



HCD 501

M.A. IN HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Child, Church & Mission

DAN BREWSTER

AN INTRODUCTORY SERIES FOR THE *MASTER OF ARTS IN HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT* PROGRAM

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Acknowledgement

The course “*Child, Church and Mission*” has proven to be a popular introduction to the whole discipline of Holistic Child Development, and has found a niche in mission and academic circles. This may be partly due to the fact that the words “Child,” “Church,” and “Mission” have so rarely been used together in the same sentence! My thanks to my HCD colleagues at MBTS and around the world and especially to Dr Sunny Tan, Academic Dean at MBTS, and to Dr Rosalind Tan, HCD Program Coordinator at MBTS for their support and contribution to this fine program.

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Glossary of Terms

HCD Curriculum is a plan for delivering the Master of Arts in HCD program at MBTS. The curriculum includes the teaching contents, standards, experiences, selection of teachers, students' competencies, and related teaching-learning issues.

HCD Syllabus is the teaching outline of an HCD course and contains statements of the teaching learning process, goals and objectives, study units, course requirements, assessment, etc.

HCD Study / Course Text contains the principal reading materials for the course. These materials can be in any form, i.e. hard-copies, electronic data, audio-visual references, etc.

HCD Study / Course Guide includes materials given to students to guide them through the learning process, e.g. outline of the lecturer's presentation, case studies, activities, question and answer sheets, etc.

HCD Introductory Series are books which introduce an HCD subject in a "nutshell". They are short commentaries on a particular HCD subject and each book contains the underlying teaching principle, a teaching outline, and bibliography.

Introduction

Jesus' response... was to place a child in the midst of the disciples.

Jesus placed a *child in the midst*. (Matthew 18:1-3 KJV). We are familiar with this story from three of the Gospels about the discussion between the disciples about which one of them would be greatest in His Kingdom (Matthew 18:1-6, Mark 9:33, and Luke. 9:46). Jesus' response to this theological question was to place a child in the midst of the disciples.

Was he naughty or nice? It is interesting that we know almost nothing about the child. But was the child young, old? Was he naughty or nice? Healthy or sickly? Playful or introvert? In a sense, he is the "*child in the midst*." But this is also the beauty of the story. The

child is any child. The child is every child. The child is boy and girl, poor and privileged, Asian, African and American.

If we take Jesus seriously, then we had better pay attention to this. The *child in the midst* is often missed! We often ignore this, or skip right over it. But notice that Jesus didn't shake his finger in the face of the child and say, "Unless you become like these big disciples here, you will never get into the kingdom."

The child in the midst is the starting point for this course.¹ There are

¹ The "*child in the midst*" is also the inspiration and focal point of the

many programs and courses on the various aspects of development, and many more on the mission and mandate of the Church as well as modern missions. This course is about these things, but all with the child in the midst. It is not a course on the "how-to's" of holistic child development but rather, a foundational course exploring some of the biblical and philosophical bases that provide the rationale and mandate for holistic ministry to children.

emerging Child Theology Movement, headed by Dr Keith White. Dr White teaches the Child Theology course in the Penang program in Holistic Child Development.

WhyChildren?

Children are the most needy and most numerous people on the planet. Never in history have we had so many children among us and never have so many of them been at great social risk. Children aged 15 and under comprise one-third of our world's six-billion people. In developing countries children make up nearly half the population. An additional 26 percent are young people -- aged 15-29. Another one billion children may be born in the next decade, very many of those into families living in extreme poverty.²

²Population in July 2004: 6,383,523,865. (6.38 billion); Source: International Programs Center, U.S. Bureau of the Census; Website: <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw>

One of our best spokespersons for children, Patrick MacDonald, founder of Viva, highlights the importance of children and the particular responsibility of the church to care for them.³

Children are a priority for the King and his Kingdom. They are many, they are strategic, they suffer and God's unambiguous mandate in their favor shouts for urgent action right across the pages of Scriptures. They are both key to the Great Commission and an essential expression of the Great Commandment. The Christian response to children today stands in many ways at a cross-road. Most

³Patrick MacDonald. *Reaching Children in Need*. (Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway Publications, 2000)

children at the turn of the century are "children at risk" or children that need more than mere words to demonstrate the love of God. They are hungry children, homeless children, hurting children. Faced with the urgent need to nurture and protect these children, lots of Christians respond compassionately, even sacrificially but most struggle to engage effectively and consistently. The increasing need for professional standards in care poses a defining challenge for the church.

An overriding reason for focus on children is that, more than any other segment of humanity; children suffer, in a sense paying for the sins of the adults. Every year tens of millions of children are victims of exploitation, violence and abuse. According to UNICEF's

Child, Church and Mission

(2007) *State of the World's Children*
27,000 children under the age of five dies each day around the world while more than a billion children live in severe deprivation. There are many other issues and problems facing children. They all add up to misery and suffering among children on a massive scale. But, every statistic, of course, is really a hurting child whom God loves and for whom Jesus died.



The Child and the Church

The Bible tells us that God's intention is to love and redeem all of His creation. This is the central message of the entire Bible. Holistic child development is a theological response to the Truth of a good but fallen creation and of a God wanting to redeem not just individuals but whole cultures and societies. God has used many people and instruments to further this intention – from creation itself to the covenants He made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel and ultimately through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross to redeem the whole world.

As we will see in this course, He has entrusted the church with the responsibility to bless and redeem

all of creation. For whatever reason, God has chosen the church to be his instrument in redeeming all of His creation back to himself. It is *only* Christians who have the understanding of the nature of sin, of God's intention for His people and His creation and of the power of the gospel to bring substantial holistic healing to the whole person – including children!

The church is the largest movement working on behalf of children at risk today in terms of children reached, ministries established and workers on the ground. Much of this work is little known. The scale of the church's work in the field of children at risk is often a surprise to people, even to those within the church.

Viewed in another way, however, we can also see that the church often has not had the impact that it should. The poor are still with us. Indeed, often the church is ignorant of, or chooses to ignore, its responsibilities and unique ability to care meaningfully for hurting children and families. It is clear that sometimes the church has not valued children. Sometimes it has had no idea about their physical or even spiritual needs. More ominously, all too often the church has been unaware of, or even denied, that holistic care for the needs of children falls within its sphere of responsibility. This "great omission" is to some extent rooted in our misunderstanding and theological differences about the fundamental role of the church.

The Child *in* the Church

Holistic child development is not holistic unless it addresses spiritual development as well. The spiritual component of holistic development is one to which only the church can respond. So what can the church do to enhance, increase and improve its overall ministry to children and create a more child-friendly environment?

A primary function of the church is to provide a place where adults can teach and disciple children to help them understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The success of the church in fulfilling this obligation is completely dependent on the quality and commitment of the staff, teachers and other

caregivers. Sadly, the careless church will often assign its least qualified people to work with children – those who have little biblical understanding; no awareness of children’s learning styles, no understanding of children’s behavior, discipline or nurture. No church will have a meaningful program for its children unless its members recruit, equip and support caregivers for its ministry to children.

Also, churches that are serious about ministering properly to children should carefully weigh the benefits and downsides of children’s sermons. But however the children’s needs are met, and

whatever approach taken, there are certainly many things that the child should expect from the church, and many ways to make the churches more child-friendly. I have been saddened at times when I visited churches which have made no provision to create a place where children would want to be. I have seen churches with almost daily child activities but without child-size tables or chairs, nothing on the walls which is colorful or attractive to children. Many churches, of course, have limited space. But in any church, much can be done to make the church compound safe, attractive, and warm and welcoming to the children.

