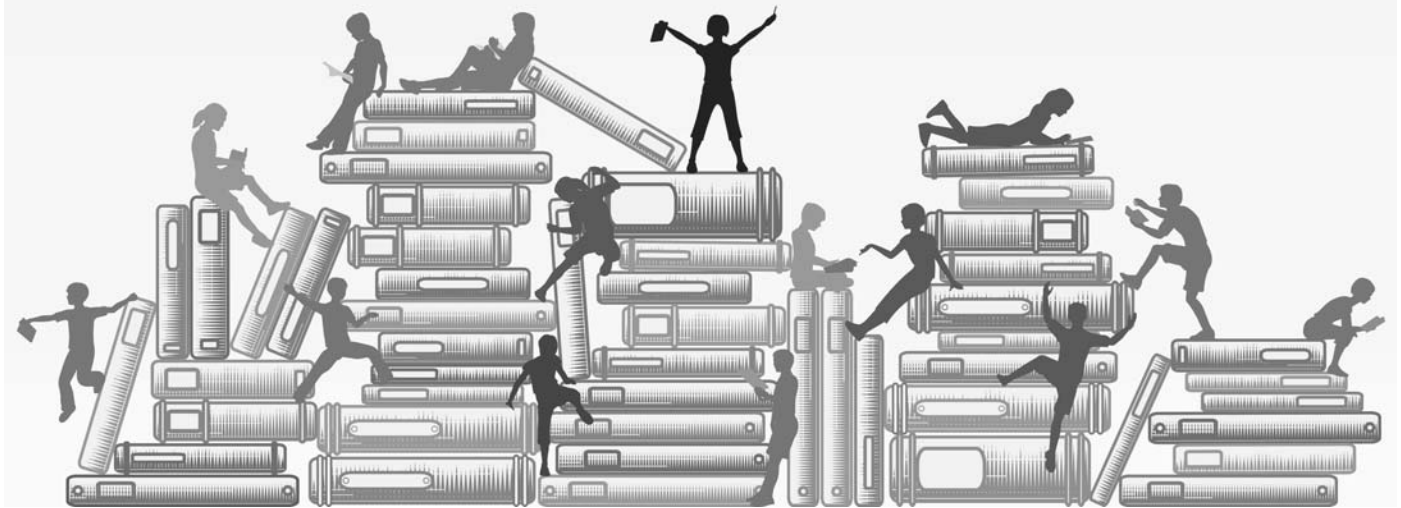


Resourcing the **Missional Family**



NANCY TICHY

The North American family is faced with many challenges. Children move away from parents, not only geographically, but morally and spiritually as well. The typical church deals with this by further fragmenting family life. In many cases, it manages families within its membership by offering help along age and gender lines, rather than along avenues provided by God for *generational faithfulness*. Biblical wisdom is compartmentalized and increasingly, followers of Jesus find it difficult to take Jesus' teaching seriously. How many, of any age, actually attempt to follow the pattern set down in the Sermon on the Mount? How often do parents develop intentional strategies and best practices to deliver a godly lifestyle to their children in ways that the pattern continues on with succeeding generations?

How can Christian parents, today, create an environment where their children learn to know God intimately and serve Him passionately? Clearly, the best design is the one where parents model the truth they espouse. Actions do seem to speak louder than words. Actions and words in sync with biblical wisdom are powerful indeed. What are practical "next steps" once parents determine to love God with their whole beings and their children as

themselves? Are there resources readily available to guide them in maintaining a godly household that honors the Creator God of the Universe and sends their children out to do the same?

The answer to these questions is a resounding, "Yes!" A fragmented lifestyle can be replaced by one that is *integrated*. Apathy can give way to inspiration and passion. Ignorance can be challenged by information. Information, inspiration and integration can be the watchwords for building godly family structures that will contribute to the life of the church and positively impact the life of the community.

Inspiration and integration are dealt with in greater detail in other articles in this issue. I will attempt to provide suggestions primarily under the heading of information. Following are a few of my favorite things. This list of resources must be incomplete. Parents desiring to arm themselves for battle against the evil forces at work today seeking to destroy godly family life will find even more to equip them for success.

