



# Sweeter Than honey

## CHILDREN'S MISSIONS EDUCATION—A PROPOSAL

BY NANCY TICHY

Checking out a “99 Cent Store” was one of my husband’s favorite pastimes—almost a hobby. One day he came home to show me his bargains and displayed a jar of honey. Imagine his chagrin when he read the fine print and discovered that one of the ingredients listed on the label was water. It wasn’t pure honey.

We who care that children find and fulfill God’s awesome destinies for their lives, sometimes discover that we are dispensing diluted honey. I don’t mean to disparage any effort to engage young lives in God’s global purposes. Increasingly, effective and creative strategies are being deployed. I simply want to challenge us to think carefully about our efforts and to make sure we are giving kids “pure” ingredients. *How might some of our most popular missions education strategies be “diluted” because they don’t go far enough? Diluted with the false assurance that these activities will insure long lasting, growth-inducing results that lead children into Biblical maturity.*

### Diluted Honey — Example 1

*The best time to start involving people in missions is when they are teenagers.* Short-term missions began with this premise. Short-term missions trips can be powerful means to involve people (of all ages, now) in mission efforts.

Look closer. We are told, a person’s character is set before he enters school. This then suggests that teenagers are well past the “prime of life” when it comes to introducing them to and involving them in God’s missionary advance. *Any long-term strategy, whether in the home, the church, or the mission agency, that overlooks discipling today’s children for mission has missed a very important component.*

### Diluted Honey — Example 2

*Children’s hearts are so tender, and if we just help them visualize the needs in this world, they will respond un-*

*selfishly.* Isn’t this a good way to combat the trend we see today? Consider how quickly little ones become self-serving and immune to the needy whether in their school and neighborhood, or beyond.

On the other hand, as *Perspectives* students all over the world discover, a basic tenet in missions education is this: Missions is not primarily about people, whether those who so desperately need to hear the Good News or those who bring it across barriers at great risk. Missions is *first of all* about God, His redemptive purposes and His intention that there be worshippers at His throne from every people group on earth. God is the main character of the Bible and His missionary heart is the unifying theme. *Can we teach this truth so that children own this principle and apply it to their lives?*

### Diluted Honey — Example 3

*Teaching missions can be exciting because diversity lends itself to interactive, creative, imaginative, hands on activities.* No one denies this, and those who champion missions education for children emphasize it. The nations have come to us, and many nationalities and languages are now represented in a typical classroom and many neighborhoods. Children can find other cultures as interesting and valuable as their own way of life. They can also realize that God created these differences for His own glory, and His purposes for people of every ethnic expression make us all equally precious in His sight.

If, however, we are not also grounding our children in this knowledge and leading them into “the obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5) to consider our part in reaching the nations, we are doing little more than any good, secular elementary school. *We also need to teach kids what diverse peoples believe so our children can wisely compare and contrast the Bible’s teachings with the world’s belief systems.* The schools teach cultural diversity as a means to gain equal acceptance of all beliefs. We must teach that although customs include many “neutral” things,

---

*Nancy Tichy is director of the USCWM regional office in Riverside, CA.*

all beliefs are not equal. We must bring out the lostness of people without Christ.

#### **Diluted Honey — Example 4**

*One of the best ways to challenge children for missions is to encourage them to give money.* Even young children have expendable income these days. Encourage them to support a missions project in place of a visit to their favorite toy store, or snack counter.

In reality, money is only one item when it comes to godly stewardship. How often do we help kids understand that we can't take anything to Heaven with us, but we can send a lot on ahead? God is interested in how we spend our money, yes, but He is also interested in how we spend our time, how we develop the talents he bestows, how we recognize our giftedness, and how we set our priorities. *What loving acts of mercy can I perform? What is in my investment portfolio that brings Him glory and that has eternal consequences?* When kids incorporate the answers to these questions into their lives, they are less likely to "throw money" at a missions project when they are adults and feel smug about how they are serving God.

#### **Diluted Honey — Example 5**

*Only people who receive a mysterious "call" are obliged to become missionaries.* A hundred years ago, many considered missionary service to be the most pres-

tigious of life's careers. One need only to hear God "call" and answer, yes. In this age of voice mailboxes, it is now convenient to ignore a call, literally and figuratively. How sad that children can grow up never responding to an invitation to one of the most fulfilling, most exhilarating adventures of life.

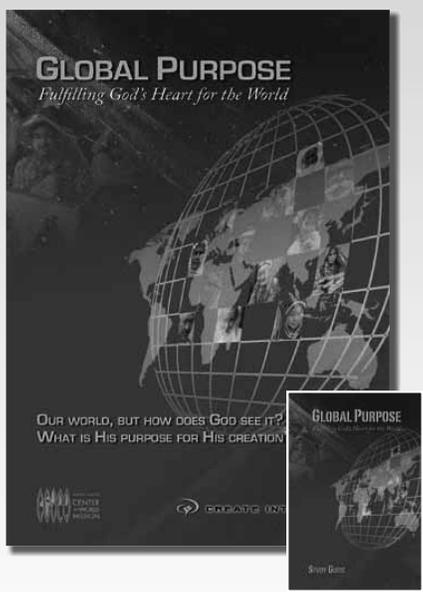
Yes, there is a missionary "call." But there are "calls" far more basic that usually precede something this specific. Can we not develop in children the assurance that God has called every single person, themselves included, to love Him, serve Him, bring Him glory? Childhood is a great time to begin understanding their gifts, talents and passions so that by the time they complete high school they know where God is leading them?