The Child and Mission

Just as we have done in previous sections, we want now to put the child “in the midst” in relation to mission. We begin by thinking of how the child is related to mission? Or better, how does mission include the child? Are children the “*Great Omission*” in mission strategies? How can cross-cultural ministry to children be sensitive, ethical, and effective? How can children be both “objects” of mission and resources for mission?

Most churches give some attention to missions. Many have a “Missions Sunday” once a year and often invite a missionary to speak, usually showing pictures and challenging the church to give to

missions. I have often been one of those speakers. Most churches believe that missions are important and that the church should occasionally spend a day or so focusing specifically on missions. Having done so, many churches will feel that they can then get back to the real work of “doing church.” But mission is at the heart of the church, and perhaps the main purpose of the Bible is to be a missionary manual? Perhaps the whole of the Bible “is the story of God’s mission – why and how lost humanity must and will be redeemed by a loving God.” And as we look at the Bible in that light, we see that to redeem all people in the center of God’s concern. And

central to our purposes here, we may rest assured that “all people” includes children.

The surprising fact is that children are actually by far the most fruitful ‘mission field.’ Most people who will ever come to Christ, from whatever culture or background, will do so before the age of 15. We call this the “4/14 Window.” The realization of the reality of this “Window” is today changing how mission is understood around the world today. The reality of the 4/14 Window means that including children in mission strategies is essential for serious mission work today.

Avenues for Advocacy

Advocacy takes its roots from the legal profession. It means speaking or pleading on behalf of another. It has to do with speaking for, acting for, or defending someone or something, before someone else. Anyone can be an advocate; he or she doesn't have to be a professional or an expert. Most child advocacy organizations specifically target public policy or governments to change or enact laws to benefit children. This is a viable and important component of child advocacy and much good has been done for children worldwide through such advocacy has provided a lot of good for children worldwide.

Non-confrontational advocacy involves speaking out or enabling

others to find their own voices to raise awareness. It includes actively challenging people with not just facts and figures, but a distinct call for change. It may involve enabling others to make changes and using experience to train and equip those willing to make those changes. Almost always it involves prayer, education, research, training, encouraging, networking and other means of highlighting and addressing issues.

It is part of the role of the church to do advocacy through speaking out against injustice, defending the cause of the poor, holding those in power to account, and empowering people to speak out for themselves. It is clear from the Bible that God expects Christians to be concerned

*Advocacy can be viewed
as simply being a
champion for children.*

about – and raise their voices on behalf of the poor: Advocacy can be viewed as simply being a champion for children. God’s heart and hope for children contrasted – with the realities of their daily life and a keen awareness and understanding of where the Christian community is in its response to these realities – provide more than sufficient motivation for the church to be a champion for children.

Advocacy as a mindset allows us to be in regional and global discussions on child and mission issues and positions us to take our place in a variety of forums on child issues. Viewing ourselves as

advocates encourages us to lift up our eyes and to view our work not just as administrators but as advocates for children – speaking out and acting on their behalf.

Hand in hand with advocacy is the important work of networking. We have shown the importance of the church worldwide of responding to the needs of children. And the church has indeed responded massively and compassionately over the years and across the continents. At the same time however, despite the large numbers of church-run and church-based programs and projects aimed at meeting the needs of children, very

many of those operate largely on their own. Many lack basic know-how and information – Who does what and where? Who can help me? Who has done this before? How do I do this? – not to mention encouragement, support and fellowship. Essential to effective programming on behalf of children are matters of management, caring for staff, liaising with donors, governments, authorities and others in the community. Effective and extensive networking is part of the response to these and other challenges.

Appendix

A Teaching Syllabus for *Child, Church & Mission*

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an overview of holistic child development, the Biblical foundations for children ministries, the work of child development, the roles and responsibilities of the church in caring for needy children, and the place of children ministries as strategies and resources for mission. This course develops awareness of contemporary church and mission issues and strategies in order to understand how ministries to children fit into this broader picture, and helps the students grasp the global and eternal significance of their ministries.

COURSE GOAL

The course will provide an overview of the relationships between holistic child development, the ministries of the Church, evangelism, Mission, and furthering the Kingdom.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of this course, the student will be able to:

- 1) Share extensively about what the Bible says about children
- 2) Discuss the spiritual roots of poverty
- 3) Discuss the roles of the Church in responding to the needs of children
- 4) Know how to development a child protection policy for own church or institution
- 5) Discuss key concepts in the development of missions and apply these to the ministry to children, including “the 4/14 Window”
- 6) Discuss the critical ethical issues in inter-faith mission to children
- 7) Critically assess the importance of children as objects of and agents for Mission
- 8) Develop strategies for non-confrontational child advocacy in your own work and ministry contexts

COURSE CONTENT

- 1) Why the Child?
- 2) Holistic development in Biblical perspective
- 3) Children in the Bible: Not a Great Omission!
- 4) Why Children are Poor: The spiritual Roots of Poverty
- 5) Why caring for children is the particular responsibility of the Church
- 6) Improving the ministry of the church in Holistic Child Development
- 7) Faith development in children
- 8) Characteristics of child-friendly churches
- 9) Child protection in church environments
- 10) Key concepts in missions and their relation to ministry to children
- 11) Practical issues in Mission and Children. Aspects of conversion ethics
- 12) Avenues for child advocacy

COURSE FORMAT

The course is intensive. It will normally be conducted over 30 hours during one week (Monday through Friday). The course will consist of lectures, class discussion, Biblical reflections, group work, and daily reading and writing assignments. Students will

complete further reading and writing assignments within two months of the end of the classroom work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Attend all class sessions.
- 2) Participate actively in group discussions, biblical reflections and class interaction.
- 3) Complete Daily Assignments as Follows:

Four Reaction/Reflection Papers (One each night Monday - Thursday): Each evening you will write a Reaction/Reflection paper. A Reaction/Reflection paper is simply a "reaction" to something that was said in the lectures, in the discussions, or in your small groups, or something from your reading. Or, it may be a reflection on something that was new to you, something with which you disagreed, something which had a big impact on you in some way. Perhaps it was an "aha" experience, from some new idea or something new from Scripture. Your Reaction/Reflection paper will also apply, critique, contextualize, or otherwise interact with some of the content of the day's content and/or discussions. *Note: Each day we will begin with some*

students giving us their “reactions” – not reading them, but telling the class what you are reacting to and why.

Reading Assignments: Overall reading requirement is 800 pages of material related to the course topics. Inclusive in this, each evening you will do approximately 40 pages of reading either from the Reader or from other relevant and/or recommended resources. Keep a log of your reading and turn it in each day along with your Reaction/Reflection Paper.