The Bible remains the most important guidebook on family life. We are blessed when we make time to trace the golden strand of *generational faithfulness* that binds its stories into a grand panorama of what God desires for *His* children. One idea: take a "Through the Bible in One Year" publication and highlight everything you read that deals with families, fathers, mothers, children. What are the examples to follow and to avoid? Whom does God put forth, besides Himself, as parents worth emulating? What makes them "good?" What were their flaws to avoid? What actual commands and suggestions are embedded in



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Scripture that need to be “written” on the hearts of family members? Make this a family adventure and invite your children into the discovery-making process.

Church Ministries that are large enough have pastors of family ministry. Praise God, their numbers are increasing and networking forms alliances for holding conferences and publishing materials. Dr. Rob Rienow of *Visionary Parenting* (www.visionaryparenting.org) and Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller of the *National Center for Biblical Parenting* (www.biblicalparenting.org) stand out as resources here. Even small churches can develop a mindset and ministries that draw attention to their families and make sure they are prayed for and ministered to in holistic ways.

Books, Periodicals, DVD’s – there seems to be no end! To fit in with the theme of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*, I will suggest some resources that primarily speak to the missional family.

Operation World and *Window On The World* – these two volumes are invaluable for providing *information, inspiration, and even integration*. *OW* is considered an adult book, but because the contents are attainable by calendar date and by alphabet it is a very flexible tool and useful with children. I call it a prayer encyclopedia. *WOW* is designed for kids, to focus on 47 countries and 47 people groups within countries. All 94 are unevangelized or represent places where thriving, reproducing faith is at risk. This children’s version abounds with photographs and gives stories and points for prayer.

Here’s an idea for *integration*: When children are mature enough, invite them to watch the news with you. For any age, one good way to combat crisis fatigue is to take the place in focus in a news broadcast or publication and look it up in *Operation World*. See if it’s included in *Window on the World*. Google it. Take information and create your own prayer guide for family use.

Global Prayer Digest – (www.globalprayerdigest.org) A magazine with two months’ worth of information in a daily format with a focus on the least-reached peoples

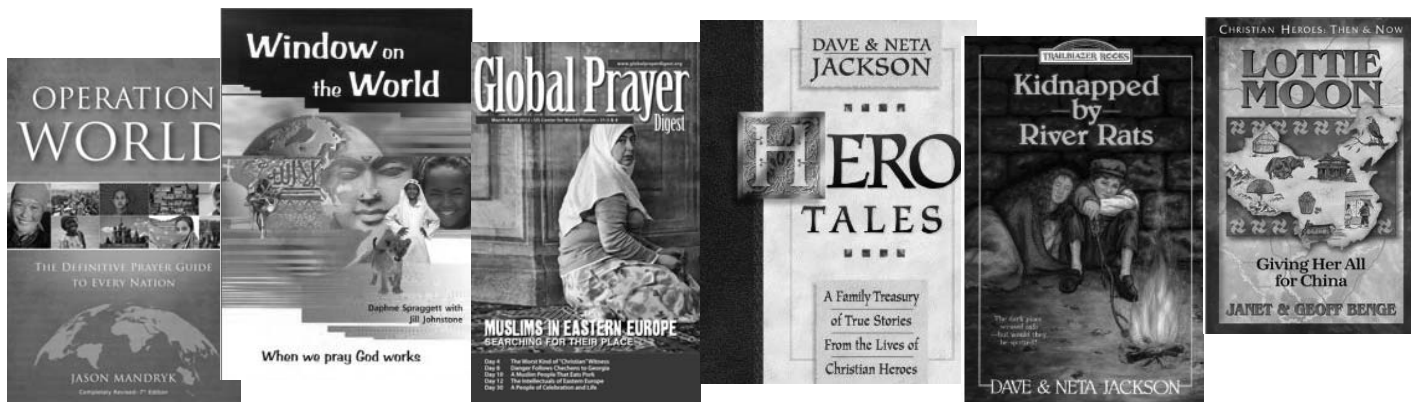
of the world. *GPD* is like a regular supply of kindling to fuel your family’s desire for God and for the nations.

DiscipleLand Curriculum – (www.DiscipleLand.com) Unique feature: Every lesson, grades one through six, incorporates some truth from the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course. Provides a great website for parents, presenting the family as a discipleship center. Recent publication: *My Awesome God Bible Storybook* for preschoolers/early readers that concludes each reading with a focus on God, the Heavenly Father (www.AwesomeGodBible.com).

