

## **Kids with Power**

### **Don't Underestimate Their Global Impact**

*by Ellen Livingood*

**Stop! Before you skip over this issue of Postings because you think that kids' ministry is not "your thing," take time to read these next few paragraphs.**

Question: If you could select just one person to join you in praying for global Kingdom advance, would you choose an adult or a child?

Most of us would automatically recruit the adult prayer partner, wouldn't we?! Why? Because we assume they have more spiritual power since they have more clout in the physical world. Oh, and they are more knowledgeable and sophisticated in their praying, and those things are important, right?

Then why did Jesus tell adults to come with the faith of little children? If the power of prayer lies in God not us, and the faith that unlocks that power is illustrated by children, then perhaps we better reconsider our priorities. Seriously.

One children's worker said simply, "Missions leaders don't understand the spiritual capacity of children."

Ruth Hubbard, senior vice president of Wycliffe Bible Translators says, "Because God is building up the faith of children, He often answers their prayers beyond the way that we as adults see Him answer."

#### **When Kids Pray**

Amazing things happen when you unleash children's prayer potential. Irma Chon is children/youth and mission pastor at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, a congregation of 160 in Hilliard, Ohio. A transformation started as God began to reveal to Irma His compassion for lost children around the world—those who did not know their Abba Father, those suffering from poverty and war. As her heart was broken by what

breaks God's heart, she came to understand that there is no one better to pray about these issues than children themselves.

"God showed me that if we call the children together and show them the world as He sees it," Irma says, "they will become some of the most passionate prayer warriors for God's kingdom purposes. God has created them to be compassionate as He is compassionate."

#### **Listening to God's Heart**

In response to what God was showing her, Irma started a Kids' Prayer Club for those in grades 1-6 which meets for a little more than hour once a week. The time begins with reading God's Word. They call it, "Time with Abba" and the children are encouraged to do the same daily at home. Each child is given a journal with selected Bible readings. Leaders explain what it means to hear God's voice when they read Scripture and to pray. They are encouraged to journal what they hear God say is on His heart.

#### **Praying over the World**

After reading God's Word, the group spends time praying. The boys and girls love their huge floor map of the world that covers the floor of their small auditorium. The children

declare who God is over the nations. Sometimes they have a very specific prayer focus like hunger, and Irma helps them identify places where children are suffering in this way.

One of the kids' favorite things is to be able to "go anywhere in the world" to pray. For instance, they have a special burden for North Korea, so they often head to the North Korea area of the map to pray.

Sometimes they prayer-walk around the world on their floor map. Other times they sit on a certain country with a Bible and just pray John 3:16 for that nation. Or leaders may give them little flashlights, and they shine their light over that nation praying things like, "Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world,' so



*Children pray over New York City (above) and intercede for the nation with Mrs. Bush (right).*



we pray that your light will come to Turkey and to North Korea.”

### Keeping a Record of Requests

Another aspect of the children’s praying involves journaling in different blank books designated for different locations. For example, they have one presidential journal, one for missionaries in Peru they know well, and one for North Korea. Another volume is their praise-for-Jesus journal. Those journals are often laying out, and children can write in them the prayers that God is giving them.



Hilliard children at the UN (above) and praying with an ambassador (left).



Occasionally the journals are sent off to the designated missionary so that they can read how the children are praying. Then they write back how God is responding. They don’t know where the journal for North Korea will ever go, but the children keep writing and keep praying!

“It is so exciting to see their compassion grow,” Irma says. “They love to know about the nations and

about the world. There are times that we encourage our children to fast. We explain what fasting means, and they decide to fast—maybe from candy or from video games, or they may fast from food for a special prayer time that we have declared.



Irma and a child pray together.

### Praying for Missionaries

During Cornerstone’s missions conference, a time is set up for the kids to gather around their missionaries to pray for them. When the workers from Peru came to visit, they let the children know how important their prayers have been and how personally they have been blessed personally. The children

take on projects for them, too.

“Children can take their rightful place in God’s Kingdom work which starts with prayer,” Irma emphasizes. “As children begin to know God through prayer, to recognize His voice, and to experience the love of the Father for themselves, He gives them His prayer agenda which consists of prayers for lost people and for the suffering. As they learn, their heart of compassion grows, and God can put them in places of opportunity and in positions of power.”

