds and strategies of the Church and her people. Our approach is church-focused and non-confrontational. Our objective is to challenge the worldwide church to greater involvement and effectiveness on behalf of impoverished children.

Borrowing from and slightly modifying the Viva Network's (an organization we will highlight in the next lesson) statement of purpose, we can say that our advocacy ministries seek to:

- **Increase:** Motivating and equipping the Church and others toward greater involvement on behalf of children.
- **Improve:** Training and equipping the Church to greater effectiveness in their ministries to children.
- **Inspire:** Affirming and encouraging existing Christian ministries for impoverished children and influencing other Churches and individuals to reward ministries on behalf of impoverished children.

DEFINITION OF ADVOCACY FOR COMPASSION

“Child Advocacy for Compassion is the ministry of raising awareness of the needs, neglect, nurture, and potential of children in poverty and challenging and enabling those within our influence to greater involvement and effectiveness on behalf of children.”

■ **Expansion of Child Advocacy Definition**

- **Advocacy:** For Compassion, the most synonymous concept for advocacy is that of being a champion. We champion the cause of children in poverty and become the champions for individual children.
- **Ministry:** Our mission statement declares that we exist as advocates. Advocacy both characterizes who we are and directs what we do.
- **Raising Awareness:** We raise awareness through personal and public means of communication and education. We must have good information and research as a basis of this communication.
- **Needs:** With poverty comes a lack of opportunities and options and innumerable barriers to the development of children.
- **Neglect:** The concept of neglect includes the failure of caregivers and protectors to provide what is necessary for healthy development and also includes many types of abuse, oppression and injustice.
- **Nurture:** Children need to be nurtured to develop healthily. There are basics of good child development that can be taught and applied across circumstances and cultures.
- **Potential:** Each child has incredible potential, which good development helps to unfold. In addition, children are a great resource to their families and communities.
- **Children in Poverty:** Our target population is children in poverty. Children are the most powerless group in society. Children in poverty generally have the greatest obstacles to their development.
- **Challenging:** Advocacy needs to move people to action. We cast the vision and challenge others to help us fulfill it.
- **Enabling:** We enable others to engage in more effective child development through facilitation, training, equipping, and providing materials.
- **Those Within our Influence:** We can be effective only with those within our influence. We focus on those closest to Compassion (staff, sponsors and donors, church partners) and work out from that sphere of influence to an ever-widening influence on the worldwide Church. We do not seek to directly influence governments or secular authorities.
- **Greater Involvement:** The goal is not just awareness of the issues but greater activity on behalf of children in need. We share what we are doing, what others are doing and how people can get involved.
- **Effectiveness:** Activity without effectiveness is pointless. We challenge and equip others to engage in the most effective interventions with the least amount of redundancy.

AVENUES FOR NON-CONFRONTATIONAL ADVOCACY

1. Prayer

Whether it is in the preparation of the strategy or in its implementation, we want and need the Lord to be a part of our activities. Our own advocate, the Holy Spirit, prays on our behalf and stands before God speaking on our behalf.

2. Vision Casting

- Teaching church members about the biblical foundations of children and ministry to children (Great Commission).
- Teaching and sharing a biblical view of poverty and human development.

- Teaching and speaking about the needs, neglect and nurture of children — the nature and scope of challenges children in poverty face, the potential of children, the role of the Church and Christian community in the discipleship and development of children and the current state of the responses of the Church and Christian community to children.

3. Research

Advocacy involves more than just speaking out about children. Part of what we have to say, we will learn through research. Research will give us better understandings of:

- The needs, neglect and nurture of children — the nature and scope of the challenges and threats to children worldwide.
- The context in which child development takes place and the root causes of poverty; the injustice, exploitation, hopelessness and effects of modernity and post-modernity.
- Relevant child/adolescent law — the child-related legal and educational instruments at national, regional, and international levels.
- Current theory and practice of child development and children's issues around the world.
- The existing literature on child development and what is available in each country.

4. Speaking Out

- Finding and creating opportunities to speak out about the needs of children and challenging the Church to action.
- Lending our voice to challenge those in responsible positions to protect and nurture children.

5. Networking

- Networking helps people and organizations learn best practices, remain motivated and encouraged and enhance coordination and planning of child development efforts. (See next lesson.)
- Sharing of best practices
- Coordination of efforts
- Information about large national and international child development organizations and their programs.

6. Equipping/Training

We have the expertise to share in Christian holistic child development, biblical foundations, program administration, and resource. Take advantage of opportunities to train and equip individuals and groups in Christian Holistic Development, program administration, resource development and other areas who directly impact children in need as well as share information and ideas about child development programs.

■ *What You Can Do As an Advocate*

One final item is to note a few things that every person can do to make advocacy a mindset.¹⁵⁴

- Be well informed about the situation of children in general and in your community in particular.
- Educate families, churches and the community about different initiatives on behalf of children around the world.
- Lead a life at home, at church and in your community that respects the worth of children.

- Pray about matters affecting children; be as specific as possible.
- Network with those who work for children and assist them in any way you can.
- Support the work of your church or other child-focused ministry and encourage others to join in making the world a safer place for children.

**SUMMARY:**

- Advocacy is a legal term which means speaking or pleading on behalf of another.
- Confrontational advocacy often involves demonstrations, lobbying, marches, placards and raising one's voice in public places. Sometimes it is more aggressive — like obstructing access, or even sabotaging or other kinds of disruption.
- Non-confrontational advocacy involves speaking out or enabling others to find their voices. Almost always it involves prayer, education, research, training, encouraging, networking and other means of highlighting and addressing issues.
- Four Aspects of Advocacy:
 - Advocacy is a mindset that can influence all the ministries in the Church.
 - Advocacy and development must go together
 - Advocacy can be a forerunner for child development
 - Advocacy can strengthen child development programs
- Six Avenues for Advocacy:
 - Prayer
 - Vision casting
 - Research
 - Speaking out
 - Networking
 - Equipping/training



READINGS:

- *Compassion Child Advocacy Frequently Asked Questions.* Compassion International, 2004.
- Andy Atkins and Graham Gordon, *Advocacy Study Pack* (U.K.: TEARFUND, June 1999), 1-43.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Contrast confrontational and non-confrontational advocacy to develop appropriate advocacy strategies within one's own ministry setting.
- Besides Abraham and Moses, can you name at least two other advocates in the Bible? Describe briefly how God's purposes were achieved through their roles in advocacy by making references to specific Bible verses, names, places, etc.
- In your own words highlight the differences between confrontational and non-confrontational advocacy. In what ways may one approach or the other (or both) be appropriate in your cultural or church context?
- How specifically might you make advocacy for children a mindset in your church or organization? Or how will you make advocacy for children a mindset for yourself?
- Select two out of the six avenues of advocacy. Consider how these may be implemented in your ministry setting in a non-confrontational manner. Briefly discuss your approach of implementation and steps to avoid any potential risks, dangers or hindrances. Give specific details, if possible.

