

Daddy Are We There Yet? (A global check-in on the world of mission and kids) by Sylvia Foth, Kidzana Ministries, Mukilteo, 2009 (38 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

INTRODUCTION

1. This Book Also Includes Kids

So what about kids? This year, more than 134 million babies will be born. At least two-thirds of them will be born into families that do not know Jesus. In addition, current growth rates will lead to at least three billion new kids being born in the next 25 years. [*CIA World Fact Book, s.v. "World."*]

CHAPTER 1. Why Are We In This Car, Anyway?

2. Why Are We In This Car, Anyway?

Many people are already on this journey in one way or another. Around the world, over 458,000 missionaries work full time to reach people for Christ. [*"Table C," IBMR, p. 30, line 54*] [Page 3]

1-1: A Father's Heart Compels Us:

3. Sarah's Story

In fact, at least 1.8 million kids live in Sarra, trapped in the sex trades. [*UNICEF, Annual Report 2007 (New York, June 2008), 14.*] [Page 5]

4. The Poor And The Needy Still Need Rescue

Many of the unreached people of the world live in really desperate circumstances. Over a billion people are struggling to survive on under \$1 per day. [*UNICEF, Annual Report 2007*] Nearly 31,000 children and young people are infected with HIV/AIDS every month. It is estimated that 15 million children have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. [*World Refugee Survey 2007, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants*] In addition, 26,000 children die each day from preventable diseases like malaria and diarrhea. Nearly 14 million people have fled their countries as refugees, because of war. [*UNICEF, State of the World's Children 2008 (New York, December 2007), 21.*] [Pages 10, 11]

5. Lost Sheep Still Need To Be Found

Around the world today, we hear reports of more people than ever coming to Christ: more than 28 million per year! In Latin America, it is estimated that 18,000 are coming to Christ each day. [*"Table C," IBMR, p.30, line 40*]

Missions leaders report that there is now a Christian presence in every political nation; [*David B. Barrett and Todd M, Johnson, World Christian Trends, ed.*

Christopher R Guidry and Peter F. Crossing (Pasadena, CA: Williams Carey Library, 2001), 52.] however, there is much to do before we see representatives from “every people, tribe, nation, and tongue” before the throne of God. Over 6500 people groups (ethnos) remain unevangelized. [*Joshua Project, “Global Progress.”*] [Page 11]

1-2: A Crazy, Changing World Needs Jesus

6. The World Is Big – And Getting Bigger

First of all, we are part of a growing population. Currently, over 6.7 billion people inhabit our planet. At least 2.2 billion of these are children under the age of 18 (33%). [*CIA World Fact Book, s.v. “World.”*] With 365,000 new babies born every day, the UN predicts there will be at least 9.2 billion born every day, the UN predicts there will be at least 9.2 billion people by the year 2050. [*School of Information Management and Systems, “How Much Information? 2003,” University of California, Berkeley.*] We’re growing at an astounding rate. However, population is not the only thing that is changing. [Page 17]

7. Technology Has Rewired Us Forever

(On the flip side, even with all this technological proliferation, it is also interesting to learn that 1.6 billion people do not have electricity at all. [*Anup Shah, “Poverty Facts and Stats,” Global Issues, September 3, 2008, www.globalissues.org.*]) [Page 19]

8. Global Power Is Shifting

China: Chinese citizens have just recently been allowed to participate in a market economy by starting private businesses. Already there are at least 85 million businesses in China. The US has only 26 million, and we have hundreds of years of history in a free-market system. [*Ted C. Fishman, “Waking to China,” World Almanac 2006, 10.*] [Page 19]

9. Global Power Is Shifting

Islam: Over 1.4 billion people call themselves Muslim, about one-fifth of our globe’s population. [*“Table C,” IBMR, p. 30, line 13.*] Islam is one of the fastest growing major religious groups. Biological growth is a main strategy. Expect the numbers to grow even more in the days ahead. [Page 20]

10. New Corporate Powers

Global trade is booming. Not only does this mean that people across the globe are familiar with brands like McDonalds, Starbucks, Toyota and Coca-Cola, but it is changing the balance of economic power. In fact, 40 of the world’s 100 largest economies are not nations, but corporations. Exxon is bigger than Sweden; AT&T is bigger than Hungary; Home Depot is bigger than Egypt. Wal-Mart by itself is larger than the economies of over 200 different nations of the world! [*CIA*

World Fact Book, world economies; "Our Annual Ranking of America's Largest Corporations, 2008," Fortune Magazine, www.cnnmoney.com (accessed October 24, 2008).] [Page 21]

11. **Global Challenges Are Also On The Rise:**

Disease Threatens: Nearly 39 million people live with HIV/AIDS and the number is still on the rise. More than 6800 people are newly infected with HIV/AIDS every day.

