

Opening a Window on the World of Children¹

Introduction:

overview the series...(review)

We are the most blessed of the world because we have an "Abba", (dad) in heaven who hears us when we cry. He places His very life, His love, within us.

Today, we are going to take that focus of the One who revealed Himself as "the Father of the fatherless" and talk about and begin to open our hearts to the 1.2 billion children in the world who are at risk because of our world's brokenness. The world we grew up in has changed.

While we were busy doing something else, something adult, something important; the world of children changed.

The children are suffering in our midst as slave laborers, orphans, prostitutes, and soldiers.

And, it is the Church that God has positioned to answer their cries.

Question: Raise your hand if you have been adopted, have adopted, are in the process of adopting, praying about adopting.

Two observations:

1. Great picture of God's love at work in the church. Thank you.
2. Every one of us should have had a hand up.

We all have been adopted, right? Every Jewish person and every Gentile has been adopted. You do not get into God's family by being of a certain nationality. You do not get into God's family by joining the church. You are not a natural born child of God born into God's family; entitled to all this grace and glory. You are born with a different father. We are sons of the evil one. When you accept Jesus as your Savior, you are adopted into the family.

- "To as many as receive Him, He gives the right to become Sons of God."
- "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God." (i.e. the furious love of God)

"Adoption is, on one hand, gospel. Our identity and inheritance are grounded in our adoption in Christ. Adoption is also *mission*. In this, our adoption spurs us to join Christ in advocating for the poor, the marginalized, the abandoned, and the fatherless. Without the theological aspect, the growing Christian emphasis on orphan care too often seems like one more cause wristband for compassionate conservative evangelicals to wear until the trend dies down. Without the missional aspect, the doctrine of adoption too easily becomes mere metaphor, just another way to say "saved." -Russell Moore *CT July 2010*

"Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption."

J. I. Packer, "*Knowing God*"

Update on the 1040 window

Today, 17 years into a worldwide mission emphasis on the 10/40 Window, there are encouraging indicators that this has been a region highly responsive to the presentation of the Gospel. The annual growth rate of Christ followers in the 10/40 Window was almost twice that of those outside the 10/40 Window. Christ followers in the 10/40 Window nations increased from 2.5% of the population in 1990 to 4.7% in 2005.

Slide: Progress of the Gospel by people group

Chart: (10-40 window statistics)

The general population grew at only 1.5% annually, while the population of Christ followers grew at an amazing 5.4% per year! Be encouraged!

Aslan is on the move in the 1040 window!

Overlay the 4-14 window

What is the 4/14 Window?

¹ For more information, go to www.4to14window.com

The 4/14 Window refers to the world of children between the ages of 4 and 14 years old. The term was introduced in a 1996 publication by Dan Brewster, then program director for Compassion International.

Last year, Luis Bush, gathered together a group of mission leaders and, as they did in the 80's with the 10/40 window, began to challenge our focus on children and youth. Children and teenagers have been largely neglected as a strategic focus of missions. Young people, (ages 4-14) make up half of the world's population, yet as little as 10% of mission efforts are currently directed toward them.

The 4/14 Window focus recognizes that children are the most receptive people group to the gospel, and positioned to be a mighty force to bring others to faith in Christ. Children have their whole lives ahead of them to live out and share their faith, and they also have time to be long-term agents of change.

The 4/14 Window is a necessary response to Jesus' command:

"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mk. 10:14). Jesus did not marginalize children, so neither can we. Jesus set a little child in the midst of His disciples and asked them to form their theology, their ministry focus, around this child.

The 10/40 Window is the geographical area with the greatest need and opportunity.

The 4/14 Window is the demographical grouping that is the most open, receptive, and moldable to every form of spiritual and developmental input.

If we correlate these statistics with the fact that almost 70% of the world's 4- to 14-year-olds (833,378,750) live in the 10/40 Window, we can begin to see the dynamic intersection of the 10/40 Window and the 4/14 Window.