¹⁵³ Michael Shiferaw, "Advocacy: Its Relations With and Support for Our Core Program" in *Compassion Study Paper* (2002), 4.

¹⁵⁴ Adapted from *Compassion Child Advocacy Frequently Asked Questions* (Compassion International, 2004).

LESSON THIRTEEN:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the provisions and protections for children detailed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
 - Discuss some of the problems that some Christians have with the CRC and support or critique those difficulties.
 - Apply key portions from a Christian standpoint to one's own ministry to children.
-

Christians are not the only people concerned about the needs of children. Fortunately, many secular NGOs, governments and the United Nations are also concerned. Now we'll turn our attention to some of the major secular initiatives and documents promoting the welfare of children.

Foremost among these is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC). The CRC is the most respected statement regarding the protection and provision for children. The CRC is a UN document ratified in the 1980s by all but two nations in the world — Somalia and the U.S.A. Its

origins go back to a visionary Christian named Eglantyne Jebb in the early 1900s. Early in 1920 she oversaw the creation of the International Save the Children Union which combined organizations from various countries working together to relieve the suffering of children in Europe.

Eglantyne wanted to raise the awareness of children's needs around the world. She developed a statement which captured her vision of rights for all children:



*I believe we should claim certain rights for the children and labor for their universal recognition, so that everybody — not merely the small number of people who are in a position to contribute to relief funds, but everybody who in any way comes into contact with children, that is to say the vast majority of mankind — may be in a position to help forward the movement.*¹⁵⁵

Within a year, Eglantyne's Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the League of Nations and achieved lasting international significance. The present UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from Eglantyne's original statement.

The CRC spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere — without discrimination — have a right to survival, an opportunity for full development, protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation, and a right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

By ratifying the CRC, national governments have supposedly committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights and they have agreed to hold themselves accountable for this commitment before the international community.

Earlier in this book I referred to another well-known UNICEF publication: *The State of the World's Children* (SOWC). Each year, *The State of the World's Children* highlights some issues relating to the welfare of children. The main purpose of the publication, however, is to monitor the extent to which the various governments are making progress toward implementing the CRC and improving the overall welfare of its children. And progress is being made. For example, over the years we have seen the overall mortality of children — the number of children dying every day, coming down. A few years back, SOWC reported that over 42,000 children were dying every day. Most recent figures indicate that the number today is about 30,000.

CONTENT AND INTENT OF THE CRC

The CRC is considered the most powerful legal instrument for the recognition and protection of children's human rights. It has 54 articles in all. A convention is an agreement between countries to obey the same law. When a government ratifies a convention, it means that it agrees to obey the law written in that convention.

The basic provisions of the convention are in three different categories. They are:

- Protection (protecting children from harm)
- Provision (providing what children need to live and develop)
- Participation (engaging children in their world)

Some of the more important provisions of the CRC include the following (note that these are summary statements):

■ **Article 1: Definition of a Child**

A child is recognized as a person under 18, unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.

■ **Article 5: Parental Guidance and the Child's Evolving Capacities**

The State must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and the extended family to provide guidance for the child that is appropriate to his or her evolving capacities.

■ Article 6: Survival and Development

Every child has the inherent right to life and the State has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.

■ Article 9: Separation from Parents

The child has a right to live with his or her parents unless this is deemed to be incompatible with the child's best interests.

■ Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

■ Article 24: Health and Health Services

The child has a right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable.

■ Article 27: Standard of Living

Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that the child has an adequate standard of living.

■ Article 28: Education

The child has a right to education and the State's duty is to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory.

■ Article 31: Leisure Recreation and Cultural Activities

The child has the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

■ Article 32: Child Labor

The child has the right to be protected from work that threatens his or her health, education or development. The State shall set minimum ages for employment and regulate working conditions.

■ Article 34: Sexual Exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

■ Article 35: Sale, Trafficking and Abduction

It is the State's obligation to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

The CRC is a constructive document that can be a valuable tool for Christians and churches. It articulates many threats facing children and provides a helpful framework for church and community awareness and action. It is also a promising step forward in challenging governments to take legal, structural and supportive actions. Through these governmental responses, the CRC thus becomes a channel for holding governments accountable to do their part. The extent to which some governments are more responsive to the needs of children, as evidenced by general improvements in the welfare of children in some sectors and in some areas, is encouraging. Sadly

though, in the places where children suffer the most, governments tend to be neglectful of their obligations in spite of their signatory commitments.

SOME CHRISTIANS' CONCERNS ABOUT THE CRC

While the CRC is the most widely used and accepted document in use today, not all Christians are enthusiastic about the CRC. In fact, the reason that it has not been ratified by the U.S. is at least partly due to resistance or opposition on the part of influential Christians there. Also, many American legislators also feel that current United States federal laws uphold the rights of children sufficiently. Some Christian workers have been reluctant to use the CRC, either because of their own concerns or their understanding that some likeminded Christians have reservations about it.

Some of the major concerns, along with the respective responses, are shown below. Following this list of concerns and responses you will be asked some questions about the CRC and the concerns about it. As you read these, do you feel that the responses are adequate answers to the concerns?

The general objection to the CRC among many Christians has to do with biblical emphasis on responsibilities and obligations rather than on rights. As Paul Stephenson notes,

*"[R]ights are not simply to be claimed or enforced but are the result of active responsibility to God for others. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul sums this up in verse 21: 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.' By acting out God's intentions for humanity, human rights, e.g., harmonious, loving and just relationships between people can be achieved."*¹⁵⁶

■ **Concern #1 — The CRC gives away too many parental rights.**

There is a perceived conflict with parental rights — an over-empowerment of children and that these rights are anti-family and erode positive Christian values. Some Christians, for example, feel that Article 3 transfers God-given parental rights and responsibilities to the State:

A *re rights central to a child's view of the world? Preliminary research indicates that relationships and play are more important to children. It would be as tragic as ironic if the move to attribute rights to them were to squeeze them further into adult moulds and institutions. ... Where is the balancing emphasis on their quality of life here and now? On play, on space, on daydreaming, on being? as distinct from becoming??*

The time is ... overdue to remove our policies and services for children from the agendas of different government departments and to encourage a new way of thinking about childhood.

—Keith White, "Small Matters," 5.