Over 2.1 million people die each year of AIDS. This trend has left entire nations without enough adults to harvest crops, conduct commerce or raise children. It is estimated that 15 million children have lost one or both parents as a result of AIDS since 1981. [*UNICEF, Annual Report 2007.*]

As sobering as these statistics are, the reality is that other preventable diseases cause even more deaths. Every three seconds, a child dies from the effects of unclean drinking water, malaria, or other preventable diseases. [*UNICEF, World's Children, 8.*] With new strains of bacteria and new virus threats discovered regularly, basic health care and health education elude many.

Poverty: Eighty percent of the world's population lives on under \$10 per day. Over half of the world's children suffer from poverty. As these children grow older, they often find themselves trapped inside a system that gives them little opportunity to escape the cycle. How will they survive? How will they grow?

War and Conflict: War is no longer only for the grown men of the world's nations. Nearly half of the 3.6 million people killed in conflict during the 1990s were children. [*UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2004 (New York, December 2004).*] At least 250,000 kids are forced to work as child soldiers. [*UNICEF, Annual Report 2007.*] At least 14 million children and their families fled their countries because of nearby fighting and live as refugees. War impacts women, children, and entire populations. [Pages 22, 23]

1-3: Did Someone Forget The Kids?

12. **Is There Really A Problem Here?**

Global population is 6.7 billion and growing. At least 28% are under the age of 15. If we extend the age to 25, half our planet is youth. And half of these, according to the UN, are living in poverty. [*CIA World Fact Book, s.v. "World," Associated Press, "Half of Kids Suffer War, Poverty, AIDS."*] [Page 28]

13....Christian children represent ten percent of the world's total population. [*"Tabel C," IBMR, p. 30.*] Patrick McDonald and Dan Brewster say, "Most people who make significant faith decisions do so before the age of 18, but less than fifteen

percent of our efforts are directed to ministry amongst children. [*Brewster and McDonald, Great Omission, 3.*] [Page 28]

14. In a recent poll by the World Evangelical Association, two-thirds of the churches reporting from around the world indicated they had little or no ministry to children. One-third indicated a desire to make this a priority. [*Kathleen J. Graham, World Evangelical Alliance, email to author.*] [Page 28]

15. **What Does God Think About Children?**

Children Are a Gift from God: Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children are a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them (Psalm 127:3-5 NIV).

Become Like Little Children: He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-4 NIV).

Welcome a Child: He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me" (Mark 9:36-37 NIV).

Jesus Calls for the Children: People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these...and he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them (Mark 10:13-16 NIV). [Pages 31, 32]

16. **Children And The Lost Sheep**

At least 67 out of 100 kids in our world are lost, outside the fold. That's 1.4 billion kids who are waiting to know Jesus for themselves. Every minute, at least 168 new kids are born into families that do not know Jesus. In addition, those "in the fold" face serious challenges keeping them from growing to love Jesus for a lifetime. The heart of Christ himself compels us to do something about it. [Page 32]

17. **So, Why Focus On Ministry To Kids?**

As we consider how to reach the 4.4 billion people on our planet who **do not know Jesus** (yet), it is essential that we consider ministry to kids, not just adults. Let's review the reasons:

Kids are everywhere! There are 2.2 billion children under 18 (33% of our world). In many of the developing countries, where we find the greatest population of unreached people, kids are at least 50% of the population. Although they do not fit the exact definition of a “people group,” because they belong to so many different cultural backgrounds, together their numbers make them the largest unreached group on our planet.

Kids are unreachable: They have the time to listen, the availability, and the interest. They are not afraid to respond when they feel the Holy Spirit drawing them to Christ. In several Campus Crusade trainings I’ve been part of, we learned that 25% of people will likely respond to receive the gospel when it is presented personally, fully. In my over 20 years of evangelism experience, I find that nearly 50% of kids are likely to respond. Not a small thing. In some ways, kids are like the guests in the parable of the banquet in Luke 14. They are invited last to the celebration, yet are the most available to attend and to respond to the generous gifts of the King.

