

### **God's Compelling Call: Helping Your Students to Know God's Heart**

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Woven throughout God's Word is a redemptive thread that reveals God's heart to bring all peoples, nations, and tongues to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In Revelation 7:9 John writes, "I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb." Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14 provide another clear example: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

In his article "The Living God Is a Missionary God," John Stott says, "God could have revealed His heart and purpose in the form of direct commands about what He wanted to see done. Instead, God chose to reveal His purpose in the form of a promise, a promise that was both personal and immensely global to bless all the families of the earth." Our foundation for the Christian mission is that 4,000 years ago God called Abraham and made a covenant with him, promising to bless not only him but through Abraham and his seed (us!) to bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3, Galatians 3:29). *We are blessed to be a blessing.*

As Christian educators, we have the privilege and responsibility to teach truth—the whole of God's Word—not just pieces and parts. The entire Bible reveals a mandate for missions. The mandate is not just what we call the Great Commission. It includes the promise given to Abraham revealed through the pages of Genesis to Revelation.

The goal in Christian schooling is neither to persuade students to become missionaries nor to train them in the skills necessary to be missionaries. The goal is to help students understand God's greater purpose and to challenge them to join Him in His mission. While some may be called to travel to distant lands, others are called to stay. God desires for us to lead lives of significance serving others, whether or not we go to distant countries. A person on mission with God is a Christian endowed with the responsibility to share in God's redemptive work. All Christians share this call.

Sometimes we miss the opportunities around us because we do not have a global perspective. Do the students of your school understand God's heart for the world? Do they understand their role in His plan? Making the biblical mandate for missions a priority of your school mission and carrying out that priority cannot be overemphasized. Research shows that the majority of people who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ do so before they reach the age of 18. We have an incredible opportunity in our Christian schools to reach children when they are the most receptive to the gospel. In order to maximize this opportunity, the school must help students understand both God's global purpose and their role in His plan.

When students begin to see the world as God sees it, making the connection between their heads and their hearts, they will have compassion for others. Acts 1:8 is a great model for developing opportunities that allow students to reach out to those in the school community, local community, region, state, country, and beyond. Student activities such as reading to other students, cleaning highways, providing supplies for an urban school, sponsoring a child in Africa, or building classrooms in Guatemala are all opportunities that help strengthen students in their faith and provide ways for them to make a difference in the world.

As Christian educators, we have been given an awesome responsibility. God has given us His mandate. Now we must effectively communicate it to our students so that they will understand their role in God's purpose and plan for the world and will lead lives of significance, impacting their generation and generations to come.

### **Reference List**

Bryant, David. 1999. What it means to be a world Christian. In *Perspectives on the world Christian movement*. Edited by Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library.

Stott, John. 1999. The living God is a missionary God. In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. Edited by Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library.

### **Imagine ... A Childhood Lost**

IMAGINE a place where children sleep on the ground in doorways and sidewalks, where desperate children wander the street at odd hours of the night to look for food and shelter. In this place children are beaten and abused. The street is home to millions of children around the world. Although street children are surrounded by people, they are all alone.

IMAGINE a disease that is tearing children from their families. Millions of innocent children are losing one or both of their parents. Other children are abandoned or afflicted because of this disease. Children become the caregivers of younger brothers and sisters, struggling to survive. The disease is AIDS, and it is destroying a continent by destroying families.

IMAGINE fleeing in the middle of the night: leaving your home and possessions, traveling through dangerous territory to a foreign land, or witnessing the execution of your parents. Children are also being forced to strap on AK-47s and participate. War is moving off the battlefields and into cities, towns, and villages. And the casualties include children.

IMAGINE the loss of childhood. Children do not have the opportunity to attend school, develop and nurture friendships, or "just be a kid." Millions of children worldwide are forced to work long days to provide for their families. Without an education, child laborers will continue in the cycle of poverty.

Children in crisis are robbed of the gift of childhood. Instead of enjoying a childhood that helps them develop their God-given abilities, they experience tremendous losses. It is beyond comprehension to fully imagine—let alone absorb—the pain, suffering, and trauma of more than:

- ❖ 140 million children living on the streets with little or no security in their homes, families, or communities
- ❖ 12 million children who have been left homeless through war, many forced to live in overcrowded refugee camps with few necessities
- ❖ 300,000 children, some as young as five, who are fighting adult wars around the world
- ❖ 12.1 million children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS, or the millions of babies born to HIV-infected parents and then abandoned in dumpsters
- ❖ 100 million children who are forced to work under difficult and dangerous conditions

“Yet behind each of the vast numbers and overwhelming statistics hides a face, a name, a life, and a soul” (McDonald 2000).

Is there any hope? Yes! Our heavenly Father understands the pain and fear of the world’s suffering children. We have a responsibility to bring the message of God’s redeeming love, healing, and hope. Children in crisis will not hear this message from their parents. They need to hear it from the people who have personally experienced the heart of the Father. Mark 10:13 says, “People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them....” Will you join us through prayer in bringing these children to Jesus?

ACSI’s role is to provide education that is Christ centered, that has the power to transform lives through the truth of God’s Word. During the battle going on for the minds and hearts of children, we believe that God is opening a door of opportunity for us to reach these children with His life-giving hope. We are partnering with other organizations to meet the needs of children in crisis around the world. In 1 Corinthians 4:1–2, Paul reminds us of our responsibility: “So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” By investing in the lives of children in crisis, our students can make a difference that will last for generations to come.

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Bryant, David. 1999. What it means to be a world Christian. In *Perspectives on the world Christian movement*. Edited by Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library.

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Will you join us in bringing hope to children without hope?

- ❖ Pray personally for children in crisis around the world. Teach your students how to pray for hurting children. Go to ACSI's website at <[www.acsi.org/intmin](http://www.acsi.org/intmin)> and print out the monthly calendar *31 Things to Pray for Children in Crisis* in order to begin praying today!
- ❖ Educate yourself and your students through the Missions Focus materials and other resources. Look for news about children in crisis around the world and incorporate this information into your classroom lessons.
- ❖ Partner with ACSI through giving. Consider giving your chapel offering throughout the year or from designated weeks. As a school, send an offering following your missions week. Or collect an offering from your class after incorporating missions into the curriculum.
- ❖ Serve hurting children. Look for opportunities in your community in places such as homeless shelters and pregnancy crisis centers, or consider going to Russia or Latin America to work with orphaned children.

*(SIDEBAR WITH IMAGE OF STARFISH)*

Make a Difference, One Life at a Time

A man was walking along the beach one sunny morning. The tide washed in thousands of starfish, leaving them to dry out on the beach. Farther up the beach, the man noticed a small boy picking up starfish and throwing them back into the ocean. Approaching the boy, the man asked, "I think I know what you are doing, sonny, but do you really think you are making a difference for the starfish?" Looking at the starfish in his hand the boy replied, "I don't know, sir, but for this one it will." He then tossed it back into the ocean. (Kilbourn 1996)

Maybe you feel overwhelmed by the stories of millions of children who are in crisis. Yet as the above story suggests, we should believe that when we place them in His hands, God can make a difference, one by one, in the lives of these children.

#### Reference List

McDonald, Patrick. 2000. *Reaching children in need*. Eastbourne, England: Kingsway Publications.

Kilbourn, Phyllis. 1996. *Children in crisis: A new commitment*. Monrovia, Calif.: World Vision (MARC) Publications.