Article 3: Best Interests of the Child

All actions concerning the child shall take full account of his or her best interests. The State shall provide the child with adequate care when parents, or others charged with that responsibility, fail to do so.

Further, some feel that articles 12, 13, and 14 tend to institutionalize rebellion by vesting children with various fundamental rights that advance notions of the child's autonomy and freedom from parental guidance:

Article 12: The Child's Opinion

The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Article 13: Freedom of Expression

The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information, make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.

Article 14: Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

The State shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.

Response:

These concerns must be given careful consideration. These provisions have in fact been used by some to challenge parental authority, especially in some Western-world contexts. However, the Convention is careful to specify, in several places, that the role of the State is subordinate to that of the parents. In the introduction to the CRC, UNICEF argues that

. . . the Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically refers to the family as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members, particularly children. States are obliged to respect parents' primary responsibility for providing care and guidance for their children and to support parents in this regard, providing material assistance and support programmes.¹⁵⁷

Article 5 in the CRC emphasizes that "States . . . shall respect the responsibilities, rights, and duties of parents . . . to provide . . . appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized by the convention." Further, Article 18 states that "Parents have joint primary responsibility for raising the child, and the State shall support them in this. The State shall provide appropriate assistance to parents in child-raising." The CRC creates no hindrances to the discretion parents have to make choices about how they raise their children.

■ Concern #2 — The CRC emphasizes rights that the child may not be mature enough to handle.

The articles causing concern include these:

Article 14: Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

The State shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.

Article 15: Freedom of Association

Children have a right to meet with others and to join or form associations.

Article 16: Protection of Privacy

Children have the right to protection from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence, and from libel or slander.

Article 17: Access to Appropriate Information

The State shall ensure the accessibility of information to children . . . from a diversity of sources, and it shall encourage [dissemination of] information of . . . benefit to the child, and take steps to protect from harmful materials.

Response:

The CRC seeks respect for children — but not at the expense of the human rights or responsibilities of others. The CRC confirms that children have a right to express their views and to have their views taken seriously and given due weight — but it does not state that children’s views are the only ones to be considered. The Convention [also] explicitly states that children have a responsibility to respect the rights of others, especially those of parents. The Convention emphasizes the need to respect children’s “evolving capacities” but does not give children the right to make decisions for themselves at too young an age. This is rooted in the common-sense concept that the child’s path from total dependence to adulthood is gradual.¹⁵⁸

■ Concern #3 — The CRC may make loving discipline, including spanking in the home, a form of child abuse.**Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect**

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the U.N. body which monitors compliance with the CRC, said this means physical punishment or the spanking of children, at home as well as at school, is prohibited.

Response:

This is also a legitimate concern, especially for those, (including myself) who believe that *loving, physical discipline* is appropriate and sometimes necessary for training of a young child. It is unfortunate that there is so little teaching of adults about proper physical discipline, and that spanking is often done in anger and can in fact become a form of physical abuse.

I believe that many parents who are concerned about the limitations this article may place on their training of their children do know how to properly use physical correction. They use it in an *infrequent, controlled and loving* manner, which affirms the child while discouraging unwanted behaviors, establishes the necessary boundaries that a child needs, and puts the parent in the proper role of shaping the will of the child without damaging the spirit.

I believe the church needs to include child training and discipline in parental training classes and provide counsel and support for parents in this difficult and often confusing responsibility. Parents who understand the proper use of spanking should not be hindered (or worse — even prosecuted) from using it in a private, and again, loving manner. Nevertheless, in the general absence of such training, it is probably best to discourage its use by parents who do not have this understand-

ing. Moreover, in today's society, I certainly would not advocate physical discipline of children by anyone other than loving, insightful parents — for example school teachers or other care-givers.

■ **Concern #4 — *The discussion of “rights” may not be culturally appropriate (especially in Asia).***

Another dividing line between Christian and secular rights “is the underlying God-centeredness of the Christian concept. Modern secular rights theory can be rooted in an individualistic (and even self-centered) approach. For Christians, the God-centeredness of rights dictates that their focus is not on claims for self, but on the desire to serve others in accordance with the teaching of Christ. Indeed, Scripture calls us consistently to think of the rights of both neighbors and strangers (Proverbs 31:8, 9; Luke 20:46, 47).¹⁵⁹

Further, unlike in the West, where the individual is emphasized, the core of Asian values is community-oriented, hence the emphasis on respect of elders, care for the extended family and filial piety. Under normal circumstances, such cultural practices naturally protect the well-being of the child and therefore the issue of “rights” does not arise.

Response:

Anyone seeking to implement the CRC must respect the culture of each family structure. It must be contextualized in each situation while at the same time preserving its intent and not letting “this is just our culture” provide an excuse for continuation of harmful cultural practices. Moreover, when traditional structures are broken and the child loses his or her protection, the CRC rises above the culture (whether Asian or Western) of the child to speak on his or her behalf in order to restore his or her basic human “rights.”

■ **Concern #5: *Secular rights don't center on biblical rights.***

There should be more emphasis on responsibility. *Rights* are self-centered. Therefore, there should be more emphasis on obligations. Rights for Christians are God-given and cannot be given or created by people or laws.

Response:

There is an essential difference between the secular rights language and the biblically based, God-given rights. Secular rights are based on a presumed “contractual” relationship between an individual and the wider society. Biblical rights are God-given and bound up with His desire for a transformed and just society (Psalms 11:7; 33:5; 106:3; Proverbs 29:7; Isaiah 1:17; 5:7; Hosea 12:6; Amos 5:15-24; Micah 3:1; Zechariah 7:9, 10). So where man-made legal rights correspond with God-given rights, they should be supported. Those which do not should not be supported.

What then shall we say? As noted above, my own feeling is that the CRC is useful and helpful for Christian groups. Seen in their most positive light, the intent of the CRC can certainly be affirmed by all Christians. Moreover, the scope of the articles is very helpful, demonstrating the wide range of aspects of the child's life, experience and environment where attention and provision are necessary by loving caregivers. Further, I believe that, again, seen in their best light, virtually all articles of the CRC will find scriptural support. Indeed, several Christian groups have given thought to Christian versions of the Rights of the Child, some of which provide extensive biblical support for each of the rights.¹⁶⁰

Finally, it is probably true that the CRC features prominently in the majority of secular programs caring for children. Given this pervasiveness and given our commitment to encourage better care for children everywhere and at all times, Christian practitioners seeking to be well informed in the global arena of childcare and protection must be very familiar with the CRC.