The powers of this world know kids are reachable, too. In the Muslim world, strong emphasis is placed on teaching the way of Islam to children before the age of five. We’ve heard stories of eight-year-old children so committed to their faith they were willing and ready to become suicide bombers.

Alternately, media and marketing gurus know that they need to capture the hearts of children early with brand names...then keep them for life. Kids are targeted around the world.

The harvest is ripe; children are ready for the gospel.

Kids are needy and poor: The UN estimates that nearly half of the world’s population of children live in poverty. With other risk factors added in, nearly 2/3 of our planet’s children live in “at risk” situations. Again, most of these children are unreached. Considering the work of Christ outlined in Isaiah 61, to “preach good news to the poor,” to “bind up the brokenhearted,” to “free the captive,” etc., we easily see that this entire passage could be a call to ministry to children. God’s heart is to rescue children, the most vulnerable group of people on our planet.

Kids are teachable: Unlike adults, kids have much less to “unlearn” when they come to Christ. They are eager to understand what it means to follow Jesus, and to obey. People who come to Christ as children are most likely to follow Jesus for a lifetime. Kids are ready and waiting.

In addition, kids are the key to transformation. When we pour the love of Christ into their lives, teaching them to follow Christ wholeheartedly, they will not only change personally, but they will impact their families, their communities, and their nations.

Kids are connected to families: As children come to Christ, they often open doors for the gospel to be shared with their families. In Muslim areas, this opportunity must be handled with great prayer and respect. But kids often bring their entire families to Christ shortly after believing in him.

Kids have great potential – to reach more kids – and others! Children can also learn to share the gospel with their friends. Their friends are also reachable, teachable and connected to families. Kids can be part of reaching future generations for Christ if we get with the program. Kids have amazing potential to not only be tomorrow’s church, but the church of today.

Mission leaders are beginning to catch the vision. Dan Brewster of Compassion International and Patrick McDonald of VIVA Network in their booklet, *Children—The Great Omission?*, say, “We believe that children and young people should be the single greatest priority for Christian work in the coming decade.” [*Brewster and McDonald, Great Omission, 3.*] [Pages 32-34]

CHAPTER 2. Where Is This Car Going?

18. Where Are We Going?

Researchers count over 16,000 distinct people groups. Nearly 10,000 are considered “reached,” with the gospel available for people to encounter. This does not mean every person has responded to receive Christ, but rather that the gospel is available to them. And unreached people group is one with no visible indigenous witness (church) of Jesus Christ and where the gospel is therefore unavailable or inaccessible. Currently, there are about 6,500 unreached groups. [*“Global Progress,” Joshua Project.*] The task is far from finished. [Page 47]

2-2: Where Are We Now?

19. The Church Is Growing

To being with, over 2.2 billion people now call themselves Christian, more than any other religious group in the world. Since the days of the disciples, the growth has never stopped. Christianity adds more than 28 million people to the church worldwide each year.

A significant part of what’s happening today in the Christian world is happening China. In China, it is estimated that over 100 million people are Christians. They

are already fourth on the list of countries with the most Christians in the world. It doesn't make the evening news, but every day, at least 10,000 new believers are added to the church. [Johnson, "World Christian Trends 2005."]

In Afghanistan, before 2002, researchers counted about 75 believers. Just two years later, in mid-2004, there were over 8000, with believers in every single one of the 34 provinces. One year later, the Christian population had tripled!

In Kenya, so many churches have been planted that I heard one Kenyan pastor say, "If you stand on any street corner in Nairobi and throw a stone, you will hit a church." The buildings are everywhere! [Pages 57, 58]

20. **We're Better Resourced**

Never before have there been so many resources available to reach our world for Christ. Believers have unprecedented access to technology, expertise, education, information, and funds. It's amazing.