Term Paper: Complete a Major Paper of 2800-3400 words (approximately 10-12 pages) with minimum of 5 references within 3 months of the end of the course. Focus on going deeper, critiquing, applying or contextualizing what you have learned. Two key components of acceptable term papers are:

1. Some kind of interaction with the subject material and content of the CCM course, and
2. Some kind of application to your own work/living/church/cultural

COURSE PLAN

This course was designed to be taught as a one week intensive, thus the 5 major sections. However, it may be adapted for other formats including full quarters or semesters. The plan of the five major sections is as follows:

- 1) Section One: The Child in Biblical Perspective
- 2) Section Two: The Child and the Church
- 3) Section Three: The Child in the Church
- 4) Section Four: The Child and Mission
- 5) Section Five: Avenues for Advocacy

SECTION ONE

The Child in Biblical Perspective

Firstly, this course is about the **Child**. The child is a person created in the image of God, with all the inherent worth and dignity which that implies. As such, we want to see the child in Biblical perspective, and understand God's view of children. What does the Bible say about children and particularly, children in need? We will find that the Bible is not silent. What we will learn of God's heart for children must surely characterize our view of them as well.

We also expect to see all children developing their God-given gifts and talents to become all that God wants them to be. We call that process "holistic child development." That is, children developing as whole persons, in body, mind and spirit.

Since many children are not able to become what God wants them to be, we will also look at why so many experience poverty and deprivation. From a biblical standpoint, why are people poor and how should we understand poverty? And how is poverty overcome? We will look at these issues generally but all with special attention to the child and a holistic approach to development.

LESSON ONE
WHY CHILDREN?

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will have a better understanding of the "at-riskness" of *all* children, and why they are so strategic for the church and for mission.

KEY VERSE:

Psalms 78:3-7 "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes ... and established the law ... which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands."

Children are the most needy and most numerous people on the planet. Never in history have we had so many children among us and never have so many of them been at great social risk. Children aged 15 and under comprise one-third of our world's six-billion people. In

developing countries children make up nearly half the population. An additional 26 percent⁴ are young people -- aged 15-29. Another one billion children may be born in the next decade, very many of those into families living in extreme poverty.

ALL CHILDREN ARE AT RISK

For many children in America and in developed countries around the world, the future looks bright. Their education is secure. Their health is usually sound, and doctors are rarely more than a phone call away. Technology promises to bring them to greater achievements than we could ever dream. But the truth is that even these children are at risk.

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN SUFFER FROM POVERTY...

An overriding reason for focus on children is that, more than any other segment of humanity, children suffer, in a sense paying for the sins of adults. Every year tens of millions of children are victims of exploitation, violence and abuse. Today more than 37 percent of our children live in absolute poverty – a total of 674 million children.⁵

⁴ Population in July 2004: 6,383,523,865. (6.38 billion); Source: International Programs Center, U.S. Bureau of the Census; Website: <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw>

⁵ Gleaned from various pages of from "Child Poverty in the Developing World.": Gordon, D, Nandy, S., Pantazis, C.,

Many, many more live in conditions of severe deprivation, facing lack of income, hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion.

... AND MILLIONS MORE SUFFER FROM PROSPERITY

While not minimizing in the least the very real suffering and deprivation suffered by so many children in poverty, it is also true that children in affluent nations and affluent families are also suffering and very much at risk. It is said that children in the West have "everything to live with, but nothing to live for." Many children and young people, especially in developed nations, are at a loss for who they are for direction in life and for any sense of purpose. Millions are suffering from neglect, lack of parental care, nurture and protection and the exploitation of predators of many kinds. Too many children lash out in violence they learned from television. Too many teenagers hate themselves. Too many children are confused and discouraged by the disheartening premises of post-modernism – life is absurd and has no meaning; there is

Pemberton, S. & Townsend, P. (http://aa.ecn.cz/img_upload/65636e2e7a707261766f64616a737476/Child_poverty.pdf. 2003)

no Truth, you are the only one who cares about you, don't trust anything or anyone.

CHILDREN ARE STRATEGIC BECAUSE "THE CLAY" IS STILL SOFT: Whether suffering from poverty or prosperity, childhood is the most formative and therefore the most strategic stage of life. To shape an adult – reach a child. Children need our attention more urgently than any other group of people, for childhood is quickly over.

Most parents know that childhood years are formative. Anyone who has been a child knows it too! Our brains are 90 percent formed before we reach the age of three⁶, and most of our adult personality is formed by the time we reach six years of age. There is substantial truth in the Jesuits' refrain 'give me a child 'til he is seven and I'll show you the man.' The Bible simply states, "train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs. 22:6).

⁶ Susan Greener, "The Effects of Failure to Meet Children's Needs" in *Celebrating Children* (Carlisle, Cumbria, Paternoster Press. 2003). 130.

LESSON TWO

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to discuss and apply a wide range of biblical insights on God's heart for children from a variety of Scripture passages.

KEY VERSE:

Matthew 18:6 "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN THE BIBLE

Some people have said that the Bible has little to say about children and childhood. This though, is surely not the case. A closer examination of Scripture – one with the child in focus – reveals not only that children are very prominent in the Bible, but also that they play a significant role in the unfolding of the message of the Bible; that God loves and protects them, that they are extremely perceptive in understanding the things of God, and that God often used them as his messengers and models.

CHILDREN ARE CREATED WITH DIGNITY

A look at what the Bible says about children reveals first that children – like all of humanity – are created in His own image, endowing them with dignity and inherent value. This is true of all children regardless of tribe, language, nationality, age, gender, ability, behaviour, caste, or any other human characteristic. This is true even for unborn children, as is clear from Psalms 139:13-16: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. . . . I am fearfully and wonderfully made; . . . My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

GOD IS THE DEFENDER OF THE NEEDY AND THE FATHERLESS

Throughout Scripture we see many examples in Scripture of the neglect or exploitation of children. Many of the same things we are concerned about today were problems in biblical times as well.

Though these things happen to children, God is not silent. Throughout Scripture, we see the unmistakable and pervasive evidence of God's love and care for children; that God is a defender of the fatherless child,

the poor and needy, protector of the vulnerable, and friend of the neglected, the exploited and the suffering child. Throughout Scripture, we see that He is a defender of the orphans and the fatherless: Over 30 passages in the OT attest to God being the defender of the fatherless, and He expects His people to be the same.

In the New Testament too, Jesus' concern for children is always evident. Jesus said that whoever welcomes a child, welcomes him. When the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus placed *a child in the midst* of them. He said that if people were not willing to become like that child, they wouldn't even get into the Kingdom – let alone have any place of prominence!

CHILDREN CAN UNDERSTAND THE THINGS OF GOD

It is not only God's love for and care for children that is striking in the Bible. We also see that God has a very high regard for their ability to understand the faith and to participate in His redemption activities.

GOD USES CHILDREN FOR SPECIAL TASKS

In many places in Scripture, we see God entrusting special Truth to children or using them as His messengers or instruments. Wess Stafford, the President of Compassion International likes to say that

often when God had something REALLY important to do – something that He couldn't entrust to adults, He used children instead.

ADULTS ARE TO LOVE, RESPECT AND WELCOME THE CHILDREN
 Jesus modeled for us concern for children through His own approach. In Matthew 19:13-14, He insisted that his disciples receive the children and not hinder them coming to Him: "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

PARENTS ARE THE PRIMARY CAREGIVERS FOR CHILDREN
 The fact that God himself trusted His own Son to humankind as a vulnerable child is indicative of the primary place of parents (Luke chapters 1 & 2). God required that His Son be nurtured by a frail but able family and community, hence, symbolically providing a model of trust and responsibility.

LESSON THREE

THE MINISTRY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- 1) Show from a biblical standpoint that care for the needy is central to the heart of God, and
- 2) Provide for oneself a definition of holistic child development and state clearly some essential characteristics of what it is and what it is not.