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG)

We now turn our attention briefly to another global secular initiative for the protection of and provision for children is the Millennium Development Goals. Governments around the world have set targets for poverty reduction and development, among many other concerns. Such targets, while not always achieved, are well intentioned and have a lot of influence on governments who participate in the community of nations.

The Millennium Development Goals were formulated at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, based on agreements from world conferences organized by the United Nations in the past decade. The goals have been accepted by many as a framework for measuring overall national development progress.

The goals focus on the efforts of the world community on achieving significant and measurable improvements in people's lives. They establish yardsticks for measuring results, not just for developing countries but for rich countries that help to fund development programs and for the multilateral institutions that help countries implement them.¹⁶¹

The major goals and targets, standards or indicators are the following:

■ **Goal # 1 — Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

- Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day.
- Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

■ **Goal # 2 — Achieve Universal Primary Education**

- Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

■ **Goal # 3 — Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

- Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015

■ **Goal # 4 — Reduce Child Mortality**

- Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

■ **Goal # 5 — Improve Maternal Health**

- Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

■ **Goal # 6 — Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Other Diseases**

- Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

■ **Goal # 7 — Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

- Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and program and reverse the loss of environmental resources.
- Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.
- Target 11: Have achieved, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

■ **Goal # 8 — Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

- Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction — both nationally and internationally).

A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN (WFFC)

The final widely recognized secular document encouraging the protection for provisions for children which we will briefly discuss is called “A World Fit for Children.” At the United Nations Special Summit on Children held in May 2002, this declaration was signed and adopted by 180 nations. The document reaffirms the leaders’ obligations to promote and protect the rights of each child and acknowledging the legal standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All of society is called upon to join a global movement to build a world fit for children, based on a 10-point rallying call that also formed the core of the “Say Yes for Children” campaign.

The plan of action sets out three necessary outcomes: the best possible start in life for children, access to a quality basic education, including free and compulsory primary education, and ample opportunity for children and adolescents to develop their individual capacities.¹⁶²

A summary of the 10 principles and objectives of “A World Fit for Children” provisions is shown below:

A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

1. **Put Children First.** In all actions that affect children, the best interests of the child will be one of the first things we think about.
2. **End Poverty.** Invest in Children. We promise once again to make a major reduction in poverty within a single generation. We all agree that to get rid of poverty we must invest in children and realize their rights. Immediate action must be taken to stop the worst forms of child labor.
3. **Leave No Child Behind.** Every girl and boy is born free and equal in every way. All forms of discrimination affecting children must end.
4. **Care for Every Child.** Children must get the best possible start in life. The survival, protection, growth and development of healthy and well-nourished children are the most important for human development. We will make real efforts to fight diseases and major causes of hunger. We will take care of children in a safe environment so that they can learn and be physically, mentally, emotionally and socially healthy.
5. **Educate Every Child.** All boys and girls should be able to have and complete a primary education that is free, something all children must attend and of good quality. Boys and girls should have equal access to primary and secondary education.
6. **Protect Children from Harm and Exploitation.** Children must be protected against any acts of violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination, as well as all forms of terrorism and hostage taking.
7. **Protect Children from War.** Children must be protected from the horrors of war. Using international law, children living in areas occupied by another country must also be protected.
8. **Combat HIV/AIDS.** Children and their families must be protected from the terrible impact of HIV/AIDS.
9. **Listen to Children and Ensure Their Participation.** We believe that children and adolescents can help to build a better future for everyone. We must respect their rights to express themselves and to participate in all matters that affect them, according to their age and maturity.
10. **Protect the Earth for Children.** We must protect our natural environment with its huge variety of life, its beauty and its resources, all of which make human life better both now

and in the future. We will do everything we can to protect children from the effects of natural disasters and environmental problems.

As noted above, I believe each of these documents are generally useful for Christian caregivers. While Christians will test the provisions against Scriptural teachings, I believe we can all profit from consideration of their lofty intent. The commitments made or implied generally are not in conflict with Christian commitments on behalf of children. Their scope helps us understand the depth and breadth of holistic child development issues, as well as possible intervention strategies. And, given the wide dissemination of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *The Millennium Goals*, and the *World Fit for Children* documents, it is not possible for Christian practitioners to be fully conversational in the global arenas of childcare without familiarity with these documents.



SUMMARY:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) consists of three basic categories:
 - Protection (protecting children from harm)
 - Provision (providing what children need to live and develop)
 - Participation (engaging children in their world)

- Some major concerns about the CRC are:
 - It gives away too many parental rights.
 - It emphasizes rights that the child may not be mature enough to handle.
 - It may make loving discipline, including spanking at home, a form of child abuse.
 - Its position on rights may not be culturally appropriate.
 - The idea of *rights* may be *secular* and not biblical.

- Other global secular initiatives for the protection of children are the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and A World Fit for Children (WFFC).

**READINGS:**

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, unofficial summary, <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/uncrc.htm>.
- Paul Stephenson, “The ‘Rights’ of the Child and the Christian Response” in *Celebrating Children*, eds. Glenn Miles and Josephine-Joy Wright (UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 52-61.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Review the concerns about the CRC noted in the text. Which ones concern you? Do you agree with the responses to the concerns of CRC? Why or why not?
- What is your response to the rights of children from your Asian (African, etc.) point of view?
- Jesus gives us the right to be called children of God. Discuss how this biblical promise relates to the rights/promises detailed in the Conventional Rights of the Child (CRC).
- Review all the articles of the CRC from the summary in the appendix of this book. Which ones have to do with:
 - Protection of children
 - Providing for children
 - Participation of children

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/aboutus/index.jsp?section=historytimeline&timeframe=1920> (Accessed December 11, 2004).

¹⁵⁶ Paul Stephenson, “The ‘Rights’ of the Child and the Christian Response” in *Celebrating Children*, eds. Glenn Miles and Josephine-Joy Wright (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 57.

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm> (Accessed Jan. 4, 2005).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Edna Valdez, ed., *Protecting Children: A Biblical Perspective on Child Rights* (Monrovia, Calif.: World Vision, 2002), 14.

¹⁶⁰ See for example the Spanish version “Liturgia y Derechos Humanos del Movimiento Ecuuménico por los Derechos Humanos” (The Latin American Council of Churches, 1984).

¹⁶¹ http://www.developmentgoals.org/About_the_goals.htm (Accessed Jan. 4, 2005).

¹⁶² <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/wffc/> (Accessed Jan. 4, 2005).