The \$23 billion used for global mission is spent for literature, broadcast, support of foreign missionaries, social projects, church planting, and more. At least 26,000 new Christian book titles are published each year, 53.7 million Bibles are distributed, and nearly 4000 Christian radio and TV stations spread the gospel around the world. [Barrett and Johnson, *World Christian Trends*, 40.] In addition, up to 29% of all North American 13-17 year olds are participating on short-term mission projects. [Christian Smith, quoted in Robert Priest, "Are Short-Term Missions Good Stewardship?" *Christianity Today*, July 5, 2005, www.christianitytoday.com.] Believers own at least 510 million of the world's computers (we get 79,000 computers more each day, too). We are not the poorest kids on the block anymore! [Page 61]

21. **The Church Is Not Reaching Everyone – Yet**

Missions leaders divide the world into three groups to help us better understand what is taking place:

World C – 33% (Christianized nations)

It is surprising to learn that at least 78% of all Christian missionaries work in countries that are already Christianized, such as Zimbabwe, Russia, France, Brazil and the US. At the turn of the millennium, over \$13 billion was being spent each year to reach people in these nations. Over 90% of all Christian literature, radio and TV was directed to reach people in World C. Everyone has not responded to receive Christ, but the gospel is readily available in these nations.

World B – 39% (some gospel presence, some Christians)

About 18% of all missionaries work in these partly reached countries. Records show that 9% of Christian literature and 4% of Christian radio/TV end up here. Some of these nations are even sending nations (such as India and South Korea).

World A – 28% (The unevangelized world: those who do not have Christ, Christianity or the gospel available to them.)

This group receives less than one-tenth of one percent of all the Christian literature, radio and TV ministry in the world. Only 3% of the world's missionaries work here. [*World Christian Database, www.worldchristiandatabase.org* (“Missionaries Sent,” accessed October 29, 2008). Barrett and Johnson, *World Christian Trends*.]

No wonder so many people are still unreached! Who decides how these resources get used, anyway?

The idea isn't to work less in World B or World C, but to do much more new work in World A. [Pages 63, 64]

22. Is There Really More To Be Done?

One of the biggest concerns for mission leaders is that we start to think the job is finished. We need to celebrate when many come to Christ. The angels in heaven rejoice when just one sinner comes to repentance. But we must inform ourselves about the realities, and guard against the feeling that there is no more work to do:

The truth is, 4.4 billion people on our planet do not know Jesus.

The truth is, currently, at least 1.87 billion people live in areas with no gospel presence at all (World A).

The truth is, in spite of major growth efforts, the percentage of people who call themselves Christian around the world has stayed essentially the same since the beginning of the 1900s (about 34%). We haven't grown percentage-wise for the past 100 years. [*Barrett and Johnson, World Christian Trends, 40; Market, “Global Christianity.”*]

The truth is that 6500 people groups still do not have a Christian witness at all.

The truth is...we are not there yet. [Page 64]

2-3: Where Do We Go From Here?

23. Will We Adjust To All This Growth?

Through population growth rates have slowed slightly, there will continue to be millions of new people on our planet every year. By 2050 the UN predicts we'll have 9.2 billion people on our planet. It is predicted that 70% of the world will be urban or suburban, rather than rural, in the decades to come.

A large number of these people will still not know Jesus. Whether they are part of an unreached people group somewhere in the 10/40 Window, or hiding within our church families, for many years to come, there will continue to be billions of people who need to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. [Page 67]

24. Will We Remember The Kids?

As we consider reaching everyone for Christ, we must once again turn our attention to nearly one-third of the world – the third that lives below the age of 18. We've seen before, that they're not always included. This must change. They must be part of the future.

To begin with, we must reach them. The 4/14 Window clarifies the need like never before. In unreached areas of the world, the population under 15 is closer to 50%. Imagine making a commitment to reach everyone in the world with the gospel, but ignoring half its people.

25. Question: Will we reach out to kids as people who also need Jesus? Or will we pass them by to focus solely on adults?

When we ignore children, we not only miss the unreached, but also a large percentage of the potential Christian workers of the world. Nearly 10% of our total world population is Christian children (people under the age of 15). How many are growing in Christ? How many are getting to church? What else are all those children doing? Some may be too young to join in. Others are challenged by poverty. But millions are ready and waiting to be part of reaching our world for Christ. We need to nurture our children to become the next generation of leaders. [Page 75]

CHAPTER 3. Why Does This Road Feel So Bumpy?

3-1: What Makes This Road So Tough For Kids?

26. HIV/AIDS & Disease

Over 38 million people live with HIV/AIDS across the world. Every minute of the day, 4 people die of AIDS-related causes, and 5 people are newly infected. It's a battle that is really hard to win.