*Furthermore, we can help them understand that God calls every Christian to be involved in His global purposes.* Those who want to go will never get anywhere without the commitment of those who are called to support them. And many do not go, not from any lack of a call, but for lack of a sending team. Though we may not choose to talk about a "wartime lifestyle" with our youngest children, it doesn't take a lot of intellectual maturity to understand and apply this principle, the earlier the better.

#### **Diluted Honey — Example 6**

*When all else has been tried, we can always fall back on prayer.* We convey this more by example than

## **'GLOBAL PURPOSE' — a new DVD from the U.S. Center for World Mission**



"At last, believers can understand the Bible's "Global Purpose" through this fascinating DVD. Viewers will understand how God's 'big picture' destiny for our planet is inseparable from His 'small picture' destiny for believers everywhere."

**Bob Blincoe**  
US Director, Frontiers

"I loved it. Great tool to use with churches. You have hit a home run with this DVD!"

**Tom Telford**  
Author, national conference speaker  
Initiative 360 and United World Mission

"For many who will serve Christ in obedience to the Great Commission, understanding the urgency and enormity of the need will be a first step. The Global Purpose DVD illustrates this reality in a powerful way."

**Bob Creson**  
President, Wycliffe Bible Translators, USA

This DVD is a teaching resource that gives an overview of **God's global purpose** to bless all peoples. It invites the viewer to explore ways to partner with others in declaring God's glory among all nations.

Produced by the Mobilization office of the U.S. Center for World Mission in cooperation with Create International  
Running time: 20 minutes

Cost: DVD with User Guide: \$16.95  
DVD with User Guide and Study Booklet: \$17.95

To order: William Carey Library/Send The Light • call 1-800-MISSION • [www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org)

we do by teaching practices. If we truly believed that “the work of missions is prayer,” we would be people of intercession and would be leading our children to participate with us. Across our nation, teachers and parents are conveying to children the joy and strategic importance of intercessory prayer. In general, however, the North American church falls sadly short of God’s desire and direction. This is true in spite of sterling examples of the South Korean church and Jim Cymbala’s fascinating story in *Fresh Wind—Fresh Fire*.

How are we to respond to all this? Almost all of us are overextended. We do what we can do, wistfully, at times, wishing we could do better. Yet, if the fate of a whole generation of children rests, in large part, in the hands of their parents, teachers and other mentors, is it not time to pay attention to what we are doing and pay the price to more effectively serve God in this generational challenge?

When children reach their teen years before we can challenge them with God’s global advance, then praise God! That’s better than sometime later. If children develop (or are born with) a sensitive nature that we can guide into taking on “Good Samaritan” work, then praise God! If children naturally enjoy what is “different” and welcome the alien in their classroom or neighborhood with ease, praise God! If we can teach children to find satisfaction by being generous, even sacrificial, to help the missionary cause, we praise God. If children jostling for space in our classrooms or for attention in our homes hear and respond to God’s “call” to full-time, career missionary service, then praise God, indeed! For the small and large bands of intercessors around our world made up of children, we praise God!

But let us, also, be diligent to present children with all of God’s truth in missions matters. Let us give them “pure honey.” Let us seek to engage children in mission endeavors *before* they become teenagers. Let us do our best to help them see *Jesus first* and people second, with a growing understanding of what it means to bring God glory. Let us help children welcome all who are different and disabled and disadvantaged into God’s Kingdom as they discover the Author of diversity and praise Him for this gift. Let us harness the amazing resources our children have to offer up to God—their money, yes, but also their very lives. Let us model for our children what “called to be a saint” is all about, showing them in compelling ways that they can embrace with joy all that it means to discover and fulfill God’s destiny for their lives. Let us intentionally raise up bands of mighty intercessors from among our children.

Finally, are we at risk of celebrating our great advances in missions education for children even as we

entertain a false sense of satisfaction in the results? If somehow we can slow down this mad pace that our world sets for us long enough to look carefully at ourselves and our teaching, and make course corrections where needed, God will use us to pass on to the next generation all that *He* wants them to have. (Psalm 145:4) They will praise Him for His mighty deeds because they will see His power and beauty in their midst. Their lives will reflect this as they follow Him wholeheartedly into adulthood. May God Who is on the throne, here and now, receive the glory due His Name. May our children be among those who worship Him in spirit and in truth—truth that is like unadulterated honey. f

### Pure Honey

1. Childhood, the earlier the better, is the best time to bring kids to an understanding of what the “obedience of faith” means and how this works out in immediate, practical, everyday scenarios along with future steps of following God through life.
2. Missions is first about GOD and bringing Him glory, which then leads naturally to matters involving people. Children are capable of learning to put the glory of God first even as they learn to express themselves in acts of mercy and compassion.
3. Cultural diversity is God’s idea. We can celebrate with our children that this is part of His plan to advance his Kingdom purposes. While appreciating the valuable aspects of all cultures, we can give children wisdom regarding the world’s religious systems and how they fall short of God’s revealed plan in Scripture.
4. Biblical stewardship lessons teach that everything we have belongs to God. He will help us know how much we can keep and still please Him. When children firmly base their lives on this premise, they will become a generation of men and women who do mighty exploits for God.
5. A “missionary” call is just one of many calls. Children can learn to understand God’s call to be whatever He directs them to be, wherever He wants them to use their talents, spiritual gifts and passions.
6. Prayer is the work of missions—praise and intercession; children may be even better suited to participate in prayer than adults.