KEY VERSE:

Proverbs 30:7-9 "Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

GOD'S HEART FOR THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

Jesus said the poor we would always have with us. But He didn't leave it at that. Yes, they will always be with us, but what are we going to do about it? Jesus showed us His concern by what He **did** for the poor. There is much we can learn about our responsibility to the hurting people of the world as we search the Scriptures.

One of the first things we notice when we look closely at God's Word is how deeply God cares for the poor. Both the Old and the New Testaments are filled with examples of God's love for the poor, His hatred of the injustices that often cause poverty and His concern that the poor be aided.

CARE FOR THE POOR IS CENTRAL TO GOD'S NATURE

"The Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them -- the Lord, who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked" (Psalms 146:6-9).

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN HOLISTIC CARE FOR CHILDREN?

If our interventions are to be holistic, then, by definition, they must give attention to spiritual as well as physical needs. "Christian" refers primarily to our motivations and intended outcomes whereas "Holistic" refers to the scope of our development interests.

Luke 2:52 is a key verse which provides a model for the kind of development we are talking about. This verse

simply says that "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men." As we shall see later, these four components – wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man – neatly encompass all aspects of the whole person and provide a useful model around which to create meaningful holistic development programs. Our objective in Christian, Holistic development is that all those with whom we work, especially the children, have the opportunity to grow and develop in these same holistic ways – in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and man.

A holistic approach to child development will include such things as:

- 1) Helping children and families know the Truth
- 2) Awakening people (children) to their self-potential.
- 3) Giving children and families options.
- 4) Helping children grow like Jesus did – in "wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).
- 5) Providing opportunity – not just things.
- 6) Promoting self-reliance.
- 7) It is always directed toward wholeness and completeness.
- 8) Through biblical goals, motivation and methods seeking to bring children into a right relationship with creation and their Creator.

WHAT CHRISTIAN HOLISTIC CARE FOR CHILDREN IS NOT
 It is also useful to state clearly what Christian, Holistic care for children is *not*. It is a fact that much development work is done by secular people from affluent Western countries. Sometimes these well-intentioned practitioners import their Western values, attitudes and/or economic theories. They also mistake their Western cultural values for universal development principles. Such values are often quite inappropriate for needy people in a non-Western context. Here are some things that Christian Holistic Development is *not*:

- Money or Westernization
- Promotion of Western value and priorities
- Welfare
- Something done to children, but with children

We must stress the difference between *development* and *welfare*. Today's western societies often create extensive "welfare" programs to care for the needy and less fortunate among them. These welfare programs usually make no distinctions between the *deserving* and *non-deserving* poor. Assistance is provided simply based on a person's income, regardless of why that person has become needy, what destructive behaviors he or she may have engaged in or what his or her real needs and abilities are. Continued giving, especially of money,

aggravates the problem rather than solving it. The continued problem of poverty in the United States, in spite of massive amounts of money distributed to the poor in various welfare programs, is a good example of the ineffectiveness of welfare.

LESSON FOUR A SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- 1) Understand poverty as fundamentally a spiritual problem.
- 2) Show how and/or why worldview may either create tendencies towards wholeness and life or towards destruction and poverty.
- 3) Contrast key aspects of a biblical worldview with those of animistic and secular worldviews and show the implications of each.

KEY VERSE:

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (or "more abundantly" - KJV).

THE NATURE OF POVERTY

“What are the causes of poverty?” “Why are children poor?” These are questions with which anyone doing development work must grapple because development work seeks to alleviate both the causes and effects of poverty. Jesus tells us that “the poor we will always have with us” (Mark 14:7). He also made it clear that we must do what we can to aid them in accordance with Deuteronomy 15:11. The “Great Commandment” which is to love our neighbors as ourselves, demands that we try to do something about poverty. To do so effectively requires that we first understand something about the nature and the causes of poverty.

Many people, when asked to define poverty, will cite things like:

Poverty as Deficits. Poverty implies as some kind of a deficit. The poor lack things like food, shelter, land and clean water. Or they lack ideas, skills or knowledge.

Lack of Options. Others suggest that poverty is mostly a lack of choices or options. The lives of the poor are dictated for them. Needy children of this world are denied opportunities that can contribute to their complete development. Many do not have

access to schooling, the option of receiving medical care, access to adequate nutritional materials. Children who grow up without options turn into adults without options as basic as adequate employment.

Poverty as a Lack of Wholeness.⁷ Life is an integrated whole -- an existence in many domains simultaneously. Poverty may be best viewed as a lack of wholeness, not just a lack of money or other necessities.

Poverty can be represented like a wheel that is inadequate for the load it is supposed to carry. It may be either totally broken or just out of balance. Either condition renders the wheel inoperable.

A SPIRITUAL VIEW OF POVERTY

In fact, dealing with poverty demands a perspective that goes beyond mere economic matters straight to issues of the heart. All of the above factors are significant in causing and perpetuating poverty. All of the above reflections on the causes of poverty contain elements of

⁷ I am indebted to my late colleague Dr. Don Miller in an undated and unpublished paper called “Child Development.” for this analysis of poverty as a lack of wholeness.

the truth. All of the above warrant attention from the careful development worker.

However, as Christians, we must be aware that these and other “causes” are, in fact, primarily the *results* rather than *causes* of poverty. As we study the Bible, we will begin to understand that poverty is not just a lack of material wealth or other shortages. It is not only corruption or calamity or disempowering entanglements. We should not make the mistake in thinking that the problems of poverty and underdevelopment have only material roots.

The fact is, that at its most basic level, the problem of poverty is most fundamentally, a *spiritual problem*. This is why the work of holistic child development must be the work of Christians. It is Christians who, through the Bible, have the answer to the problem of sin.

CONSEQUENCES OF WORLDVIEWS

Believing and living out the basic assumptions of animistic and secular world views *leads to more or less predictable consequences*. Of course, neither animism nor secularism will lead *automatically* to material poverty, hopelessness and despair. But these two fundamental worldviews *do* lead to moral ambiguity, to fatalism, to

spiritual poverty and very often, ultimately to material poverty as well.

Likewise, people with a theistic (biblical) worldview will not always be materially wealthy or self-sufficient. But believing and *consistently acting* on the assumptions and understanding of the theistic (or biblical) worldview, will, *inevitably* lead to biblical wholeness, spiritual well-being (in spite of circumstances), material adequacy, resourcefulness in using one’s own talents and available resources.

From a very human standpoint, we see that the biblical worldview contributes to a wise stewardship of the resources that God provides, and very often an accumulation of material blessings as well. Most often, at the very least, a biblical worldview will lead to an “adequacy” of material resources and to a sense of well-being, and an experience of the “abundant life” which Jesus desires for all people.

JESUS COMES TO GIVE ABUNDANT LIFE

This “abundant life” is in fact what Jesus desires for all people. However, this is not to suggest that *abundant life* refers primarily to material wealth, and certainly not to excesses of accumulation and acquisition. We are not preaching here of a “prosperity gospel.” Abundant life

does not mean “abundant stuff” – lots of material possessions and worldly goods. That is not what abundant life is all about.

What it is about is at least a life of adequacy, a life free of exploitation, wherein children are healthy enough to be productive, have adequate education, enough resources to be healthy, well-nourished, and educated, close and satisfying family relationships, joy, (even in the midst of difficult circumstances), hope and peace and contentment with whatever God has provided.