This would be a horrific problem, even if it only impacted adults, but it doesn't. Worldwide, over 2.3 million children under 15 live with HIV/AIDS. What's the nearest large city to you? Does this equal the population of that city? What portion? And every day, more than 1000 children are newly infected with HIV/AIDS. [UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2008*, 21.]

In addition, at least 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, most in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that a child loses a parent to AIDS-related causes every 14 seconds. By 2010, the number of children orphaned by AIDS globally is expected to exceed 25 million. [UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2008*, 21.] [Page 83]

27. **Effects Of War On Children**

When my children were in elementary school, I never let them walk home from school alone. There were too many dangers on the way: bad people, fast cars, and other kids. My worries are nothing compared to those of mothers living in areas of war and conflict around the world.

In recent years, stories of "invisible children" have gripped our hearts. In northern Uganda, thousands of children travel by night to the cities to sleep. In doing so, they hope to escape being kidnapped to serve as child soldiers. At least 250,000 young people under 18 are exploited as child soldiers around the world.

In Liberia, during the civil war, we heard stories of children lured with the promise of a house, car, and steady income after their service. This was very appealing in a country with up to 90% unemployment. After enlisting, children were transported to a different country and trained in guerilla warfare techniques. Upon returning to Liberia as soldiers, still only children and young teens, many were required to prove their loyalty to the army by returning to their home towns to shoot a family member. Often, the assigned targets were their own mothers.

Others were kidnapped and forced to act as soldiers, spies, or slaves for older military members. Both boys and girls have been targets, with boys being taught to kill, girls being forced to serve as slaves and to provide sexual services to soldiers. Millions of other children living in areas of war and conflict will never be asked to serve as child soldiers. They face other troubles.

Some will give their lives. "During World War I, civilians made up fewer than five percent of all casualties. Today, 75 percent or more of those killed or wounded in wars are non-combatants, with nearly half of the 3.6 million people killed in conflict in recent decades being children." [*The World at War*, www.globalsecurity.org.]

In 2007 almost 14 million people were forced from their countries as refugees. [*US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, "The World's Refugees, 2006," World Almanac 2008, 850.*] 14 million. Imagine if all the people of the whole nation of Guatemala were suddenly without a home – or everyone in the whole state of Illinois (including Chicago). The number is about the same. Where would they go? How would they live?

The number of people internally displaced (meaning they didn't leave their countries, but still fled their homes) is 24.5 million, nearly twice as many as other refugees. These families are equally challenged.

Consider the impact for children. Their daily routines are disrupted. Children may not be able to attend school. Often their friends and support systems are missing. Many lose track of parents or family members as they flee. Families often lose their homes and belongings.

For many children, the invisible wounds of war leave the greatest mark. We heard of one young girl whose village was attacked by rebels. Residents were led into the center of town, where they were all slaughtered. Somehow, she survived, hidden under those who fell. After she was sure the attackers were gone, she freed herself, walking out across all the bodies.

Rescuers found her and were amazed. For weeks, she was silent about the ordeal. Finally, she began to share her horror. It was not the fear of being shot, or the feeling of being trapped in the midst of all the bodies that lingered. In her village, placing the bottom of one's foot on someone was a sign of ultimate disrespect. Somehow, she could not free herself from the feelings of guilt at having walked over all those people she honored and loved.

Why doesn't this madness stop? Around the year 2000, the UN created Millennium Development Goals with the aim of improving the world through human development by 2015. The goals were agreed to by the UN's 191 member states. It was estimated that the goals for reducing poverty, child abuse, and disease, and also improving education, literacy, and health care around the world could be achieved at an annual cost of \$40-70 billion. In comparison, global military spending in 2005 totaled \$956 billion. [*Associated Press, "Half of Kids Suffer War, Poverty, AIDS."*] (UPDATE: The world's nations are now spending more than one trillion per year to wage our wars.) [*"The World at War," www.globalsecurity.org.*]

Christians are at the forefront of peace and reconciliation movements. They're active in serving refugees and displaced persons, they're meeting needs where possible. But the global culture hasn't changed. Stopping conflicts and caring for the children simply does not seem to be a worldwide priority. [Pages 84-86]

28. Child Labor

For some children, the abuse comes in the form of work expectations. Over 218 million children, aged 5-17, are engaged in child labor throughout the world. [UNICEF, "Child Labor," *www.unicef.org* (accessed June 20, 2007).] Perhaps you have seen some of them in a marketplace somewhere around the world, selling their wares: bags, newspaper for wrapping purchased items, tissues, bottles of water, or candy. They're just trying to survive. [Page 87]

29. Child Labor

Around the world, many are involved in unreasonable hours of family-based responsibility. We met children who had never been to school, because they were required to watch the family's small herd of goats for over twelve hours per day, every day. Or girls of eight or nine who had sole responsibility to care for a baby sibling all day, every day, while both parents worked.