The 4-14 window, like the 10-40 window, is a multi-faceted challenge. It must be approached holistically. (spiritual, mental, physical, economic, social, ministry)

What we are not saying:

We are not saying ignore adults. It is God's plan to use families; parents. Families reflect something eternally true about God. Eph. 3: 14 says, "Every family in heaven and earth is named after God's fatherhood." We know what parenting should look like based on the Father's example.

Nor are we saying we condone brainwashing children. No. It is wrong wherever it is done. Since there is a greater receptivity we should proceed with a greater caution; lest there be exploitation or abuse.

1. The Spiritual Challenge

In human development there is no more critical period than the decade represented by the 4/14 Window. It is a profoundly formative period when perspectives are shaped either positively or negatively and when a view of one's own significance (or lack of significance) is formulated. The needs and potential of this age group should inspire a purposeful response by those charged today with forming the world of tomorrow. It is a call to turn "the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6).

Most people who will ever make a decision to follow Christ will do so before their 15th birthday. In the USA, nearly 85% of people who make a decision for Christ, do so between the ages of 4 and 14. During the 20th Century, that age group was the single largest source of new believers for the American church.

Slide: Ages at which people become Christians

Ethiopian church in Bahir Dar - 85% below working age

In his book *Transforming Your Children into Spiritual Champions*, George Barna presents the results of three years of research that confirm that timeless principle from the wisdom literature: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6 ESV).

Barna's research verifies that a person's lifelong behaviors and beliefs are generally developed during childhood and early adolescence. In the overwhelming majority, most of the moral and spiritual foundations are in place by age nine. Fundamental perspectives on truth, integrity, meaning, justice, morality, and ethics are formed at this early stage of life. If we can reach youth and disciple them while they are in the process of shaping their world and life view, they will not easily be moved from that rock.

That brings us to the second challenge.

2. The Mental /cognitive Challenge

Any sensible parent knows the childhood years are formative. Our brains are 90% formed by the age of three. 85% of our adult personality is formed by the time we reach six years of age. By the time the typical child reaches age nine, the mental gears are shifted and the child begins to use internal cues to either confirm or challenge an existing perspective. As the child grows into adolescence, change becomes more and more difficult. By adulthood, only with great effort or under great influence will a person replace existing views and understandings.

Barna goes on to note that "adults essentially carry out the beliefs they embraced when they were young."

This view challenges the stages of intellectual development formulated by Jean Piaget, et. al., contending that one must reach the age of 15 to be capable of reasoning as an adult.

Every mature society recognizes childhood and adolescence as a time to prepare the young for the remainder of life. Most often this is done through the establishment of primary and secondary schools. Educators worldwide understand the critical importance of the 4/14 Window in the correct formation of children; however, despite the efforts of many governments, untold millions of children receive little or no education.

This problem of substandard education is exacerbated by other factors—the disintegration of the family unit, poverty, ill health, poor nutrition, to name but a few. This then results in masses of unmotivated, poorly educated men and women, barely capable of earning a meager income. And the situation is further complicated for children whose own parents deprive them of an education by forcing them to work in order to help support the family.

Questions to Think About

The Bible provides some clear, compelling answers to these important questions...

- Want to enter God's kingdom?
Become like little children.
- Want to be great in God's eyes?
Then become like little children.
- Want to let Jesus know you welcome and receive Him?
Then welcome little children.
- Want to avoid judgment at God's hand?
Then don't lead little children astray.
- Want to identify with God's plans?
Then don't belittle or despise little children.
- Want to follow Jesus' example?
Then love, pray for, accept, be with, and bless little children. (Mk. 10:14)

The manifesto of a new influential school of thought on human progress and nation building is called *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, by Samuel P. Huntington and Lawrence E. Harrison. These scholars ponder the question of why, at the beginning of the 21st

Century, the world is more divided than ever between the rich and the poor, between those living in freedom and those under oppression.