THE THIEF COMES TO STEAL

In contrast to God’s plan, there is also a “thief” out there who has exactly the opposite intentions for the sheep. That is why at the beginning of this same verse Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10a). Satan does not want children nor their families to have that abundant life. Satan is a liar. And Satan will lie and do anything else he can to kill, steal and destroy.

The apostle Paul, in Romans also talks about people exchanging the Truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:18-22). Ignoring God and believing Satan’s lies leads to a downward spiral of poverty, death and destruction. This is what we see all around us. Walking in a

desperate slum, it does not take long to see that Satan is often successful in stealing and destroying. For so many hurting children around the world, Satan has stolen their abundant life. They are left with ugliness, mistrust, corruption, exploitation, suffering and misery.

God’s intent has always been that his people, including children, be “whole” and complete in all aspects of life. This involves helping children and families understand biblical Truths. Is material and physical assistance still necessary? Of course. They still have needs, and we are commanded to provide help with nutritious food, education, health care and other interventions. But if the children and families we work with come to believe and follow biblical truths, they will have true freedom, release, wholeness, a future and a hope.

Since the root problem is spiritual rather than material, a holistic approach to the problems of poverty requires spiritual as well as physical responses. It is the Church – not governments, secular NGOs, the UN or other secular bodies that has an adequate response to the real causes of poverty. Therefore, effective Holistic Child Development must be done from a Christian standpoint. **Holistic Child Development is the particular challenge and opportunity for Christians and the Church.** While our non-Christian friends do very good work, from

which we may learn a great deal, and while much of our work may be very similar to that of non-Christians, it is *Christians* who can respond most completely and effectively to the problem of poverty.

SECTION TWO

The Child *and* the Church

In the **Child and the Church**, we explore some theological foundations on the role of the Church in Holistic Development. We challenge the narrow understanding of the calling of the church which deals only with the spiritual nurture of children. And we challenge the understanding that the church has no role with respect to children at risk, and the non-Christian children *outside* the walls of the church. Recognizing that the church is often weak and ill-equipped for the task, we nevertheless accept the *mystery* that God has entrusted the Church to be His own hands and arms to care holistically for *all* of his children. We also provide a sample Covenant which the Church at all levels in any country may use to identify and make commitments on behalf of children.

LESSON FIVE THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completion of this lesson the student should be able to:

- 1) Show from Scripture God's intention for holistic redemption of all Creation.
- 2) Defend a position on the relationship between evangelism and social action.

KEY VERSE:

John 3:17 "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

God has entrusted the Church with the responsibility to bless and redeem all of Creation. We are reminded that "God does not make junk, and we dishonor the Creator if we take a negative view of the work of his hands when he himself takes such a positive view. In fact, so positive a view did he take of what he had created that he refused to scrap it when mankind spoiled it, but determined instead, at the cost of his Son's life, to make it new and good again. God does not make junk, and he does not junk what he has made.

The point is that it is not only *people* who are to be redeemed and led to fullness in Christ, but also *all* of God's creation. It is this reality which provides the foundation for things like community development work – providing development assistance to increase income, improve economic systems, political systems, and all other aspects of human life and relationships.

Humankind (including children) have a special place In Creation. Humans are created in God's own image imparting special worth and dignity. Moreover, God has empowered us to be co-creators with him and to participate in his redemptive relationship with the rest of creation.⁸ The work of holistic child development participates in empowering children to fulfill their divinely ordered role of creating cultures.

THE MYSTERY OF THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

From the New Testament onwards, God's chosen instrument for His redemptive work has been His Church. For whatever reason, God has chosen the Church to be his instrument in redeeming all of His creation back to himself. It is *only* Christians who have the understanding of the nature of sin, of God's

⁸ Arthur F. Holmes, "Toward a Christian View of Things" in *The Making of a Christian Mind*, ed. Arthur Holmes (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 20.

intention for His people and His creation and of the power of the gospel to bring substantial holistic healing to the whole person – including children!

LESSON SIX

WHY CARE FOR CHILDREN IS THE PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to how from Scripture why care for children is the *particular* responsibility of Christians and the Church.

KEY VERSE:

I Kings 17:23-24 "Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

This section gives us opportunity to do more extensive exegeses of various passages from Scripture which illustrate the particular responsibility and capacity of the church to do holistic child development. Included are:

- 1) **Because only the Church can respond to the Needs of the Whole Person**
Luke 2:52 “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”
- 2) **Because God Hears the Children Crying**
Genesis 21:17. “God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.”
- 3) **Because Caring for Children Dispels Disbelief**
1 Kings 17:24 “Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.”
- 4) **Because Only the Church can “remove the curse”**
Malachi 4:6 “He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

SECTION THREE

The Child *in* the Church

Having established the obligation of the Church to care holistically for children, we now examine how to improve the ministry of the church to children, both inside and outside its walls. We examine some fundamental issues on conversion and faith development of children. We ask questions such as “What should a child expect from the Church?” “How can the Church improve its ministry to children?” and “What can be done to make the church staff, compound and programs more child-friendly?”

Further, though it is tragic to have to bring up, we look briefly at the issue of child protection in the Church. Specifically, we will look at protecting children from ourselves – that is our own employees or volunteers who may participate with us in our programs for children *in order* to gain access to children for exploitation. We briefly outline the essential components of a strong child protection policy.

LESSON SEVEN
FAITH DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this lesson the student should be able to:

- 1) Defend a position on the 4/14 Window and other issues related to faith development of children.
- 2) Discuss and critique some stages of faith development in children and essentials of spiritual training.

KEY VERSE:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

FAITH DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

All children have some faith from the earliest months of life. The infant in her mother’s arms shows faith, not by believing or doing but simply by trusting. We noted in lesson one the intriguing notion from Dr. Vinay Samuel, that children have an inherent *transcendence* -- a sense or

sensitivity to the Divine, to ‘mystery’ and to the touch of God in their lives.

We explore John Westerhoff’s 4 stage analysis of faith development in children.⁹ He says that early in life, children tend to “catch” faith – they apprehend rather than comprehend. They sense a positive environment; they hear positive things about Jesus, when they are welcomed and nurtured in places adults call “church.” The hugs and affirmation they get from adults are, at least in part, credited to the God the adults worship.

The absence of those hugs and affirmation will mean that children will have a difficult time developing faith at all.

A further stage of faith development takes place when children and young people begin to identify with the faith of their parents or peers. Of crucial importance at this stage is that the child senses that he/she is wanted, needed, accepted, and important in the church and faith community.

⁹ John Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Revised edition (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 2000). I am indebted to Steve Wamberg for this summary as well.

As children grow older, faith is usually characterized by questioning, doubt, searching and experimentation. Westerhoff says that “[s]earching faith requires that we explore alternatives to our earlier understandings and ways, for people need to test their own tradition by learning about others.”¹⁰

A final stage of faith development according to Westerhoff is “owned faith”:

*Due to the serious struggle with doubt that precedes it, owned faith often appears as a great illumination or enlightenment, but in any case it can be witnessed in our actions and new needs. Now people most want to put their faith into personal and social action, and they are willing and able to stand up for what they believe, even against the community of their nurture.*¹¹

Steve Wamberg notes that the apostle Paul was a prime example of “owned faith.” Once he came to faith in Christ, he was eager to put his faith into action. He took the opportunity time and again to stand up for his belief in Christ, even against the Jewish faith community that had nurtured him.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 94.