LESSON FOURTEEN:

Networking on Behalf of Children



OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Discuss and defend at least five benefits of networking and apply networking principles to current ministries.
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We have shown the importance of the Church worldwide in responding to the needs of children. And the Church has indeed responded massively and compassionately over the years and across the continents. At the same time, however, despite the large numbers of Church-run and Church-based programs and projects aimed at meeting the needs of children, many of those operate largely on their own. Many lack basic know-how and information — Who does what and where? Who can help me? Who has done this before? How do I do this? — as

well as encouragement, support and fellowship. Essential to effective programming on behalf of children are matters of management, caring for staff, and communicating with donors, governments, authorities and others in the community. Effective and extensive networking is part of the response to these and other challenges.

BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

There are many benefits of networking the various church and other Christian ministries to children at the local, regional, national and global levels. Among the benefits are:

D*espite significant efforts to help ‘children at risk’ at a grass-roots level, the evangelical movement has made a fairly marginal input into the areas of research and evaluation. Academically and technically we live largely off the experience of others in our thinking about how to shape good childcare practice. . . . Many . . . serious development and childcare organisations look upon the evangelical movement as energetic and compassionate while failing to take it into account as a serious entity. This has much to do with a low level of awareness of the actual nature and scope of our efforts, but I believe that it is also . . . a result of our failure to conduct serious research into practice, policy and performance. One colleague described our efforts to help children as bearing much heat but shining little light.*

— Patrick McDonald, *Reaching Children at Risk*, 108-109.

■ ***Being Effectively Connected***¹⁶³

Isolation is a troubling and discouraging problem for many ministries to children. The work is hard in any case. Trying to do it alone is harder still. Many ministries do not know what help or encouragement may be available in their own communities or towns. “When Christians are not linked together, every new situation that arises, no matter how common, must be dealt with as though for the first time. Devising teaching plans, approaching local authorities for resources, finding prayer support, tracking down sources of food, funding and equipment, dealing with legal problems, enforcing discipline and figuring out how to handle emotional upsets with staff and children — with each new problem the wheel is reinvented in an attempt to find solutions. Without the experience and accumulated wisdom of others to draw on, mistakes are made that could have been avoided.”¹⁶⁴

■ ***Maximizing the Use of Resources***

The experience of networking has shown that some places have overlapping work with children while many other areas have none. In Compassion’s work, it is not uncommon to find that we are not the only sponsorship organization working or considering work in a given area. At the same time, there are so many areas which have nothing. The same is true for any kind of response to the needs of children. Networking is crucial to ensure that the gaps are covered and the overlap is minimized. It is important that we maximize the use of our resources and minimize duplication of efforts.

■ ***Improving Development Practice***

Many church-based programs or projects, while doing the best they can, lack either resources or capacity to operate professionally. As Christians we need to do more than simply care for children in need — we need to do it with professionalism and real expertise. Networking can help ministries access and implement the training, resources, and best practices needed to operate with excellence.

■ **Developing Professional Standards**

What does good Christian childcare look like? What does it involve? How is it achieved? Networking can help bring people and organizations together to establish and agree upon professional ministry standards. Once standards have been established, the networked ministries can hold one another accountable and together pursue higher levels of excellence.

■ **Making Quality Training More Accessible**

There is a vast need for training and capacity building among Christian childcare workers. Most childcare workers are eager for expertise and advice. The problem is providing it. When churches and organizations are networked together, they can begin to identify similar needs for training. Networking can then link together the expertise, materials and other resources with those needing the equipping.

■ **Providing Better Care for Caregivers**

Patrick McDonald points out that Christian ministries are not known for their care for caregivers. He further adds:

A very serious but often unrecognized problem for people in the frontline of ministry to children at risk is lack of practical, emotional and spiritual support. Inability to find time for fellowship with other Christians or for personal renewal and lack of prayer backing leads to discouragement and early burn out. Some carry on but begin to lose the vision they once had for helping these children and end up investing all their resources into just surviving the next crisis.¹⁶⁵

Effective networking is essential to provide the encouragement, fellowship, and opportunities for rest, revival and renewal among childcare workers.

GETTING CONNECTED — THE VIVA NETWORK

The global Christian movement involved in caring for children at risk has a very strong ally in the Viva Network. Viva Network is a global movement of Christians caring for “children at risk.” It seeks to enhance and expand existing efforts by connecting and mobilizing all Christians to meet the challenge of helping hurting children. This is done through a variety of networking initiatives which give Christians working with “children at risk” opportunities to find others involved in similar work, encourage and challenge each other, share ideas, information and resources, engage in joint ventures, and launch new initiatives on behalf of “children at risk.” These networking initiatives take place locally, regionally and internationally.¹⁶⁶

NETWORKING HELPS DEVELOP OUR *PROPRIOCEPTION*

Most people, without looking at their legs, will know whether or not they are crossed. The reason is that normal people have a kind of sixth sense called proprioception, which enables a person to sense the rest of the body. Paralyzed people often do not have this extra sense. The bedsores and other injuries they sometimes suffer are often due to an inability to sense their body and prevent injury.

In a sense, networking of Christians caring for children helps us develop our proprioception. That is, it helps us sense the rest of the Body. When one part is hurting, other parts can respond. When one part is in need, another part can provide. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 for further study about the Christian Body.

This remarkable ministry has established more than 40 national networks around the world, as well as having been the impetus for many sub-networks and child-related initiatives of all kinds from training, materials development, forums, conferences, research, to whole new ministry directions such as the Child Theology Movement and Understanding God's Heart for Children.

The goals of the Viva Network are to improve the quality of care for children, increase action on behalf of children, and influence decision-makers to be a more effective voice for children. They do this in numerous ways:

- Establishing networks at all levels
- Linking people and groups wanting to help children, and linking those with common needs or interests, through individual contacts, conferences and forums
- Developing or facilitating the development of training and equipping opportunities at all levels
- Providing resources such as the journal *Reaching Children at Risk*
- Developing ministry databases and other kinds of mapping on all aspects of ministry to children and identifying and following key trends pertaining to the global effort to care for children
- Mobilizing new efforts to reach children at risk worldwide
- Being national and local advocates for children

For more information about networking, contact a Viva representative by visiting www.viva.org.

PROFILE OF THE VIVA NETWORK

A Movement of Christians Caring for “Children At Risk”

Vision

Viva Network is a global movement of Christians passionately concerned for “children at risk,” committed to every child having the opportunity to become all that God intends.

Aims

- Improve quality of care for children.
- Increase action on behalf of children.
- Influence decision-makers. Be an effective voice on behalf of “children at risk.”

Overall Strategy

1. *A Global Christian Framework for Action:*

A framework for movement-wide action that would benchmark current work and set goals for our individual and collaborative achievement.

2. *An Active Meeting Place:*

To develop and sustain a global, visible and functional movement for Christians working with “children at risk” through networking and linking.