Their concluding thought summarizes their findings: "Cultural values shape the development of nations. It offers an important insight into why some countries and ethnic/

religious groups have done better than others, not just in economic terms, but also with respect to consolidation of democratic institutions and social justice. Former Singaporean Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew said, "More than economics, more than politics, a nation's culture will determine its fate."

III. Two Sister Nations, Two Distinct Cultures

Look at North and South Korea and get an objective measurement on two scales: economic prosperity and religious freedom.

In 1953 South Korea was the poorest nation in all of Asia. It is now the third most prosperous country in Asia, ranking tenth in the world. Its citizens live with an incomparably greater freedom of religion than the people of North Korea. In dramatic contrast, after 55 years of dictatorial rule, North Korea remains among the poorest nations in the world. One of the starkest differences between North and South Korea is seen in the education received by each nation's children. In great measure, South Korea's educational system has grown out of a worldview fostered by its churches, Christian families and influential believers.

North Korea, however, has shaped its children and youth under an atheistic philosophy of education. Rev. Kim Nam Soo, the Korean founder of Promise Ministries in New York City, began visiting North Korea in 1993 with the intention of traveling throughout the nation to look for ways to meet the needs of the people. Moved by his firsthand experience in that restrictive place, his highest priority in mission became the training of children with the goal of instilling within them a biblical worldview and commitment to the creator God. His experience was a transformational moment in his life that resulted in a strong personal commitment.

In North Korea, Rev. Kim Nam Soo observed the deep-seated effects of raising a child with an atheistic mindset. He saw what happens when children are removed from their parents in early infancy and trained in a tightly controlled environment. It was clear that this education tactic was designed to imbue the agenda of the Communist state, and it has proven to be very effective. It has produced a hardest foundation, rarely shaken by outer influences such as persecution, famine, and changes within neighboring countries. Kim observed that soon after birth, a child is sent to a state-sponsored nursery and dedicated to the communist regime and the "Great Leader."

The North Korean child spends all of infancy and childhood in this environment, absorbing a prescribed worldview, historical view, and creation view.

Without any choice, the child's life goals and life path will be determined by outside forces. Through all that he discovered in North Korea, Rev. Kim has re-prioritized his global missions focus toward raising up children and youth from the 4/14 Window to know God and serve Him. A decade ago he began writing on the compelling need for a shift in mission strategies and resources toward this purpose.

Although he is unable to intercede in the plight of children in North Korea, Kim is leading efforts on behalf of thousands of children in other nations such as El Salvador and India. His example is inspiring others to do likewise for the 4/14 generation worldwide. One other challenge...

3. The Physical / health Challenge

- More than 91 million children under age 5 suffer from debilitating hunger.
- More than half a dozen countries in Africa have a mortality rate above 25%.
But, the world of children has changed because of AIDS.
- Take Africa, for example: it is projected that 40,000,000 children in Africa alone will be orphaned by AIDS by 2015.
- One African every 10 seconds dies of AIDS. You can't think about caring for orphans without facing AIDS. More children have AIDS than there are gays in the world. We can't say that it is a gay disease any longer. If it started there, it is not there now.
- We know the cure for the number one killer of children: diarrhea.

According to the World Health Organization, 85% of the world's orphans are between ages of 4 and 14.

*Slide: World orphan population
(both the list and the map)*

TSP's South African project - sponsoring church Westside Family Church - Schaun Colin - "Out in the huts" of the Transkei region- ask to meet with the orphans to talk and give them something- in a school of 500, about 150 will come. "Beat the drum"

Conclusion:

James 1:27

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

"to care for or look after, with the implication of continuous responsibility"

4. The Economic Challenge - the physically poor

World Orphan Population

COUNTRY ORPHANS (where OBC has a presence)

India 25,700,000

China 20,600,000

Ethiopia 4,800,000

Bangladesh . . 4,400,000

South Africa . . 2,500,000

OXFORD STATEMENT ON CHILDREN AT RISK

Asserts God's Passionate Concern for Needy Children

"Scripture clearly shows that God is outraged about what is happening to children.