At least 126 million find themselves in the worst forms of child labor: slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, and other forced labor. Some experience highly hazardous situations, such as working in mines, with chemicals and pesticides or with dangerous machinery. Girls from northern India have been sold to families from the Middle East as home slaves. Many children are unseen, laboring behind the walls of workshops, hidden from view in plantations. They might pick cocoa beans all day long, but never taste chocolate themselves.

In some parts of northern India, children are sold to pay off debts, their parents believing they are being sent to work in good jobs in other parts of the world. In fact, they are being sent into the trafficking industry to work as bonded slaves.

The most distressing and demeaning form of child labor is sexual exploitation. Over 1.8 million children are trapped in the sex trades: prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities. [UNICEF, *Annual Report 2007*.] The sexual exploitation of women and children is the third largest illicit industry on the planet (just behind the sale of illegal arms and drugs). [United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime, "Briefing Note 8: Statistics on Human Trafficking in South Asia," *UN-GIFT – Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking*, *www.giftasia.in* (accessed August 11, 2008).] It's lucrative for some. Life-shattering for others. [Pages 87, 88]

30. The Girl Child

Globally, 93 million children are out of school, unable to get even basic education. A majority of these are girls. [UNICEF, *Annual Report 2007*.]

31. Poverty

More than one billion people in the world live on less than one dollar a day. In total, 2.7 billion struggle to survive on less than two dollars a day. ["Fast Facts:

Faces of Poverty,” UN Millennium Project 2006, www.unmillenniumproject.org.] In these poverty-challenged areas, the population of children is often close to 50%. Many face extreme poverty, where there is not enough food to eat, clothing to wear, and no secure housing. [Page 90]

32. Street Children

It is estimated that 100 million kids live on the streets, but they're nearly impossible to count. [*“Street Children and Homelessness,” CYC Online, 68 (September 2004). www.cyc-net.org. [Page 91]*]

3-2: Are We Gonna Run Out Of Gas?

33. Is There Really A Shortage Of Supply?

Some may say there are not enough workers, not enough resources and not enough dollars to reach our world for Christ. I may disagree. A global lack of resources is not the issue. God has more than enough.

So what's the problem? Why do we so often experience lack? Is there any way to tap into God's supply on a more regular basis? Are there obstacles we can overcome?

Some say it's the enemy. It is.

Some say it's a lack of faith. It is.

Some say we squander what we get. Some do.

Some say we're asking for things that are not God's will. True.

Some say we're holding onto God's stuff as if it is our own. We are.

Some of us just can't figure out what we really need. It seems so. [Page 100]

34. The “P” World: People

But how many do we need, and for what? We might look at all the progress in mission during the past two centuries, and wonder whether there is even still a need for “missionaries.” We've mentioned the 458,000 foreign missionaries already working worldwide. Of greater importance, perhaps, are the nearly 12 million non-foreign clergy and lay-Christian workers serving fulltime with missions, local churches and parachurch organizations. What a huge number. Do we really need more?

It all depends on what those people are doing.

If we're considering reaching the unreached, it helps us to review some facts. Remember World C (33%)? It's the Christian world, and gets about three-quarters of all foreign missionaries. World A (the totally unreached), gets about 3%. Grand total, we send 14,400 to the unreached areas; that's one missionary for every 130,000 unreached people! [Page 101]

35. The "P" World: People

Let's consider a different view of the task. What if we wanted to reach all the unreached kids of the world, about 1.4 billion children under 15? What if every church in North America challenged itself to reach **and disciple** (please do not skip this word) 100 totally unreached kids around the world each year through its mission ministries and teams? About 300,000 congregations (even if some do not have a current interest in mission) times 100 kids equals...30 million kids! Some churches might do more. Some might do less.