¹¹ Ibid., 95.

¹² Wamberg, 14.

IS THERE A “4/14 WINDOW OF RECEPTIVITY?”¹³

Most people who will ever make a decision to follow Christ will do so before their 15th birthday. There is a “4/14 Window of Receptivity” for children and young people to make a firm decision to follow Christ. If a young person has not made such a decision before the age of fifteen, it is highly unlikely that he/she will make such a life-changing “conversion” decision at any time in their future.

LESSON EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD FRIENDLY CHURCHES

OBJECTIVE:

At the completion of this lesson the student should be able to rate one’s church on child-friendliness and advocate for a wide range of child-friendly improvements in all levels of the national Church.

¹³ Dan Brewster, “The 4/14 Window: Child Ministries and Mission Strategies” in *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment*, ed. Phyllis Kilbourne (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC, 1996). This section on the “4/14 Window of Receptivity” is taken from a paper presented to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, October, 2004 by Daniel Brewster and Patrick McDonald called “Children: The Great Omission?” (Oxford: Viva Network, 2004).

KEY VERSE:

Zech 8:4-5 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.'"

BASIC THINGS THAT CHILDREN SHOULD GET FROM THE CHURCH

We begin by asking ourselves what are the basic things that a child should expect from the Church. The essentials include at least the following:

- 1) Teaching of the Word of God.
- 2) Making Disciples of Children.
- 3) Prayer.
- 4) Love and Care.
- 5) Opportunities to Participate in Ministry.
- 6) A "Child Friendly" Church Compound
- 7) Appropriate Class Rooms.
- 8) Qualified Children Teachers.
- 9) Age Graded Classes and Curricula.
- 10) Family Equipping and Preparation.
- 11) Protection from Harmful Traditions

MAKING CHURCH PROGRAMS MORE CHILD FRIENDLY

Beyond these, there are measures that the church may take to make the programs and the compounds more

nurturing, profitable, interesting and safe for the child. The class will develop their own suggestions as to how to make the church programs, compounds and staff more child friendly.

HELPING THE CHURCH HELP FAMILIES

Parents today are desperately needing guidance from the church on issues of parenting, training, discipline, time management, priorities, value conflicts and many others. The technological age puts some parents at a disadvantage as they seek to provide guidance and boundaries for their children. A significant component of this lesson will be concerned with helping the church help parents in these crucial areas. Topics discussed may include "Accepting Love vs. Transforming Love," "Good-enough parenting," pacing the child, expectations for the child, and things like home-schooling and education priorities.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH AT ALL LEVELS

This segment will introduce a "Covenant for Churches on Ministering to Children." This will suggest responsibilities, roles and opportunities, for the church at all levels, to improve its ministry to children and to develop and commit to strategies for more effective ministry to children in the churches. The Covenant details the responsibilities of each level of the Church

and set out minimum standards which each level should seek to provide or achieve in order to better minister to the children and families they serve.

LESSON NINE:
CHILD PROTECTION IN CHURCH
ENVIRONMENTS

OBJECTIVE:

At the completion of this lesson the student should be able to develop and apply appropriate child protection measures in one's own church or other care setting.

KEY VERSE:

Matt 18:6 "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

It is a shame to have to discuss the question of child protection in the context of the Church's ministries to children. For some, it is almost beyond belief that some of the ugliness of sexual exploitation of children could happen right in our church environments. However, we must not be naive. It is possible that there are those who would seek to use involvement in a church based child

program for their own personal motives which may be perverted rather than pure. It does happen.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

- 1) Screening of Visitors to Your Child Activities or Projects
- 2) Screening and Selection of Staff Who Work with Children
- 3) Staff Behavior Guidelines
- 4) Specific Do's and Don'ts
- 5) Reporting Procedures For Alleged Sexual Misconduct
 - a. Internal Reporting Procedures
 - b. External Reporting Procedures
- 6) Responding To Allegations Of Abuse

NINE COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- 1) Statement of Commitment
- 2) Communicating the Commitment
- 3) Behavioral Protocols
- 4) Child Protection in our Publicity and External Communications
- 5) Ensuring Project Partners Share the Commitment
- 6) Guidelines for Screening and Recruitment
- 7) Responses to Allegations
- 8) Advocacy and Networking
- 9) Confidentiality

SECTION FOUR:

The Child and Mission

How does or should Mission include the child? How do children fit into mission strategies? It is rare that the words “child” and “mission” are seen together in the same sentence. In spite of the wealth of biblical material on the significance and receptiveness of the child, until recently, children have long been overlooked in mission. However we will see that that oversight is changing is now being corrected. There are many new mission developments which are taking children and youth seriously. As mission to and with children develops however, we must ask how can ministry to children – especially cross-cultural and inter-faith mission to and with children be sensitive, ethical and effective? How can children be both “*objects*” of mission as well as *agents and resources* for missions? We also look at children as resources for missions, children ministries and mission strategies with special attention to the “4/14 Window.”

LESSON TEN

MISSION – WHAT THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO DO

Objective:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to apply key concepts in the historical development and the current practice of missions to the ministry of holistic child development.

KEY VERSE:

Matt 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

What is Mission? The word *mission* is not used in the Bible. Neither are other familiar Christian terms like *rapture*, or *trinity*. The word mission has lots of uses in contemporary English – diplomatic mission, peace-seeking mission, mission to outer space or mission impossible! However, the kind of mission we are interested in here is the Mission of God or of the Church.

OVERVIEW OF MISSION IN THE BIBLE

Some people think that the foundation for Mission is the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19. The fact is, the rationale for Mission is found throughout the Bible. God's choosing of Abraham was a selection of one nation to communicate His message to others. God's covenant with Abraham was that He would bless Abraham and that all nations would be blessed through him.

A (SHORT) HISTORY OF MODERN MISSIONS

The Perspectives on World Mission¹⁴ identifies three overlapping "eras" of missions in the last 200 years. These years are the time frame of what is called "Modern Missions".

The **First Era** of Modern Missions (1792 - 1910) began with the "Founder of Modern Mission," William Carey. In 1791, William Carey wrote an article called "An enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use 'Means' for the Conversion of the Heathens". He argued that in order for the missionary endeavor to be successful, mission societies or sending agencies were needed to provide prayer and financial support to send out missionaries (these Societies were the "Means" to which

he referred). Soon after, "Means" were established. The Baptist Missions Society with William Carey as its first missionary was formed. Although it was flimsy and weak and provided only the minimal support he needed to get to India, it inspired many other societies on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁵

The **Second Era**, (1865 - 1874) featured missions into the interior of mission fields. The impetus was Hudson Taylor's bold vision that the peoples of the interior of China needed to be reached. Over 40 other interior mission agencies were formed - Africa Inland Mission, China Inland Mission and Sudan Interior Mission. In both the First and Second eras of missions, ministry to children figured prominently, though, this aspect is often overlooked in mission writing. That oversight is now beginning to be addressed.