### Children’s Prayers Go Global

The impact of this one group of praying children is going far beyond what they could have imagined. In September of 2007, five youth from Hilliard (5<sup>th</sup> grade through high school) were invited along with over 40 children and 150 adults from various places around the world to come to the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The children heard firsthand from some of the ambassadors, and they were invited to be part of a historical moment of prayer. These youth stood in the UN building praying for the children of the nations, the victims of AIDS and of war. They declared who God is and prayed that the nations will come to know Him. The ambassadors welcomed the children to pray for them.”

When President Bush’s wife, Laura, visited their city, she was told about children who pray for the nations, and she invited them into a private place away from the press. There they gathered around her and prayed for her and for the nation, simply verbalizing once again what God had already challenged them to pray many times before.

Irma was invited to Chihuahua, Mexico, where she helped to put on a one-day missions conference for over 1,500 children in the city convention center. Churches worked together to bring the nations to the children in this one-day missions adventure.

“I was invited to come and have a House of Prayer there,” Irma reports, “and I included many of the things we do here. The Mexican children spent all day going from station to station learning about the people of the world and then came to the House of Prayer where they prayed with passion for the

nations, clearly impacted by a new burden for people God had given them.”

Irma shares a poignant example of her children’s heart for prayer: “We had heard a report from a short-term team that had just returned



Mexican children pray over the nations.

from Ecuador. At the

conclusion, we asked for a child to pray. One of our little boys enthusiastically waved his hand. He could have prayed right where he was; we didn’t ask him to move. But he got up, walked to the front, dropped to his knees, prostrated himself and started to pray. He just followed his heart! That’s the kind of prayer that moves mountains.”



### Teaching Children Everywhere to Pray

"Pastor told us that there is power in prayer. He said we can change the country through prayer," a 12-year-old child from the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, explained to IMB missionary Sue Sprenkle. "So that is what we are doing, changing the country."

This past January, in the middle of the violence that wracked this East African nation following contested elections, Sue heard that children were meeting to pray, and followed the stream of boys and girls into a small, tin shack that serves as their church. The pastor told Sue that the children had started gathering daily on their own, increasing over a period of two weeks to an average of over 200 from age 3-17.

"Father, our country is in trouble. We pray for peace to come," an 11-year-old prayed. "Protect us, Father. Teach people to love one another and not to fight anymore."

A 16-year-old girl prayed for internally displaced people. She asked God to help the children feel safe and be able to go to school.

Sue noted that adults were amazed to see that after the children started praying, there were no more deaths, houses burned, or even violence in their section of the slum. The children were nonplussed; they just expected God to answer their prayers.

So was it worth teaching children to pray? Can we afford not to?!

### Whose Job Is It?

Wycliffe translator Dorothea Lander came home from the field and discovered that when she spoke to a children's group and posed the question, "How many of you have been asked by your parents or teachers to consider doing something in missions?" sometimes there were one or two positive responses, but more often not one child raised a hand. Dorothea was challenged to do something to change that and is now Wycliffe's children's communications coordinator. She says, "Many churches have stopped telling children about the world's needs, offering them opportunities to make a difference, and challenging them to consider missions involvement. If we want to raise a generation which loves the world the way God loves the world, we will have to give them ways to respond when they are young."

Dr. Ruth Hubbard, senior vice president at Wycliffe, emphasizes that raising kids as disciples and disciple makers is the Christian parents' task. "But it is also important for the church to come as a community of faith and do it together, to

wield our influence with each others' kids. Wycliffe comes alongside pastors and church leaders and teachers to provide resources. We minister directly to kids, too, but our primary strategy is to connect churches, parents, children's leaders, home schoolers, Christian school teachers, etc., with resources that tell the story of the Great Commission and the role of the church which includes Bible translation.

"I have watched God answer children's prayers," Ruth continues. "He answers their prayers in amazing ways because He is building their faith. And while adults often rationalize away a supernatural answer, children recognize God's working.

"And children give," she adds. "Of course they can't give huge amounts, but from Scripture we know that God measures the gift by the heart of the giver rather than the size of the gift. When children give their "first fruit," God not only multiplies their gift but also uses the experience to mold them into lifetime givers. Kids are not "half people"! One way God blesses their obedience is by using it to motivate, encourage, and challenge others.