Even if this dream were possible, it would barely move us forward. Why? Because, right now, more than 88 million kids are born each year into families that do not know Jesus. So we'd still be falling behind, just with annual biological growth. We will barely have begun to reach the 1.4 billion unreached children who are already waiting to know Christ, much less reach the new ones. [Page 102]

CHAPTER 5. Does Anyone Have A Map?

5-1: What Do All Those Numbers Mean?

36. What Do The Numbers Say About The Information Explosion?

There are currently 6.4 million books published about Christianity. Christians have produced 4.8 billion Bibles over the years, with 1.6 billion currently available on the planet. [*"Table C," IBMR, p. 30, line 58.*] Non-Christian countries have 227 million Bibles in place in their midst, more than needed to serve all Christians there. However, they are poorly distributed, so many still do not have access to a Bible. [*Johnson, "World Christian Trends 2005."*] Wycliffe also reports that the Bible still has not been translated into 3000 languages around our world. [Page 174]

37. What Do The Numbers Say About Our Involvement?

Those in fulltime foreign mission number about 458,000. This works out to about one of every 4800 Christians. And these people are busy. Every day, at least 200,000 more people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. About two out of five respond and are added to the Body of Christ. [*"Table C," IBMR, p. 30, line 12.*]

5-2: Is There A Map For Reaching Kids?

38. What Works in Ministry to Children?

A lot of ministry to kids amounts to little more than child care and entertainment. This alone does not fulfill God's heart for kids. What will help us really reach kids and disciple them?

Over the past several years, we have asked mission leaders, pastors and teachers to tell us about the most effective evangelism and outreach programs working in their regions. This has not been a formal study. However, we heard many common themes, emphasized over and over again.

Top ten most effective programs for reaching kids

1. Families
2. Mercy ministry (ongoing compassion in action)
3. Christian mission schools
4. Vibrant, relevant Sunday school or children's church
5. Friends
6. Bible camps
7. Other club programs
8. Vacation Bible schools or other crusade-type events
9. Sports camps, programs
10. Vacation Bible schools or other crusade-type events

Look back over the list. Do you notice what is missing? We have not included curriculum, children's tracts, children's Bibles, videos, coloring books, or other literature. Why? Because children do not come to Christ as a result of a piece of paper, unless it come attached to a human being. Children (and adults, too) are reached through relationships.

In many developing regions of the world where we train children's leaders, people request materials. They want curriculum and teaching supplies. We understand the desire. But we feel obligated to tell them about the great North American curriculum experiment. For the past 50 years, we have watched more and more curriculum become available to Christian teachers for Sunday School and other children's programs. Most teachers have ample access to well-written curriculum. What is the result?

Researchers report that two-thirds of our students are leaving the church after high school. Our children struggle to describe their beliefs. Have they grown as disciples? Unfortunately, no.

One lesson we have learned: it's about relationships. [Pages 180, 181]

4. Teachers Who Change Lives

Children's leaders, together with pastors and others in our believing communities, need to search for answers to these questions (and more that will be asked in the future) to fully equip themselves to serve children in this rapidly changing world.

What kind of teacher can help a child grow strong in faith for a lifetime? The story of Nehemiah offers powerful insight. Remember the story? As the people worked to rebuild the temple, they discovered they Book of the Law. It had been hidden away for years.

Nehemiah called all the people together. Ezra and his team of temple leaders took the lead. "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read" (Nehemiah 8:8 NIV).

This is the job of our teachers. They need to know God's Word deeply for themselves, then help children understand. Often, this means using creativity, humor, stories, object lessons, puppets, drama – whatever creative communication tools might be available – to help children understand the truth from God's Word. The message needs to be translated into a language all children can understand. In every community I've visited, this always includes fun and humor.

So what kind of impact can this teaching have? Several verses later in Nehemiah, we read that the people wept. They repented. They understood the truth from God's law, and wanted to live in new ways. The teaching resulted in a change of behavior. They were transformed.

Is this what happens when we teach? Is this the kind of teaching that takes place in our churches?

As people teach children, they also grow themselves. One teacher in Africa said, "I used to always narrate Bible stories to children every Sunday when I met with them, but now I need to help them apply the Bible truth of each story to their lives. This has changed my own personal life a great deal as well as the life of my children."

I believe we need excellent teachers more than ever. Kids do not need simple childcare. They need prepared, trained, mature, knowledgeable, genuine, growing – and tremendously fun and enjoyable people – to help them grow to love Jesus the most. [Page 188]