3. *An Encourager of Excellence:*

Encourage excellence in all areas of child development ministry through training, resourcing, developing standards and encouraging and facilitating the caring for caregivers.

4. A Force for Mobilization:

Encourage a significant increase in Christian outreach to “children at risk” by actively and aggressively helping to mobilise new efforts worldwide.

5. An Influencer of Decision-Makers:

Work so that the Christian movement is an initiating and formative force in all areas of child development related to public policy — defending and introducing biblical standards legislation.

6. A Christian Child Development Think-Tank:

Become one of the world’s foremost authorities on child development practice, priorities, policy and performance, imparting biblical values in child development practice, as well as in the public debate.

7. A Voice of Prayer:

In view of this mammoth task, we realize that one of our highest priorities must be to develop a massive movement of intentional prayer.

**SUMMARY:**

- Six Benefits of Networking:
 - Being effectively connected
 - Maximizing use of resources
 - Improving development practices
 - Developing professional standards
 - Making quality training more accessible
 - Providing better care for caregivers

**READING:**

- Patrick McDonald, *Reaching Children in Need* (Eastbourne UK: Kingsway Publications, 2000), chapters 5, 6, pp. 71-117.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Reflect on your experience in caring for children or the impoverished. Have you experienced the feeling that you are “all alone”? Describe.
- Give at least one example of how you have seen networking improve your ministry (or how you think it *could* improve) under each of the six topics above in the summary of the six benefits of networking.

¹⁶³ No discussion of the networking of Christian childcare workers can be done without noting the contribution of Patrick McDonald and the Viva Network. Most of the points that follow are from his book *Reaching Children in Need*, and/or other materials from Patrick and the Viva Network.

¹⁶⁴ Patrick McDonald, *Reaching Children in Need* (Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway Publications, 2001), 81.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.viva.org> (Accessed Jan. 4, 2005).

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ABOUT COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL

The following information, adapted from the Compassion publication called *God's Mandate, Our Challenge*, will help the reader know more about the vision and ministry of Compassion International.

MISSION STATEMENT

In response to the Great Commission, Compassion International exists as an advocate for children, to release them from their spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty and enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults.

THE WORLD OF CHILDREN

Children age 15 and under comprise one-third of our world's six billion people. In developing countries, children make up nearly half the population. For many children in America and in developed countries around the world, the future looks bright. Their education is secure. Their health is usually sound, and doctors are rarely more than a phone call away. Technology promises to bring children to greater achievements than we could ever dream.

But what about the children whose daily needs are not being met? These children will also become tomorrow's parents. If we invest in them, they also can become tomorrow's community leaders, health workers, teachers, pastors, and business people.

If ignored, many will die as they live — victims of poverty and practitioners of anything else it takes to survive.

THE MANDATE AND METHOD FOR MINISTRY TO THE POOR

Jesus told his followers that the poor would always be among us. He also made it clear that we must do what we can to aid them, in accordance with Deuteronomy 15:11: *For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, "You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your impoverished and poor in your land."*

As Christians, the staff of Compassion believe that ministry to the poor must address a complete range of concerns that face the poor. We know that poverty strikes on many levels and in several ways.

Poverty's message is, "There is nothing you can do to change your situation." This sense of powerlessness chips away at self-esteem in the poor. If one repeatedly faces a life seemingly without options, and time and again hears that he or she cannot do anything about it, hope is abandoned and a spirit of fatalism sets in. Poverty is a thief of hope. **Therefore, ministry to the poor must counteract fatalism and provide hope.**

Effective ministry with the poor will equip them to become powerful instruments against poverty. They know what their problems are. They understand better than most how to build their futures. And the poor have told us, time and again, that **the best investment we can make in the battle against poverty is an investment in their children.**

CHILDREN ARE THE FOCUS

Why does Compassion's ministry have a special focus on children? Two reasons: First, God deeply values children. Second, children are highly effective agents of change in almost every setting.

Far too many of us take a casual look at the Bible and assume that children are helpless pawns with little practical value even to God until they are adults. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What sets children and youth apart in the eyes of God? Perhaps it is the simple faith and trust in God they exhibit under circumstances that seem impossible to adults. But whatever the case, it is clear that children are considered a resource, not a liability, in God's economy. Jesus used children to describe the standards required in God's Kingdom and warned of dire consequences for their abuse:

[Jesus] called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:2-6).

In God's sight, there are no "disposable" children. The challenge, then, is to help each child — even those in the most difficult circumstances — fulfill his or her God-given potential.

God's heart for children compels us to practical action on their behalf. This creates Christian child development. And that perfectly describes the ministry of Compassion.

We believe children are a valuable resource. Children are teachable and open. They have a tremendous influence on their families, churches, and communities.

Children — even children in need — have not yet given in to the fatalism that often comes with adulthood. Children still believe they can make a difference. Because they believe they can, they often do.

It is not unusual for Compassion-assisted children to learn how to read and then to teach their entire families to read. We hear of children who establish a relationship with Jesus Christ and then lead their own families to Him. Many of the non-formal education skills that apply to the workplace or the family farm are taken there by children and adopted by the adults in their lives.

Compassion views children as the focus of our ministry. We intend to equip them to influence

other people as they become fulfilled Christian adults. Their influence, even today, is of profound value.

WORKING THROUGH THE LOCAL CHURCH

Compassion conducts our ministry with a clear agenda and a distinct goal. We often use the phrase “child discipleship” to describe our ministry.

Our goal of child discipleship puts Compassion in an exclusive partnership with the local Church. The “local church” we work with may not involve a building with a steeple. Instead, we’re talking about the local Body of believers that would be recognized by the community as an organized center of worship and outreach.

We believe the local Church is God’s chosen agent to fulfill the Great Commission. Our ministry reaches out to children throughout the community, regardless of religious affiliation. This outreach is conducted by our partner, the local Body of believers.

While there is a clear philosophical reason for Compassion to partner with the local Church, there is also a practical advantage to our partnership: Local churches provide unparalleled continuity for child development. A local body of believers must be present before we can come into a community. The Body of Christ will remain long after our part of the mission there is done. Our experience has shown that the local Church is far more stable as an agent of continuing development than local councils or other administrative offices.

The local Church resonates with our mission and objectives. The local Church demonstrates God’s love in action to the community it serves. The local church has a stable and continuing role to change communities. When it applies those energies in Jesus’ name to reach children in need, we could have no better partner. Compassion works closely with partners to expand their vision for ministry to children, to build capacity to develop each child, and to ensure each program is well managed.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT IS OUR CORE MINISTRY

What does Christian child development look like? In Compassion’s ministry, child development is a long-term activity. It is rooted in learning. It results in changes of character, understandings, attitudes and behavior — in other words, it affects every aspect of life.