"Wycliffe is beginning to equip children to pray beyond themselves. We live in a culture where it is all about them, yet praying for ourselves is so stifling. God can use prayer to engage a child in something on the other side of the world far beyond themselves. They can be engaged not just in peripheral things but on the front line as intercessors. And we don't want to just get them to pray but develop and maintain a relationship so that they see some of the fruit of their prayer investment."

In Matthew 7, Jesus taught that a life based on hearing the Word but not doing anything about it is like a house built on sand. Dorothea emphasizes that giving children Bible knowledge without opportunity to put it into practice likewise leads to disaster. Children deserve better! If we don't give kids ways to act on Jesus' words when they are young, we are raising a generation built on sand and setting them up for disaster.

Challenging agencies: Be aware that one of the most untapped resources is the prayers of the children. Understand the spiritual capacity of the children. God is really raising up children all over the world. Seeing it more around the world than in North America. Agencies would realize that when you have a budget cut or financial difficulties, the first thing we cut is the resources to children. Instead, increase your resources to children. When you put together information for the 10/40 window, bring it down to a level where children can also access that information. Make prayer cards available that are kid friendly.



## Local Churches: Children's Mobilization

- 1. Recognize the Next Generation potential.** Never before in the history of the world has a generation had such amazing access—to communication tools, to education, to resources, to medical care, to shared global culture. Let's not shortchange them by offering only entertaining activities but put in their hands tools, training, and an understanding so that they can change their world. Take seriously what they can do now and what God has in store for them later.
- 2. Develop a written plan for children's missions engagement from pre-school to high school graduation.** It won't happen by chance. Make sure each age bracket is included. What key concepts need to be communicated at every level? How will you consistently challenge boys and girls to commit their lives for God's purpose? How will you guide them into biblical life decisions that will prepare them to freely follow God's leading to serve ends-of-the-earth Kingdom purposes wherever He places them?
- 3. Recruit a children's teacher for your missions committee and/or your missions conference planning team.** Adding a children's specialist to your team will do multiple things: (1) It will continue to remind you to prioritize the inclusion of youth in all of your planning. (2) You will have someone who can coordinate children's events using methodology that connects well to today's kids. (3) Exposing a teacher to the excitement of missions vision will gain a long-term missions advocate.
- 4. Listen to and learn from kids.** Sit in on the children's program and talk to children's leaders. Appreciate the work the children's ministries team is investing. Analyze what connects well with children. Interview kids. Find out what they know about the world and about missions. Discover what they care about. Listen carefully and you probably will hear evidence that God is already developing compassion in their hearts.
- 5. Integrate missions into current children's programs.** Rather than adding yet another program, find ways to help teachers include a global perspective in Sunday school, Awana, or other events. Make it easy for them. Give them ready-to-go resources.
- 6. Ask your missionaries to speak to the children.** Children's specialist Jill Harris reports that a survey of Urbana 2000 participants revealed that the number one missions influence in the lives of these young adults was a missionary. Meeting a "live" missionary scored far higher than even parents' input. Children are impacted when they meet a missionary up close and personal. Note: Your missionaries may need some guidance in how to relate to your children. Perhaps one of your regular teachers could provide advice about what content and presentation methods would be most effective.
- 7. Give children their own piece of financial projects.** Karen Hardin of Caleb Project reminds missions leaders that kids love to take ownership and get involved. When their church recently raised funds to purchase a vehicle for workers in Central Asia, the children took responsibility for raising the funds for the wheels. And they reminded the adults that the car would go nowhere until they had provided all four wheels!
- 8. Involve your children in hands-on missions ministry.** With proper training, kids can help lead a VBS in an inner-city mission setting or hand out mittens and scarves they have collected. Properly guided, they can entertain younger boys and girls living at a shelter, or pass out food to the homeless.
- 9. Sponsor family missions trips.** Not every short-term project is a good fit for children, but many times boys and girls can contribute. Older children can help with childcare at a regional field conference, or assist in teaching music, puppets, or sports in a missions setting. The world over, children are bridge builders.
- 10. Send teachers and other children's education specialists on short-term missions trips** with the specific assignment to return and **develop some children's stories and curriculum** from what they saw and experienced. If you have a **photographer and/or videographer** who can produce materials for children, send them, too! Not only will these be a blessing in your own church but field missionaries will be grateful to have quality material to use on their next home assignment. Offer these resources to the mission agency, as well.
- 11. Stock your church library with children's missions materials.** Many of the sites noted below have books, CDs and DVDs that should be part of your children's library resources. Consider resourcing some purchases from your missions budget.
- 12. Start small and grow.** Don't be discouraged when you hear of a large church that holds a huge children's missions conference with spectacular resources. Learn from them (attend their program to see just what is going on), then work on building your team and initiating one activity at a time. Ask God to bring you gifted people and show you how to use them.
- 13. Challenge and train children to share Jesus with cross-cultural friends.** Youth in most Western cultures now attend school with boys and girls of other religions, or no faith at all. Kids can share their faith cross-culturally right in their own school or neighborhood, but they need to be taught how.
- 14. Capitalize on the potential of impacting parents by giving children a global perspective.** Encourage your kids to share what they are learning with their parents. Send home with them information that will engage mom and dad, too. Plan a family night as part of an upcoming missions program and get your kids to bring their parents.



