

Understanding the Great Commission Children...The Second Rate Mandate

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The future of missions (the church) depends on our ability to strategically invest in children!

We cannot continue to ignore the most significant entry-level equation for Christianity...doing so will surely result in the decline of Christianity as we know it.

Mark 10:13-16

What will the church look like 50 years from now if we continue to ignore children?

Children as a People Group

- They are a large people group (2 billion children in the world)
- They are a suffering people group
- They are an unwanted people group (most unsafe place for a baby is the womb) (Street children)
- They are an exploited people group (Asia sex trade)(labor)
- They are a victimized people group
- ...But they are also a very receptive people group.

The 4 – 14 Window

“Most people who make significant faith decisions do so before the age of 14, but less than 15% of our efforts in missions are directed to ministry to children”

Why children should be our priority

- **Children suffer** more than any other segment of humanity. Today more than 37% of our children live in **absolute poverty** – a total of 674 million children.
- The staggering truth is that more than a billion children, or 56%, are living in **severe deprivation!**
- Statistics tell us that an estimated one million children enter the **commercial sex trade** every year (Victimized)
- More than 91 million children under 5 are growing up with **debilitating hunger**
- 134 million children have **no access to any school** whatsoever
- 15 million children are **orphaned because of AIDS**

- 246 million children work, with 171 million engaged in the worst forms of **child labor**
- 265 million children have **not been immunized** against any disease
- Over 1/3 of children have to live in **dwellings with more than 5 people per room**
- Over half a billion children have **no toilet facilities** whatsoever
- Almost half a billion children lack **access to published information** of any kind
- 376 million children have more than a 15 minute walk to water and or are using **unsafe water sources**
- **Here's the BIG one...Children are important to God!** (Matthew 18:1-6)

Children account for half the potential harvest

Never in history have we had so many children among us, and never have so many of them been at great social and eternal risk

Almost one-third of the world's population (nearly 2 billion) is under the age of 15.

An additional 26% are young people aged between 15 – 29.

Children are strategic (George Barna)

- The “clay” is still soft...the cement is still wet!
- Childhood is the most formative and therefore the most strategic stage of life.
- Our brains are 90% formed by the time we reach the age of three.
- 85 % of our adult personality is formed by the time we reach 6 years of age.
- 85% of Christians make their commitment to Christ by age 14.
- People past the age of 18 only have a 6% chance of making a Christian faith commitment.

- To change a nation, start with children. Hitler, Stalin, The Taliban, the LRA in Uganda, the Spartans and the Mongols knew it and built their armies using children.

It's a War!

We are engaged in a war... it's not about programs.

- Ministry to children is actually the front lines of the war.
- Satan's goal: Recruit or neutralize the emerging generation of spiritual warriors

It's not what we do **FOR** children...but what we do **IN** children that matters!

- Our challenge is to impact children while they still hope & dream

To Summarize:

- **Children are the key to world evangelization.**
- **The future of missions depends on our ability to minister to children**
- **Childhood is the most significant entry level age group for Christianity**

So what can we do?

- Re-program our minds to think strategically about children
 - Challenge our churches to seriously minister to children
 - Invest in the real war on poverty (spiritual war) (relief Vs ministry)(changed people change communities)
 - Start by becoming a missionary to one child (sponsor) (Sponsoring a child is certainly not all that we should be doing...but its hard to imagine doing less)
 - Become an advocate for children (Proverbs 31:8)
 - Think Small...Aim lower...Give up...Go have a cup of coffee!
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