Christian child development helps children understand certain biblical truths; that they are loved by God, have worth as God’s children, and can be in eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Christian child development addresses the “big picture” of a child’s life: the spiritual, physical, social and economic aspects.

Christian child development affirms the role of the family in a child’s life. This happens through the training and equipping of parents and through the involvement of parents in the planning and activities of a child development program. Their involvement makes the program more responsive to the child’s needs and unique situation. Local opportunities and barriers are recognized. Learning activities are culturally relevant, nurturing and age-appropriate.

Effective Christian child development challenges children to better understand and apply their gifts. Children will interact with parents, ministry staff and adult community members to develop their own sense of belonging and responsibility. Christian child development should offer children love, acceptance and a sense of belonging. It should allow children to make mistakes and acquire discipline in a positive atmosphere. A nurturing environment helps children to dream appropriately.

Then, a child can work proactively toward reaching those dreams.

Christian child development engages the community. A community is responsible for its children. Every community has key resources — financial, human or material—essential to the healthy development of its children. Child development involves the family, Church and local community.

Compassion child development affirms the value of community involvement and development on behalf of children in need. Indeed, Compassion contributes to community development through the enhancement of local church ministries, the reinforcement of families, and the development of its children. That being said, the Compassion model focuses on *individual human development*. Every activity is evaluated in terms of its impact on the children we serve. Our measure of success is sustainable development in the lives of these children.

Compassion considers each child we serve as an individual with unique needs and potential. We do not ignore the community context of a child, but we base our program delivery on the needs of the child first. Compassion's program model for child development engages prenatal mothers and infants (the Child Survival Program) and continues through to young adulthood (the Leadership Development Program). Young adults with outstanding Christian leadership potential are offered opportunities for higher education and leadership training through the Leadership Development Program.

Compassion works in some of the world's poorest communities. Visit a Compassion-assisted program in action. You'll see local people nurturing children in need. You'll discover that the program is administered through a local church. You'll watch children happily engaged in activities that help them face every day life, ranging from safe recreation to age-appropriate Bible lessons.

You'll see adults actively tutoring or teaching the children in the program. You'll notice a great deal of positive reinforcement and personal attention. You'll observe children eating a healthy snack or meal. You'll listen to children singing together, and marvel that children from the neighborhood that surrounds this ministry could be so joyful.

You'll watch older children look after the needs of younger ones. You'll see children learning life skills — perhaps baking, carpentry or even basic hygiene — that could take them from the edge of survival to success.

And if you talk to the children, you'll discover a unique connection between them and those who are investing in them from a distance — their sponsors.

CHILD SPONSORSHIP IS THE PRIMARY MEANS

Compassion invests in children through one-to-one child sponsorship. This practice links one sponsor with one child in need. The sponsor can become the special person in a child's life who gives him or her the extra encouragement and confidence needed to overcome the barriers of poverty. As practiced through Compassion, sponsorship is a developmental relationship.

The one-to-one connection between a sponsor and a child personalizes the relationship between them. For both the child and the sponsor, the relationship provides a cross-cultural link with a human face. This is no abstract matter for either party, but a personal investment of emotional support and communication between them.

The evidence behind this truth is simple: by and large, children know their sponsors by name, and sponsors know their sponsored children by name. Even more, a child and a sponsor usually know some personal details from the other's life. Frequently they pray for each other. Through this exchange, sponsored children can feel cared for and loved.

Compassion sponsorship engages a sponsor on a deeper level than most other charitable giv-

ing opportunities. Compassion consistently reminds the sponsor to write letters of encouragement to the sponsored child. This kind of encouragement from someone outside a child's immediate context often has a profound impact on the child's self-worth and accomplishment. At this level, the sponsor can be a "significant other" — someone apart from the child's immediate family who is relationally influencing a child's development.

Children in poverty need exactly the kind of encouragement a sponsor can provide. Although they would likely learn to appreciate financial support alone, the personal motivation and comfort a sponsor can offer are usually far more valuable to them. The testimony of thousands of Compassion-sponsored children over half a century affirms this.

Sponsorship for Compassion and the children we serve is much more than a means to raise funds. From the simple reinforcement of self-expression and literacy in letter writing to the building of self-perception and esteem through cross-cultural relationships, sponsorship is a developmental activity.

One more note: Our experience has proven that we dare not underestimate the value of the child's ministry to the sponsor, either. The prayer and encouragement sponsored children offer to those who invest in them have brought about a deeper walk with Christ for thousands of sponsors and helped initiate that walk for many hundreds of others.

CHILD DISCIPLESHIP IS THE GOAL

As our Mission Statement clearly indicates, Compassion is rooted in the Great Commission.

In response to the Great Commission, Compassion International exists as an advocate for children. . . .

We operate "in response to the Great Commission." The goal of the Great Commission is to make disciples. Jesus tells us to make disciples by "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded" (Matthew 28:19-20). Compassion's goal for each child we serve is this: to take a child from the brink of survival to "life to the full" as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We believe that the most loving thing we can do for children is to introduce them to Jesus Christ. And we encourage them in the Word and ways of God. This is not a simplistic spiritual approach but a comprehensive developmental strategy.

First, *when children discover their worth to God, their self-esteem blossoms*. This single step goes a long way in helping a child overcome the message of fatalism that comes with poverty.

Second, children who recognize their roles as disciples are a strategic part of today's Church. Children often are the most effective evangelists within their families. Older children can prove themselves to be among the most effective volunteers in teaching other children and in encouraging their peers in the faith.

Third, children disciplined in the Word and ways of God are our most powerful tool against tomorrow's poverty because they bring the heart and mind of Christ to the challenges they know from experience. Children who grow up in poverty have firsthand experience no classroom could ever teach. Armed with the knowledge of God, these children become the adults who prove to be the most creative and effective in leading their communities into powerful solutions for the challenges presented by poverty.

Our Mission Statement also addresses the approach our strategy should take:

To release them from their spiritual, economic, social, and physical poverty . . .

Because God created the whole person, we believe that discipleship must also address the whole person. Other organizations do very worthy ministry. Some specialize in evangelism. Others emphasize healthcare, still others feed the hungry, and others educate. All are worthy causes.

Compassion's goal however, is holistic child discipleship. It is a different destination for the child. It causes Compassion to bring a comprehensive ministry to the children we serve.

The result we seek through holistic discipleship is also covered in the Mission Statement:

. . . to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults.