Books for Children to Read

Again, the list must be incomplete! Half a century ago, books published for children to read, apart from texts in the classroom, were slim pickings, mostly biographies that were pretty boring along with *Nancy Drew*, *Bobby Twins*, *BoxCar Kids* and a very few others including comic books. Today the options, just under Christian literature alone, are abundant, whether it be children’s Bibles, Bible story books, biographies or adventure stories.

- *Hero Tales, Volumes II, III, IV: A Family Treasury of True Stories From the Lives of Christian Heroes* by Dave & Neta Jackson, 1997, on; by Bethany House Publishers www.bethanyhouse.com
Each volume contains 15 biographies of missionaries, evangelists and other Christian heroes who worked courageously to share the gospel with others. Perfect for bedtime story hour/homeschooling.
- *Trailblazer Books* by Dave & Neta Jackson Series of books for children to read combining biography and fiction. by Bethany House Publishers.
More than 36 books in the series. Well written even for adults.
- *Christians Heroes: Then & Now- Inspiring True Stories of Men and Women Who Answered God’s Call* by Janet & Geoff Benge by YWAM Publishing; www.ywampublishing.com



- *Heroes For Young Readers*; more than 19 in a series of biographies, written in rhyme, for early readers by Renee Taft Meloche by YWAM Publishing.

Books for Parents/Grandparents to Read

Top seven for every household: Even though you can find many more than these, I chose the following books for their direct bearing on the topic of the missional family. They not only deal with foundational issues for creating family life according to God's design, but provide practical strategies and best practices for weaving compassion, outreach, prayer and worship into the family's fabric.

- *Too Small To Ignore: Why the Least of These Matters Most* by Dr. Wess Stafford 2007 by Compassion International, Inc.
A valuable read to understand the global assault on children and families along with keen insights into parenting strategies, partly flowing out of the author's own childhood challenges in Africa documented in his book. My top pick of these top seven!
- *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship: How to Keep Them Close to God for LIFE* by Kathleen Chapman 2003 by Baker Books
The finest book I've read on what true worship is, with practical ways to incorporate it into the lives of children and adults. Includes "52 Ideas for Worship Moments."
- *Growing Compassionate Kids: Helping Kids See Beyond Their Backyard* by Jan Johnson 2001 by Upper Room Books
Twenty-two chapters full of wisdom and practical strategies to combat "affluenza." The author is a widely known, highly respected writer/speaker on matters of spiritual formation.
- *Becoming a World Changing Family: Fun & Innovative Ways to Spread the Good News* by Donna S. Thomas 2008 by YWAM Publishing
This book gives answers to "the sheer volume of activities competing for your family's time and energy that makes it hard to focus on one of the most important tasks of all—fulfilling the Great Commission. Creative, practical, impactful."
- *When Families Pray: Forty Devotions to Build, Strengthen, and Bond* by Cheri Fuller 1999 by Multnomah Publishers, Inc.
Each chapter starts with a Scripture verse and illustrative anecdote, followed by discussion questions, other related Scripture passages, a prayer and parting thought/quotation. Cheri Fuller is a

highly regarded, prolific author on matters of family, spiritual formation.

- *Raising Kids For True Greatness: Redefine Success for You and Your Child* by Dr. Tim Kimmel 2006 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
Eleven chapters defining godly success with practical strategies for helping children achieve it. Discusses ways to prepare kids to reach the potential and fulfill the purposes God has designed for them. A thoughtfully wise and practical book.
 - *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority* by George Barna 2003 by Regal Books
A vitally important book, still, to be shared by pastors and parents alike. Challenges the church "to come alongside parents and equip them to provide their children—at the earliest age possible—with biblical precepts that will protect them from a worldview hostile to the biblical worldview." A vital read for all adults.
- ### Eight More Books that Make Valuable Additions to Parents' Libraries
- *Missions Moments: 52 Foundational Messages and Activities for Children* by Mitzi Eaker 2005 by Women's Missionary Union
 - *My Children, My Mission Field: A Family's Place in God's Plan to Change the World* by Susan E. Field 2002 by New Hope Publishers
 - *Kids Making a Difference: Incredible Stories Of What Kids Today Are Doing Around the World* by Pete Hohmann; 8061 Shady Grove Road; Mechanicsville, VA 23111
 - *Faith Begins at Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center* by Mark Holmen 2005 by Regal Books
 - *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids: Preparing Our Children to Change Their World* 2006 by InterVarsity Press
 - *Real Kids—Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives* by Karen Marie Yust 2004 by Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint
 - *The Missional Mom: Living with Purpose at Home & in the World* by Helen Lee 2011 by Moody Publishers
 - *501 Practical Ways to Love Your Grandkids and Their Parents* by Roger Sonnenberg 1997 by Concordia Publishing House