Over and over again God's warning throughout the Bible is 'Don't touch my precious children!' (Exodus 22:22-24; Psalm 68:5, Ezekiel 16:4-14, Deuteronomy 24:17, etc.).

God indicates terrible consequences for anyone harming His children: "...it would be better that a millstone be hung around

his neck and [he] be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

"As Christians then, we gladly acknowledge that our profound concern for children at risk flows from God Himself and our commitment to Jesus Christ. Most fundamentally, we affirm that children, born and unborn, along with the rest of humanity, are created in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic worth (Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13-14). Any actions that demean, devalue or otherwise diminish children are sinful.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where an attitude of cynicism towards the dignity of human life has resulted in a tragic loss of respect for humankind. Increasingly, children are the undeserving victims of human and demonic forces. The criminal waste of children's lives is an indictment upon all societies and cries out to God for vengeance."

5. The Social Challenge

III. Dalits in India

6. The Ministry Challenge

Slide: World orphan population (list and map)

From ANM's Magazine, "World Missions":

4-14 window
What is it?

The 4-14 window is a focus on the world's 1.2 billion unreached children and youth. Dr. Luis Bush originated the phrase "10/40 window" focusing on a "geographic window" where the majority of unreached people groups are located, The 4-14 window offers a "generational window" within that geographic window where The 10/40 Window referenced a geographic frame; the 4/14 Window describes a demographic frame—a life season- comprising the ten years between the ages of 4 and 14.

Why is it strategically important?

- Children and teenagers are the largest group, yet they are the most neglected.
- They make up half of the world's population, yet as little as 10% of current mission efforts are directed toward them.
- They can become the next generation of transformational Christian leaders. Win a child to Christ and you may get 60-80 years of service for Christ.
- Children are the most receptive group and the most strategically positioned force to bring others to faith in Christ.

To maximize the transformational impact of children and youth in the 4/14 Window we must address the spiritual, mental, physical, relational, economic, and social issues they face. We must also confront their "ministerial poverty"—the scarcity of opportunities for them to exercise their gifts and achieve their potential in ways that honor God and advance His Kingdom. It is crucial that mission efforts Is this approach biblically defensible?

Families, the Bible tells us, reflect something eternally true about God. It is God's fatherhood after which every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph. 3:14-15). We know what human parenting should look like based on our Father's behavior toward us.

The reverse is also true. We see something of God's fatherhood in our relationship with our human fathers. Jesus tells us that our fathers' provision and discipline show us God's active love toward us (Matt. 7:9-11; Heb. 12:5-17).

There are 210 million orphans worldwide, and adoptions to the U. S. have dropped 45 percent since 2004.

Pioneers Media

The 4/14 Window

Posted by: **Brian Russell** on 1/28/2010

- Categories:
- **Stories**



by Tami Snowden and Janay Garrick, Pioneers in the USA

Children at the Core of 21st Century Missions Strategy

More than 300 international Christian leaders met at the 4/14 Window Global Summit at the beginning of September 2009 to discuss a new missions focus: children between the ages of 4 to 14 years old. The summit was called by Luis Bush, the renowned missiologist who championed the 10/40 Window—calling it the “core of the core” —leading to a strategic movement by the Church to focus its church-planting efforts on unreached peoples between 10 and 40 degrees latitude from West Africa to Southeast Asia. Today, Christian leaders, church planters, and missiologists are urging a new focus: the 4/14 Window. It also can be called “the core of the core.”

Questions to Consider

- In what tangible ways, do you, your family, church and/or ministry place a high value on children and see them as worthy of ministry?
- What steps might you take to ensure that children between the ages of 4 and 14 hear the gospel of Christ and are equipped to be active participants in the Church?
- What other ways might you respond to this urgent appeal for a new missions focus to the 4/14 Window?