We want to nurture children from the poorest of circumstances so they will become responsible, fulfilled Christian adults who will:

- Be Christian in faith and deed
- Support themselves and share with others in need
- Be responsible members of family, church and community, and nation
- Maintain their own physical well-being

Only then will we believe that we are fulfilling the Great Commission through our distinctive calling to child discipleship.

CONCLUSION

We began this study by doing what Jesus did — placing a child in the midst. We took note that Jesus Himself said that children are both signs of and heirs to the Kingdom. We said that if Jesus was serious about the well-being of the child, then we too must take the respect and care for children seriously and understand their role and biblical significance. We saw that all children are at risk from either poverty or prosperity and that childhood is marred by suffering and exploitation or squeezed into adulthood by our commercialism and materialism.

We explored what the Bible says about children. They are neither hidden nor ignored; neither insignificant nor peripheral. Rather, we saw that they feature prominently in the unfolding story of God communicating His *new* way of following Him wholeheartedly. Children were frequently His agents, instruments, models and *modus*.

Recognizing the importance of children in God's perspective, we then looked at issues relating to the holistic development of children — how to ensure that all children enjoy God's intent for them: fullness of life. We discovered that concern for the needs, neglect and nurture of all children is seen throughout Scripture and we noted that God expects it to be a focus for our concern as well. Children suffer greatly from poverty, and we saw that poverty is not just a matter of physical deprivations but is in fact most fundamentally a *spiritual* problem. We noted how the worldviews of *animism* and *secularism* have inevitable tendencies to lead children and families toward hopelessness, poverty and destruction, while a biblical worldview — *consistently followed and acted upon* — leads similarly in the opposite direction: toward lives of wholeness, abundance and hope.

Since poverty is a spiritual problem, addressing poverty is the *particular* responsibility of Christians and of the Church. We then explored issues involving the child and the Church, noting some theological foundations for the Church in involving itself in holistic development, including the salvation, redemption and reconciliation of all of creation. In spite of this clear biblical mandate, there have long been *debates* and *dissentions* in the Church about its dual roles of evangelism *and* social action (or holistic ministries).

Next we placed the child *in the church* and asked how to make the church a more child-friendly place. Often we have misunderstood the children's place in church and underestimated their contributions. We looked at the responsibility of the church on all levels to work toward more child-sensitive approaches and ministries and examined ways to make the church programs, compounds, and staffs more child-friendly. We looked at how faith grows in children, and how the Church can promote and encourage that faith development. And, though painful, we acknowledged that even in church contexts, children may be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and we

provided an overview of child protection protocols to protect the children and ministries from devastating incidents of child abuse within our walls.

In *The Child and Mission* we saw that ministry to children is indeed the most fruitful kind of mission. We said that mission is, quite simply, what the Church is called to do, and we reviewed briefly some aspects of modern missions, mission concepts, and some contemporary issues in mission. We noted that historically, through the establishment of mission schools, whole generations of future African and Asian leaders grew up with Christian training. While Christian schools may not be viable mission models today, we asked, “What new strategies do mission agencies have today to reach and grow the next generation of global leaders?” We saw that most mission agencies continue to overlook this most important of mission harvest fields. The reality of the 4/14 Window means that ministry to children and young people must feature prominently in any credible modern mission strategy.

Children, though, must not be viewed only as objects of mission but also as important and effective agents and instruments for mission. Joseph, Moses, Miriam, Samuel, Naaman’s Samaritan servant girl, Esther, David, Josiah and Jeremiah were all His agents and emissaries in Scripture. When God needed great faith and courage, when He needed a pure, clear, channel for His message, when He needed vision, when He needed great creative genius, when He needed great generosity — He chose a child. Likewise, children today need to be viewed as resources for mission, and challenged and released to become risk-takers for God.

Finally, with the *child in the midst*, we looked at the need to “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9). We recognize that Christians need to advocate for children through speaking out against injustice, defending the cause of the poor, holding those in power accountable, and empowering people to speak out for themselves. We spoke of advocacy involving prayer, education, research, training, encouraging, networking and other means to highlight and address the issues facing children.

My prayer is that this study has helped you develop your understanding of the meaning and nature of the relationships between child, church and mission. More than that, I hope it has:

- **Informed** you about children’s issues and about their needs, neglect and nurture; about the Church’s role in caring for them, and how they are an integral part of God’s design for ministry, mission and furthering His Kingdom.
- **Inspired** you to understand children from a biblical perspective and to view ministry and mission to and with children as more legitimate, profound and strategic than you had before.
- **Influenced** you to seek to improve your own and your church’s ministries to children and to seek, in turn, to influence others in the same direction.

“And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, ‘Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me’” (Mark 9:36-37, KJV).

THE M.A. PROGRAM IN HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Penang, Malaysia

This program was designed as a partnership in Asia between Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary and Compassion International to provide graduate level training for Compassion Asia staff, for key Compassion Partner staff, and for strategic development workers and practitioners from other countries in Asia. The courses were first taught in 2001, and more than 140 students from 17 countries have now taken one or more courses. The first graduation of 12 students took place in June, 2004.

CHILD, CHURCH AND MISSION COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readers who are working on their own and seeking graduate or undergraduate credit for this course in Child, Church and Mission should seek approval and guidelines from the academic dean of the institution providing credit for the course. As a suggestion, the following program of study should meet the requirements for three graduate-level credits in most institutions.

- Read each lesson with the Bible in hand. Look up any Scriptures which are not printed out.
- Read selections from the reading list provided at the end of each section.
- At the end of each section, write a one- to two-page reaction paper about the section content, readings or related materials. These reaction papers should provide personal reflections, personal impact and discussion of new insights, agreement or disagreement with key concepts, application of concepts to one's own ministry, or other application or response. The overall reaction should be original, personal, reflective and related to the section content.
- Respond to the reflection questions at the end of each lesson and do the activities as suggested.
- Prepare a final paper of not more than 2,000 words or less which applies one or more key concepts from the lessons, readings or discussions to one's own ministry.

OR

- Secure approval from your mentor and carry out a project which applies or implements a key component of the course to a particular ministry or church situation.

For Students in Guided or Classroom Study (3 Credits):

- The above or as assigned by instructor.
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DAN BREWSTER

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In his 21 years with Compassion, Dan has served as Area Director for Africa, Director for Program Development and Compassion's first Director of Advocacy. A veteran traveler to more than 90 countries, Dan has also been involved in planning and monitoring child and family development or relief projects in more than 50 countries.

Dan has a doctorate in Missiology from Fuller Seminary and has written and taught widely, promoting and managing Christian child development ministries and programs. He and his wife, Alice, live in Penang, Malaysia, and have three grown children.