A Final Word for This Segment:

Each of the following authors is responsible for multiple titles, but anything by Randy Alcorn, John Piper, and Steve Saint is valuable for inspiration/motivation. Especially powerful for teenagers and young adults: *Don't Waste Your Life* by Piper (www.desiringgod.org/store), *Treasure Principle* by Alcorn (www.hotbooksale.com/store), and the book, *End of the Spear* by Saint (www.itecusa.org/store).

DVDs

- **The Torchlighters** – Heroes of the Faith Ongoing series of animated programs with strong values and educational content for ages 8-12. Each episode presents the story of true-life hero from Christian history. 30 minutes; includes interviews, leader's guide and student handouts. By Christian History Institute with *The Voice of the Martyrs*, www.torchlighters.org.
- **Redcard! Standing Against Oppression Providing Hope** – Equip Yourself to Take a Stand. Eight interactive lessons engage the entire family in exploring God's heart for children at risk. Designed for children, grade four and up, by Caleb Resources; www.RedCardKids.org; www.cartpioneers.org

DVD Documentaries – A selected few full length features suitable for family viewing. Some contain segments not appropriate for young children. (Most of these found at: www.visionvideo.com)

Listed below by focus – title.

Persecution/Music/China – *Canaan Hymns*
 Redemptive Analogies – *Peace Child*
 2 Timothy 2:2 Principle – *EE-TAOW, The Next Chapter*
 Pioneer Bible Translation – *Return to Hauna*
 Godly Ambition/Children/Africa – *Mama Heidi*
 Humility/War/Congo/Medicine – *Mama Luka*
 Spiritual Warfare/Uganda – *An Unconventional War*
 Fraser/Lisu/Prevailing Prayer – *Breakthrough*
 Amy Carmichael/India – *Mother to the Motherless*

Web Site and Publishing House/Distributors

www.globalxpresskc.com – *USCWM* – Free downloads of missions magazine for kids w/teaching tips
www.kidsofcourage.com – Persecuted Church, emagazine for kids

www.questforcompassion.org – Compassion Intl., emagazine for kids

www.simkids.org *Serving in Mission* – general missions, Africa/Asia/S.America

www.ntm.org/kidstuff – New Tribes Mission, tribal outreach

www.wycliffe.org/Kids/FreeCurriculum/PrayerLessons.aspx

www.onehen.org – Christian Community Development

www.viva.org/PrayToday – Contains a very fine video presentation: *The Great Omission*, a daily prayer diary, among other things.

Some Other Significant Mission Agencies that Have Focus on/for Children:

(An incomplete list!)

Inspirational Films (Story of *Jesus* for Children in multiple languages) Great tool for neighborhood evangelism

Pioneers (Caleb Project) www.cartpioneers.org Very valuable online store of missions resources for kids

Transform World/New Generation – www.4to14Window.com

World Vision (Child Sponsorship)

Samaritan's Purse (Shoe Boxes, and more)

Heifer International – www.Heifer.org (Christian Community Development)

A Final Word – A Resource That May Yet Need to be Created

If setting the course of a young child is a better strategy than course correction for a young adult, then shouldn't intentional guidance (and resourcing) for families of the very young be better than drastic interventions later on? If resources for this don't already exist, they must be written and produced.

Even beyond that, I'd like to suggest parenting classes for teenagers (a significant number of whom are parents before high school graduation) and a firm grip on premarital counseling that includes basic principles of godly child rearing and early childhood development. This may be the single most important resource to prepare emerging Christian parents to not only keep their kids safe, but to prepare them for their God given privilege of carrying His *Good News* to their neighbors nearby and far away. May it be so. 🌐