## Resources for Children's Missions Mobilization

### RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS MOBILIZING CHILDREN FOR MISSIONS

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#### Discipleland

[www.discipleland.com](http://www.discipleland.com)

This curriculum for children age 2 – grade 6 is designed to help the church fulfill the Great Commission. Missions is integrated throughout the material.

#### Kidology's Missions Zone

[www.kidology.org/zones/zone.asp?zone\\_id=19](http://www.kidology.org/zones/zone.asp?zone_id=19)

Kidology offers teachers creative ideas for teaching missions. A modest membership fee is required to access most of their resources.

#### Reinbridge

805.987.0064

Three short videos presenting basic missions concepts. Preview on YouTube and order a DVD of high quality:

Prayer and Fasting for Kids:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSbYXcN5VBQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSbYXcN5VBQ)

Prayer walking for Kids:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQOLGTKL\\_ag&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQOLGTKL_ag&feature=related)

10/40 Window for Kids

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0A75w748\\_Ro&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0A75w748_Ro&feature=related)

Most of the agency sites below also include materials for teachers.

### MISSIONS WEBSITES AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR KIDS

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#### IMB South Asia Caravan & GO West Africa

<http://caravanfriends.org/>

[www.gowestafrica.org/kids/](http://www.gowestafrica.org/kids/)

Interactive sites for kids presented by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

#### New Tribes Missions' Kidstuff Page

<https://usa.ntm.org/mission-minded-kids>

Interactive pages for children with some limited materials in the "Teacher's Lounge" for adults.

#### Planet World Bible

Thomas Nelson, publishers

Available in many bookstores and from online sources. Helps children understand God's plan for the Word as evidenced throughout Scripture.

#### SIM Kids Website

[www.simkids.org](http://www.simkids.org)

A fun animated "trip" to different continents where there are stories, things to do, recipes, and much more. Teachers can find resources here, too.

#### Voice of the Martyrs resources and Kids of Courage website

[www.vombooks.com/](http://www.vombooks.com/) and [www.persecuted.com/link](http://www.persecuted.com/link)

Both of these sites sponsored by Voice of the Martyrs provides books, videos, and online resources for helping kids learn about, and pray for, those suffering persecution.

#### Wycliffe's Kids Website

[www.wycliffe.org/kids.aspx](http://www.wycliffe.org/kids.aspx)

This site offers a number of pages for children filled with fun information and interactive games, but there is also a wealth of resources for parents and teachers.

#### YWAM

[www.Worldchristian.com](http://www.Worldchristian.com)

Youth with a Mission publishes missionary biographies at several different reading levels. Some of all of these books are available from a number of sources, but the entire list is here.

#### A Missions Experience on a Disneyworld Vacation

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Wycliffe Bible Translators US Headquarters

Orlando, Florida

407.852.3626

If you are taking a family vacation to Disneyworld, take time to stop by Wycliffe Bible Translators Orlando headquarters. Their WordSpring Discovery Center offers you an opportunity to see the world and the Word in a whole new way. Children and adults will enjoy a living cultural adventure exploring the history of the Bible, the world's languages, and the ongoing work of Bible translation. Multimedia presentations, interactive computer games and simulations, audio dramas, and hands-on activities engage all ages.

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