The **Third Era** of missions (1974 - present) like the previous two, was inspired by a key visionary, Cameron Townsend. Townsend was a "second era" missionary working in Guatemala, trying to distribute Spanish Bibles. He noticed that most of the Indians did not speak Spanish. One asked him, "If your God is so smart, why

¹⁴ Meg Crossman, ed. *Worldwide Perspectives* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995), 5-1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-4.

can't he speak our language?"¹⁶ Good question! The problem inspired Townsend to start his own mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators. As had happened in the earlier eras, the third era spawned many new mission agencies and organizations. This era saw the rise of many "Service Missions" like Missionary Aviation Fellowship and Gospel Recordings. In the early 1950s, it saw the first of the many Relief and Development organizations like World Vision and Compassion International.

SEVEN IMPORTANT MISSIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS¹⁷ (AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO CHILDREN)

- 1) The Great Commission
- 2) People Groups
- 3) Evangelized and Un-evangelized (or reached and unreached)
- 4) Receptivity of People Groups
- 5) The 10/40 Window
- 6) The Spread of Christianity
- 7) The Growth of Non-Western Missions

¹⁶ Crossman, *Worldwide Perspectives*, 5-10.

¹⁷ These 7 missiological concepts are adapted from Daniel Brewster, *Compassion's Role in Furthering the Kingdom* (Unpublished paper, 1995).

THE CHILD AND MISSION

Children are (or should be) very strategic in reaching the unreached and furthering God's Kingdom. Children figure prominently, (or should do so) in each of the 7 key missions concepts noted above:

- 1) The Great Commission applies to children as well as to adults.
- 2) Children may not be a people group in the usual sense, but, as we will see in the next lesson, viewing them as a people group helps us view them more strategically.
- 3) Many, many of the world's children are among the world's unevangelized.
- 4) Children, more than any other people group are receptive to the Gospel.
- 5) Nearly half of the population of every country within the 10/40 Window is under the age of 18.
- 6) Where the churches are growing, most of the new converts are under the age of 18.
- 7) Children are both objectives of and resources for, Mission in the non-Western world.

CHILDREN AS RESOURCES FOR MISSION

The reality of the 4/14 window means that including children in mission strategies is important for serious mission work today. However, children must not be

thought of only as possible objects of evangelism and mission. As we have also seen, both Scripture and experience show us that children have far more spiritual capacity than they are often given credit for. They can hear and obey God's Word in their lives and they can minister to others. They participated fully in the Jewish festivals and are included in the Commandments. Also, they are chosen again and again as God's instruments when adults or adult institutions fail.

LESSON ELEVEN
PRACTICAL ISSUES IN MISSION AND
CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- 1) Discuss and contextualize some cautions in mission to children in cross-cultural settings.
- 2) Defend a position on the validity and strategic value of the 4/14 Window.
- 3) Develop strategies which properly place children as both recipients of and resources for mission activities.

KEY VERSE:

1 Cor 9:22-23 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

In lesson seven, we examined several matters pertaining to the conversion of children. Faith development was compared to the growth of a tree. We noted however, that in that lesson we were exploring issues related to the children in the Church, and or those primarily growing up in Christian homes. We now turn our attention more directly to issues pertaining to the **child and Mission**. The issues of conversion and faith development in cross-cultural, or interfaith evangelism are very different from the issues than the same matters in the Christian context. As we shall see, ministry to children may be a remarkably effective way to find sensitive inroads into unreached communities and people groups. But inter-faith evangelism, and especially the inter-faith evangelism of children has very different issues and implications.

CONVERSION OR PROSELYTISM?¹⁸

Charges and accusations are sometimes made about *proselytizing* amongst children. There are laws in many countries prohibiting proselytizing. Further, some countries are now making laws against any conversion from one faith to another. Here we explore the important distinctions between evangelism and proselytism.

WHAT ABOUT "BUYING CONVERTS AND THE DANGER OF 'RICE' CHRISTIANS?"

Much legitimate criticism has been lodged against *buying* Christians and the dangers of creating *rice* Christians. A person may be coerced into making a declaration of faith in response to receiving a bowl of rice or other attractive material goods. They may do this because they are desperate or simply want to ensure that the flow of *rice* is not interrupted. Children and families may reevaluate their declarations of faith when the need is alleviated.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Sujitha Siri Kumara, a Sri Lankan working with ESCAPE in Colombo. His paper "The Ethics of Conversion in the Sri Lankan Context" presented in my class on Child, Church and Mission at the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary in June 2003, shaped several of the points in this lesson

EVANGELISM OR EXPLOITATION?

Christians engaged in meeting the spiritual needs of children are often criticized by non-Christians who see evangelism as a form of exploitation. How do we respond to this accusation? What methods do we employ that make this accusation a legitimate one? How do we exercise a non-manipulative integrity and respect in our evangelism without softening the gospel and the need of children for it?

CAUTIONS FOR CHILD EVANGELISM IN SENSITIVE SITUATIONS
 Evangelism and providing Christian training to children of non-Christian parents, if done with integrity and transparency is neither exploitative nor unethical. The presentation of the Gospel, even to children, is legitimate and mandated by Scripture. However, there may indeed be *circumstances* which may make overt evangelism improper or even unethical. The concerned cross-cultural worker must also be wise, sensitive, and compassionate. Here we explore a few principles which are valid and important for those ministering to children in sensitive, non-Christian environments.

STRATEGIC MISSION TO CHILDREN

In lesson seven, we introduced The "4/14 Window." The 4/14 window refers to the reality noted earlier, that most people who make decisions for Christ, do so between the ages of four and 14. From what you

learned in lesson ten, you now know that the idea of the “4/14 Window” is “piggy-backed” on the better known concept of the “10/40 Window.”

A WINDOW WITHIN THE WINDOW

This segment documents the reality of the 4/14 Window, through reviews of more than 200 surveys of Christians on all continents concerning when they made their decision to follow Christ. These informal results demonstrate that between 60 and 80 percent of non-western Christians also decided to follow Christ between the ages of four and 14.

THE 4/14 WINDOW AND CHURCH GROWTH

Experience also suggests that one of the most significant interventions that can be made to encourage church growth is to assist the church to develop child health, education, and spiritual nurture programs for children. If child assistance programs are done right, if non-Christians are enrolled and if parents are included, those churches will invariably grow.

THE 4/14 WINDOW AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In their enthusiasm for development of global evangelism strategies, Christians have at times acted as though we did not have time to wait for young Christians to mature into their place of leadership. This

is a shortsighted approach. Clearly we must affirm that we can still afford to grow the Church.

Today’s children are still tomorrow’s leaders. Child development is a long-term process. Just as we as parents know that it takes at least 18 years to “develop” our own children, so likewise, child development is a long time proposition. Maturity in future Christian leadership requires strategic and sustained investments in the Christian nurture of children today.

CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF MISSION

As noted, the reality of the 4/14 window means that including children in mission strategies is important for serious mission work today. However, children are dependent on adults to equip them to do these things. Our lack of vision for the spiritual capacity of children can cause us to do things that actually harm or stunt the spiritual growth of children. Children are dreamers. They are idealists; they always have faith in a better tomorrow.

CHILDREN NEED TO BE CHALLENGED

A look at the resources for Sunday school teachers will reveal many topics about how God will bless believers, but virtually nothing on equipping children for outreach or challenging them for service or missions.

GIVING CHILDREN A MISSIONARY WORLDVIEW

How might we impart a missionary world view to children? How can we communicate concepts about missions to children in a way that they can understand and see how they fit in? How can kids come to know they really can make a difference in God's global purposes? Here we will explore ways to interest and educate children about missions.

