

Going into All the World—to Children—2010-2020

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According to research, children from preschool to middle school are the most gospel-open demography. Research has also shown that by twelve years old their spiritual life foundation is settled (Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, 2003, p. 38). From 12 to 14 years onward they are integrating into society and looking for agreement, not shake-up. From that perspective, children under 14 should be the most evangelism-targetted people group on the planet. They are, in one sense, all one curious openhearted culture no matter where they live. We need not admonish them to come as a little child to enter the kingdom of God. Barring extreme abuse, they are already in a state of child-likeness until the foundations of life are cemented between 12-14 years old. This is the message I presented at the Tokyo 2010 4/14 workshop.

Has this cry for missions specifically to children brought significant progress in the past ten years?

The answer is Yes...in numbers and in efforts of mission ministries but not much in change of action and attitude within global church leadership. On the most recent web announcement of the next 4/14 Movement Global Summit, the statement is made, "[We believe there is a breeze beginning to blow, signs of a move of God.](#) In my opinion and seemingly from theirs, we are still in the beginning of a movement that needs to sweep through the church.

Since 2001, in 25 countries, I have participated in establishing new children's ministries. Working through two mission organizations, [Kids in Ministry PowerClubs](#) and [SOS Kids Adventure](#), the total of the children we have reached is approximately 45,000. Child Evangelism Fellowship, a much larger organization, has professed to hearing salvation prayers from [10,480,210 children](#). Tallying our smaller efforts with theirs, we have yet only reached .0054% of the kids in the world, a drop in the open bucket. Other commendable work is being done by the [414 Movement](#), [Awana clubs](#), [1 for 50](#), [Kidzana](#), [Children in Christ](#), [Iris Ministries](#), and the many individual ministries that glean free children's material from [max7.org](#). Yet, recognizing the present population of the children in the world is [25.4% of 7.7 billion](#), just under 2 billion children, that leaves plenty of room for progress. Fulfilment of the great commission to make disciples of all children in every nation can never be completed by mission agencies. Raising kids is an inside job.

The goal and yearning of our missionary hearts is that local fellowships will adopt the call to reach the most open, hungry, waiting segment of society—their children. Kids *are* waiting for us. Children from preschool to middle school are open to hear and believe the gospel. This is confirmed through methodical research by George Barna (Barna, 2003) and confirmed by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer in their research book, *Already Gone* (Ken Ham, 2009). Barna, a well-known church researcher wrote in the introduction to his book, "The necessity of seeing children as *the primary focus of ministry* never occurred to me....In retrospect, my view was so far off the mark that I didn't just miss the boat—I missed the entire ocean!" (Barna, pp. 11-12)

In my present experience, top leadership, with sterling exceptions, continues to miss the ocean of the mission field around them. I walk in Africa often and observe children at church time relegated to outside spaces with little attention or resources. I have observed Christian church children of India becoming more and more pressured to achieve natural success but not deeply inspired to value connection to Jesus. I have also rejoiced to experience exceptions. [Pastor Pradeep Moses](#) of India very intentionally found curriculum to bring his children into the dimension of using the gifts of the Spirit. Rev. George B. James of Northern Bible College Church in Arusha, Tanzania, is supporting his workers with encouragement and church funding as they train their kids to "live the Book of Acts". Rev. B. Chisamba of Falls Assembly of God in Lilongwe, Malawi,

looks at children as “key people of the church” and hands the service over to them on occasion. All of these forward-looking leaders support trained staff who disciple children to follow the Lord in action *and* ministry. Sitting and listening does not make a disciple. A disciple does what he sees his Master do. Pastor Pradeep specifically states that the Holy Spirit told him to look forward two generations in order to set his ministry goals.

May this wisdom set a standard for all who bear responsibility to establish training for those who will lead after them. Senior leadership most often proclaims the need but does not refocus time and money to assure that children are trained in ministry. I applaud Pastors Andrew and Rachel Mackenzie of Busia, Kenya, Harvest Church. The little kids who were trained in Rachel’s PowerClub have become the young adults who now lead in the main church.

We international children’s ministries aim to support the local body in outreach to children. We are helpers of faith, supporters of the local church. They are to do the work of evangelism and discipleship among the young citizens of their communities. The focus of the 4/14 Window Movement is to see *movement* in the local church. Consider the great change that must come in the mindset of the Body of Christ to see this end time harvest. A harvest is ripe only in one season. Children all have the same space of time to grow up. By twelve years old, they have formed the beliefs that will direct them for life¹. At the beginning of life, they are open to learn. And life never ends. Every human born is an eternal being. We pass from earth into a state of joy or regret after meeting our Creator. (2 Corinthians 5:10) What if a child misses the truth that the culture of heaven supersedes all cultures?

“The probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her savior is 32 percent between the age of 5-12; 4 percent in those in the 13-18-age range; and 6 percent for people 19 or older...In other words, by the age of 13, your spiritual identity is largely set in place.” (Barna, p. 34) 4/14 Window Movement is called a “window”. Windows open and close according to the atmosphere. We must recognize our harvest field. Only the young are seeking identity. Only Christ can offer eternal identity.

Children live in hope, saying “when I grow up...” with a forward-looking mindset. We have the life to grow into, one that cannot be taken away by circumstances. Many are the testimonies of great men and women of faith who got their faith as children. The seed became a tree of life for themselves and others. The one who bent his voice to the ear of the child reaped rewards for the man and woman they became.

The numbers of children embraced by mission ministries since 2010 has increased yearly. As we international children’s ministries work separately, but in concert, to reach children and train children’s ministers, the Lord’s heart is with us. But we long to see the local church globally undertake the changes needed to incorporate children as disciples of Christ, a part of the Body *now*. We must agree to disciple them to reach for the mark of the high calling of Christ in the same season they are learning to read and write. It will require change in belief and attitude. Even Jesus had to strive with his team of “elders” in order to have direct contact with children. He admonished them, “Do not hinder them. Let the little children come to me.”—personally, directly and eternally.

¹ (<http://www.psychologycharts.com/erikson-stages-of-development-chart.html>)