

# Let the Children Come

Nancy Tichy

**L**ike many movements of God, this one has a modest beginning. Nearly two decades ago, men and women came together from all over the United States representing mission agencies and publishing houses. About twenty in all, with diverse backgrounds, they had at least one thing in common – a love for children. Some were writers of children’s materials. All had experience in working with children, and all complained about the lack of state-of-the-art material essential for teaching missions to children. They focused primarily on churches whose workers asked for experienced, professional assistance.

An international network of people and organizations has grown out of those few days of brainstorming and prayer hosted by Jill Harris and Frontiers, in Mesa, Arizona. Churches and mission agencies, together, hosted international conferences for children’s missions education enthusiasts. Subsequent “think tank” type meetings launched writing groups. Now, every basic curriculum needed to teach missions to children and youth, in English, is available. This includes everything from kids’ versions of the *Perspectives* course, to “traditional” Sunday School discipleship-oriented curricula, to scores of missionary biographies and fictional adventures written for children of all ages. A half dozen or so mission agencies have developed entertaining and informative interactive Web sites for kids. Directions for finding much of this material can be found online, and in a few locations lending libraries have been developed. (See “The Wheel Has Been Invented” page 21) to find an annotated bibliography to help teachers and parents find the assistance they may be seeking.)

And there is more. Over the past two decades many adults in missions leadership have recognized the value of cooperating with leaders in children’s ministry. Each has much to contribute to the programs of the others. Parents in home schooling networks are incorporating God’s heart for the nations into their traditional, academic curricula. Caring, professional help is increasingly available for the needs of missionary families and kids, or TCKs (Third Culture Kids).

For a long time mission agencies have existed to minister to the urgent needs of children. They range from very large and well-known to a multitude of smaller organizations. It is impossible to tally the value of these efforts to bless children who go hungry, who are ravaged by natural disasters, evil intentions, disease and war. These children are the least of the least in

many parts of the world.

These are the ones who most poignantly demonstrate the challenge that still exists for us to live in obedience to our Savior’s command, “Let the children come to me...”

More recently, other activity has appeared on the scene that continues to focus on children – their needs and their potential to glorify God. Increasingly, church leaders are seeking ways to partner with parents to disciple kids not only for their own

sake but for God’s Kingdom work. Curriculum producers, more and more, challenge adults to disciple children for Christian maturity, with a focus on living for the Glory of God, even at a young age. Creative and carefully crafted materials are available to implement this.

Two agencies further implement this by training North American children’s workers for short-term,



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cross-cultural mission work, building on their compassion and expertise, and sending them out in teams to empower children's workers around the world. One example is Kidz at Heart, founded and directed by respected teacher and author, Gordon West, who works out of Mesa, Arizona ([www.KidZatheart.org](http://www.KidZatheart.org)). Another is Kidzana, with Sylvia Foth at the helm, which also has a large scope of international involvement ([www.kidzana.org](http://www.kidzana.org)). Sylvia's book, *Daddy, Are We There Yet?*, published in 2009, supplements this by pulling together an amazing amount of information regarding the plight of children worldwide, and giving her readers powerful motivation to get involved ([www.daddyarewethereyet.org](http://www.daddyarewethereyet.org)). Meanwhile, we hear numerous stories of children all over the world doing great spiritual exploits, proving over and over that they don't have to wait until they grow up to serve God.

It should be no surprise that all of this activity and energy has come together. One example is called the 1 for 50 Initiative ([www.1for50.net](http://www.1for50.net)). It began in the summer of 2008 when representatives of 32 nations gathered for the Global Children's Forum at Wheaton College, ([www.globalchildrensministry.org](http://www.globalchildrensministry.org)) with a focus on the world's 2.2 billion children. Christian ministry to these precious lives was admittedly uneven and, again, people prayed, brainstormed, shared concern and came up with a vision and a mission statement. The 1 for 50 Vision: to mobilize the Body of Christ worldwide to reach and disciple children to become all God intends them to be. The 1 for 50 Mission: to equip one children's outreach and discipleship leader for every 50 kids around the world.

This emerging movement is based on five principles. One: Make disciples, not simply converts. Two: Reach the unreached with the love of Jesus. Three: Engage Christian families to fulfill their biblical mandate. Four: Nurture the whole child. Five: Advance God's Kingdom. Strategies for success include: vision casting, training, networking and resource, information sharing.