SECTION FIVE

Avenues for Advocacy

In this final Section on the Child, Church and Mission we begin by looking at the concept of Advocacy. In improving the ministry to children, the Church needs to be aware of the primary secular initiatives and tools relating to protecting and providing for the child. The main such tool is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, in lesson thirteen, we will examine the useful aspects of this and other tools. But we will also raise some of the questions asked by some Christians from a biblical standpoint.

Hand in hand with advocacy is the important work of networking. We have shown the importance of the Church worldwide of responding to the needs of children. But many of the churches and ministries caring for children operate largely on their own. Effective and extensive networking can help ministries encourage one another, combine efforts, and avoid overlap.

LESSON TWELVE

NON-CONFRONTATIONAL ADVOCACY

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completing this lesson the student will be able to contrast confrontational and non-confrontational advocacy to develop appropriate advocacy strategies within one's own ministry setting.

KEY VERSE:

Lamentations 2:19 "Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street."

ADVOCACY: THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

Advocacy takes its roots from the legal profession. It means speaking or pleading on behalf of another. It has to do with speaking for, acting for, or defending someone or something, before someone else. It is part of the role of the church to do advocacy through speaking out against injustice, defending the cause of the poor, holding those in power to account, and empowering people to speak out for themselves. It is clear from the Bible that God expects Christians to be concerned about - and raise their voices on behalf of the poor:

NON-CONFRONTATIONAL ADVOCACY

Anyone can be an advocate; he or she doesn't have to be a professional or an expert. Most child advocacy organizations specifically target public policy or governments to change or enact laws to benefit children. This is a viable and important component of child advocacy and much good has been done for children worldwide through such advocacy has provided a lot of good for children worldwide.

Non-confrontational advocacy involves speaking out or enabling others to find their own voices to raise awareness. It includes actively challenging people with not just facts and figures, but a distinct call for change. It may involve enabling others to make changes and using experience to train and equip those willing to make those changes. Almost always it involves prayer, education, research, training, encouraging, networking and other means of highlighting and addressing issues.

ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPMENT GO TOGETHER

Often development does not get to the root of the problem. Advocacy often deals with the structural aspects of poverty, exploitation and injustice that address more directly some of these issues.

ADVOCACY AS A MINDSET

Advocacy can be viewed as simply being a champion for children. God's heart and hope for children contrasted – with the realities of their daily life and a keen awareness and understanding of where the Christian community is in its response to these realities – provide more than sufficient motivation for the church to be a champion for children.

Advocacy as a mindset allows us to be in regional and global discussions on child and mission issues and positions us to take our place in a variety of forums on child issues. Viewing ourselves as advocates encourages us to lift up our eyes and to view our ministry not just as administrators on behalf of children but as advocates for children – speaking out and acting on their behalf.

AVENUES FOR NON-CONFRONTATIONAL ADVOCACY

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Vision Casting
- 3) Research
- 4) Speaking Out
- 5) Networking
- 6) Equipping/Training

LESSON THIRTEEN

THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completion of this lesson the student will be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the Christian context and apply key portions to one's own ministry to children.

KEY VERSE:

Proverbs 31:8, 9 "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Full attention is given to the CRC in another of the HCD courses, so the coverage in this course will be limited. The CRC will be introduced and discussed, since The CRC is the most respected statement regarding the protection and provision for children.

Some of the provisions of the CRC will be reviewed, but attention will also be given to some Christian concerns about the CRC.

SOME CHRISTIANS' CONCERNS ABOUT THE CRC

Not all Christians are enthusiastic about the CRC. For example, there is a perceived conflict with parental rights – an over-empowerment of children and that these rights are anti-family and erode positive Christian values. Some Christians, for example, feel that some articles transfer God-given parental rights and responsibilities to the State. Others feel that the CRC emphasizes rights that the child may not be mature enough to handle.

Another dividing line between Christian and secular rights “is the underlying God-centeredness of the Christian concept. Modern secular rights theory can be rooted in an individualistic (and even self-centered) approach. For Christians, the God-centeredness of rights dictates that their focus is not on claims for self, but on the desire to serve others in accordance with the teaching of Christ. Indeed, Scripture calls us consistently to think of the rights of both neighbors and strangers.

These and other concerns may be briefly covered in this short overview of the CRC as it relates to Child Advocacy.

LESSON FOURTEEN

NETWORKING ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE:

Upon completion of this lesson the student should be able to discuss and defend at least five benefits of networking and apply networking principles to current ministries.

KEY VERSE:

Lam 2:19 “Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street”.

Hand in hand with advocacy is the important work of networking. We have shown the importance of the Church worldwide of responding to the needs of children. And the Church has indeed responded massively and compassionately over the years and across the continents. At the same time however, despite the large numbers of Church-run and Church-based programs and projects aimed at meeting the needs of children, very many of those operate largely on their own. Many lack basic know-how and information – Who does what and where? Who can help me? Who

has done this before? How do I do this? – not to mention encouragement, support and fellowship. Essential to effective programming on behalf of children are matters of management, caring for staff, liaising with donors, governments, authorities and others in the community. Effective and extensive networking is part of the response to these and other challenges.

BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

There are many benefits of networking the various church and other Christian ministries to children at the local, regional, national and global levels. Among the benefits are:

Being Effectively Connected

Isolation is a troubling and discouraging problem for many ministries to children. The work is hard in any case. Trying to do it alone is harder still. Many ministries do not know what help or encouragement may be available in their own community or town.

Maximizing the Use of Resources

The experience of networking has shown that some places have overlapping work with children while many other areas have none.

Improving Development Practice

Many church based programs or projects, while doing the best they can, lack either resources or capacity to operate professionally. As Christians we need to do more than simply care for children in need – we need to do it with professionalism and real expertise. Networking can help ministries access and implement the training, resources, and best practices needed to operate with excellence.

Developing Professional Standards

What does good Christian childcare look like? What does it involve? How is it achieved? Networking can help bring people and organizations together to establish and agree upon professional ministry standards.

Making Quality Training More Accessible

There is a vast need for training and capacity building among Christian childcare workers. Most childcare workers are eager for expertise and advice. The problem is providing it. When churches and organizations are networked together, they can begin to identify similar needs for training.

Providing Better Care for Caregivers

Patrick McDonald points out that Christian ministries are not known for their care for caregivers:

A very serious, but often unrecognized problem for people in the frontline of ministry to children at risk, is lack of practical, emotional and spiritual support. Inability to find time for fellowship with other Christians or for personal renewal and lack of prayer backing leads to discouragement and early burn-out. Some carry on but begin to lose the vision they once had for helping these children and end up investing all their resources into just surviving the next crisis.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., 88.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The **Master of Arts in Holistic Child Development** is a unique partnership in Asia between the *Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary* and *Compassion International* to provide graduate-level training for leaders and practitioners in children at risk ministries. The goal is to equip Christians to become competent and passionate leaders and trainers in holistic child development programs in the life and ministries of the Church.

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1. Child, Church and Mission
2. Childhoods in Cultural Contexts
3. Poverty and Marginalization of Children
4. Child Development and Functioning in Families and Communities
5. Theological Foundations for Holistic Child Development
6. Intervention Strategies for Children at Risk
7. Self Care of the Caregivers
8. Children's Agency: Participation and Protection

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*“Children are a priority
for the King and his
Kingdom... They are
both key to the Great
Commission and an
essential expression of the
Great Commandment.”*

Patrick McDonald