

Growing Missions-Minded Kids

“Mom, instead of buying me a pair of shoes today, can we buy some for Manuel?”

This question surprised Joshua’s mom, who was on her way to the shoe store to pick out a new pair of shoes for Joshua. Where had this thought come from? What made Joshua decide that he should sacrifice his pair of shoes in order to purchase a pair for Manuel?

Upon further investigation, it was his exposure to missions at church. Joshua and his mom attend a church which taught their children about missions. In this case it was an Assemblies of God church and their missions program for kids, BGMC (Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge). As Joshua saw videos of poor children around the world without proper food or clothing, something began to happen in his heart. Inside was growing a heart of compassion for others. This heart of compassion not only caused Joshua to see the needs of children worldwide, but recognize the need Manuel had right in his own school. Exposure to missions changes the heart of kids.

As you expose children to **the Great Commission**, they’ll see the need to reach out to those around them and to the world with the gospel. They will have a heart for witnessing and sharing their faith.

As you expose children to **the needs of the world**, you create a heart of compassion that wants to reach out and help those who are less fortunate. Kids can be selfish; they need to see and realize just how blessed they are by God. When they realize this, they will want to share their blessings with others.

As you expose children to **missionaries**, they’ll learn about the call of God and about the miracles that are taking place all over the world. Children will develop a burden for a particular area or group of people. As a result of that burden, they will pray for those missionaries, those countries, and those people.

The heritage of missions must be passed on to the next generation. The future of missions could diminish if the next generation does not obtain a burden for the lost. Kids who sacrifice and give to missions now develop into adults who sacrifice and give to missions in the future. Unfortunately, exposure to missionaries is lessening rather than increasing. Culture in our churches has caused it to decline. This is due to:

Dilemma #1: Kids are no longer sitting in adult services.

Years ago, most children sat in adult services with their parents. These kids were exposed to missions through the missionaries who spoke in the services. Today, most kids are in their own services in other parts of the building.

Dilemma #2: Sunday night services.

Traditionally, many missionaries speak during Sunday night services—giving kids exposure to missions. Today many churches no longer conduct Sunday night services.



Dilemma #3: Missionaries no longer stay in homes.

In previous generations, many kids had exposure to missions when missionaries stayed in their homes. In today's society, most guest speakers stay in hotels rather than in homes.

Solution #1: Schedule missionaries to speak in kids' church.

When the church is having a missionary speak to the adults, have the missionary also come into kids' church or Sunday School before or after they speak to the adults.

Solution #2: Schedule special missions services on Sunday nights just for kids and families.

If there aren't Sunday evening services, then occasionally plan them specifically so that families with kids can meet with missionaries. If there are Sunday night services with separate children's activities, bring the children in on those nights to hear the missionaries.

Solution #3: Make an effort to have missionaries eat meals with families.

Share with the missionary the value of exposing children to missionaries and schedule families to have meals with missionaries. These meals can be in their

homes or at a restaurant. Once again, this gives the missionary an opportunity to share his or her vision with the children.

Solution #4: Provide a regular missions emphasis for the kids along with a major yearly emphasis.

In order for kids to catch a heart for missions, they need to have regular exposure to missions. The ideal situation is to have a monthly missions emphasis by having a monthly missions service for the kids. Kids need to be taught to pray for missionaries and the lost. Kids need to be challenged to give to the work of missions. And kids need to be compelled to keep their hearts open to the call of missions. A large number of Assemblies of God missionaries were called to missions as children. Children who are not taught about missions may not hear God's call to missions work. If the Church does not make an effort to prepare children to develop a heart of missions and a heart of compassion, there is the danger of a lack of missionaries in the decades to come. ■

The Boyds have been involved in Children's Ministries for over 28 years. Since 1999, they have served as the directors of the National Children's Ministries Agency for the Assemblies of God and directors of BGMC. Mary's primary responsibility is serving as the National BGMC Coordinator. Prior to coming to the Assemblies of God national office, they were full-time children's pastors in three great churches for 19 years.

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