Another equally significant development is called Raising Up a New Generation from the 4/14 Window to Transform the World ([www.4to14Window.com](http://www.4to14Window.com)). (4/14 refers to that period in human life – ages 4 to 14 – that is most opportune for spiritual development.) Led by well-known missions pioneer, Luis Bush, and coming directly as the fulfillment of a dream God gave to Pastor Nam Soo Kim, hundreds of delegates convened in Flushing, NY in September 2009 and in

2010. More than 500 men, women and children came from all over the globe—over 80 nations—united by love for children and desire to see children fulfill the plans that God has for them.

The large Korean church, pastored by Kim, provided generous, gracious and godly hospitality for the delegates. During the day, the participants worked along regional lines and in focus workshops. They spent evenings in plenary sessions with challenging speakers. Presently, smaller task forces continue their work. They are developing ministry strategies to bring to the agendas of future international conferences.

What does all of this mean? Is God at work to raise the awareness and impact the consciences of missionary leadership worldwide? Will those involved in missionary efforts value strategies that include reaching out to and discipling children to expand God's global kingdom? To answer these questions, serious thinkers from both sides of the room—the missions people and the children's people—are entering into dialogue and partnership.

Many are putting forward the assertion that any long-term mission strategy which does not implement a well-developed plan for discipling children for God's Kingdom purposes is both shortsighted and biblically incomplete.

**Shortsighted.** How easily we overlook the practical consideration that God's design for children in today's churches and Christian homes is for them to fulfill their God-given destinies. This is more likely to happen when we intentionally tend to their spiritual development while they are young. A tender seedling is more likely to become the mature tree it was meant to be, if it is well tended as it develops, not if its care is haphazard. No nursery owner neglects this obvious truth. And if we fall short of preparing our children, content with pampering and protecting them, we put them at peril for missing God's design for their lives. Sad statistics from our present day American church give us fair warning.

This is true of the church wherever it is, including mission field, pioneer work. Watch the documentary DVD, "EE-TAOW, the Next Chapter" for a good example. The lives of children were dramatically changed when the Gospel was introduced to and accepted by the Mouk people. Children were expected to "grow in grace" just as much as adults were. Children were part of the first Mouk missionary teams that went out. And since that original story is more than 20 years old,



# BILL OF RIGHTS

## for Kingdom Kids

Nancy Tichy

### We hold the following as inalienable rights for Christian children today:

- I. The right to develop a biblical world view, learning to put God at the center of their personal universe.
- II. The right to know their rich Christian heritage, and learn about men and women who have kept bright God's flame of promise, from Paul's day to the present.
- III. The right to age-appropriate and exciting presentations that vividly portray missionaries, how they live and their roles in serving God.
- IV. The right to enter into some missionaries' lives, discovering how to encourage and love them, and to pray for them specifically, regularly, fervently.
- V. The right to an ever-maturing awareness of local and worldwide needs and how God may want them to meet these challenges starting now.
- VI. The right to learn to appreciate different cultures, convinced that God loves ALL peoples of the world and deserves to receive their praise.
- VII. The right to thoroughly understand major world religious systems in order to pray more intelligently and witness more effectively to children from these religions whom they may well meet every day.
- VIII. The right to understand God's global strategy of "making disciples" (Matt. 28:18-20) and all this implies for planting reproducing churches among peoples who have not heard about Jesus. This is based on the conviction that the only way to a right relationship with God is through Jesus Christ and Him alone.
- IX. The right to participate in meaningful, regular prayer for peoples without a church and/or those living where the church is small, struggling and often under persecution.
- X. The right to move with growing maturity into an "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5) and respond to the truth that missions is not, first of all, about people (whether givers or receivers) but missions is first of all about God, Who deserves the praise of all peoples so beautifully depicted in Rev. 7:9,10.

guess who is providing leadership now for the growing network of churches?

**Biblical basis.** Generational faithfulness is the term we give to God's design for the nurturing and training of children in His Kingdom. Psalm 145:4 is one of many references to this. Practical instruction is given in the Old Testament both by direct teaching and in examples within narratives. Knowledge of God's glory and faithfulness is the legacy He wants one generation to pass on to the next in an unbroken chain of truth that ties all of history together. Jesus taught frequently about the place of children in the Kingdom. He was Himself an example of a child well-raised to understand and obey God's Word. At twelve, He was mature enough to enter into dialogue with the theologians of His day.

All over the world, whether in the home or in the church, children must be challenged to obey the Great Commandment to love God with their whole beings, as well as the Great Commission. Statistics indicate that the early years of a person's life are the optimum time to implement this. As we find age-appropriate ways to challenge children, we must not forget that children often have spiritual perceptivity far beyond their years.

In light of the above, here are some practical suggestions:

First, we are very close to producing, in English, much of the curricula that is needed to present the four pillars of *Perspectives* to children within a church context. More will undoubtedly become available. Can we assist those who are translating the *Perspectives Reader* and *Study Guide* into languages other than English to do the same for children in their languages?

Second, in English, little has been developed to challenge and equip parents, grandparents and other relatives to teach mission principles to children within the context of the home. Changing this is of utmost importance. Not only will it introduce Kingdom truth to the children, it will help the adults who pass this truth on to their children to implement it more carefully into their own lives.

Finally, praise God, a growing number of men and women, agencies and denominations, are speaking out for children and developing strategic ministries to children. In spite of Satan's work to cloud our minds to biblical teaching, both Old and New Testament, momentum is growing as we declare to our younger generations both God's mighty works and His glorious character—His glory (Psalm 145:4).



The Church in the Global South is waking up to this mighty truth. We, who once were their pioneer fathers in the faith, need to acknowledge their energetic ministries with children and let them mentor us. Together, in obedient faith, we must invite our children to come

to Jesus not only as Savior but as Mighty King of the Nations. Let them come and take their places as witnesses to their Heavenly Father, the One worthy of wholehearted investment of their time, talents and resources—their all. 🌐

## The Wheel Has Been Invented!

By Nancy Tichy

Has God put mission education in your children's ministry sights? Want to know where to go for resources—if resources even exist? Cheer up! All the basics have been created and are readily available. Seven are listed below. All you need to add are specific people/projects your church or agency endorses.

**1) Caleb Project [www.cartpioneers.org](http://www.cartpioneers.org)**  
*THUMB Teacher's Resource Kit.* Introduce your children to the 10/40 Window and a representative people group from each of the major religions: Tribal, Hindu, Unreligious (atheistic), Muslim and Buddhist. CD/DVD format with six state-of-the-art video presentations, teacher guides and downloadable handouts for kids.

*Outside the Lines* The powerful adult mission course, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, designed for use with kids. This curriculum comes in CD/DVD format and includes four tracks: KG/1st, 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th, & 6th through 8th grades. Everything you need for teaching is here including music, media clips, directions for crafts and activities, teachers' guides and student handouts. Adaptable for use in 13-week and up to 26 weeks time frame.

*God's Got Stuff To Do (DVD & CD)* format for teachers and student guidebook bring six missionary roles children can play now. This is an excellent follow-up to previous materials.

*Window on the World 96:* two-page country and people group presentations for children with full-color photographs, information, stories and prayer items.

*RED CARD*—Eight interactive lessons engage the entire family in exploring God's heart for children at risk. Appropriate content for grade 4 and up. (Published in 2009)

**2) Group Publishing [www.group.com](http://www.group.com) ~ Compassion [www.compassion.com](http://www.compassion.com)**  
*HOPE LIVES* A five-week journey that transforms children's hearts and nurtures a Jesus-centered, compassionate response to poverty. (Published in 2009)

### 3) Through the Bible Publishers - Disciple-Land Curriculum [www.discipleland.com](http://www.discipleland.com)

This full six-year curriculum (Levels 1-6 for Grades 1-6) follows a sound scope and sequence for biblical literacy and discipleship. It also includes mission teaching in every lesson at every level. Newly-developed Web site for parents and kids enhances the mission teaching.

Also, available: two stand-alone, 13-week "adventures" take kids to the Philippines with Bible translators, and around the world with the *Jesus Film*. More adventures coming.

### 4) Children's Bibles

*PlanetWord*—[www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com); Nelson Publishers. Created with Wycliffe input, this mission study Bible (NKJV) provides an abundance of missions material in kid-friendly format with a closing section of full-color illustrations. Suitable for 3rd/4th graders and older.

*The Global Bible*—[www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org) Features over 40 full-page presentations on countries around the world. Controlled vocabulary version makes this Bible suitable for younger readers.

### 5) Interactive Discipleship Program - Global Xpress Kids Club & Lil' Engines. (Monthly Magazines)

[www.globalxpresskc.com](http://www.globalxpresskc.com) Check out the Web site to see how much this mission club for children offers! Includes links to other exciting missionary Web sites for kids. Offers a program for using materials in a weekly church or club context. (Note: no "e" on xpress in web site address.)

### 6) Voice of the Martyrs [www.kidsofcourage.com](http://www.kidsofcourage.com) Kids of Courage

Free quarterly magazine featuring areas where the church is under pressure and Christians still suffer. Appropriately formatted for kids. Curriculum guide is offered for purchase each time.

### 7) Build a Children's Mission Reading Library [www.ywampublishing.com](http://www.ywampublishing.com)

Series of missionary biographies: Christian Heroes, Then & Now; Heroes for Young Readers; Hero Tales, I,II,III,IV. Some with curriculum guides. Also, *Reel Kids Adventures*, mission/fiction.