# Session 2: Kids Are Strategic

***Objectives:***

* Comprehend the value of seeing children as agents of ministry vs. objects of ministry
* Understand how God has uniquely created children to be participants in His big story
* Visualize the end goal of children’s mobilization

***Teaching Time:***  45 minutes, 1 hour with translation

***Materials:***

* Bible
* Session 2 handout for each participant
* Puzzle Activity handout for each participant
* Session 2 People Outlines from Teaching Aids folder (Samuel, Naaman’s servant girl, Josiah)
* (Option 1) Parable of The Lost Sheep video (free download from Max7.org)
* (Option 1) laptop and screen
* (Option 2) 100 cotton balls/small rocks
* (Option 2) a small bag
* One short candle and one tall candle
* Dots Banner from the Teaching Aids folder
* Colored marker
* Clear tape
* Puzzle in its original box
* Three clothespins

***Getting Ready:***

1. Print out the dots banner and tape the sheets together. On the first sheet, use a colored marker to color in 10 dots near the upper left corner (They will already be red if you are using a color printer.)
2. Print out the Session 2 people outlines teaching aid. Cut out each person outline.
3. ***(Option 1)*** If you are watching The Lost Sheep video, set up your computer and screen for viewing. Open with QuickTime player or watch on YouTube (<http://youtu.be/tyWZeOlaRo4>).
4. ***(Option 2)*** Place 99 cotton balls/small rocks in a small bag. Hide one cotton ball/rock in the room before the session begins. Make sure that the participants do not see you do this.
5. Pass out the Session 2 handout to participants before the session begins. You can pass out the Puzzle Activity handout before that activity near the end of the session.

# Introduction

Together, we just took a journey through God’s big story.

We learned that this story is about God’s mission and saw how it permeates the entire Bible.

God is in the process of making His name great among all nations, in every culture of the world.

In this session, we will learn how children are strategic in God’s mission and how He creates and empowers kids to participate in His big story.

We will also look at what can happen if we, as children’s leaders and parents, prepare and release the children in our churches and homes to be used for God’s purposes.

Partner Discussion

Let us begin by thinking about how our own culture views children.

Look on your handout. Do you see the section at the top that says “Partner Discussion Questions”? (Give participants time to locate this section.)

Find a partner sitting near you and discuss those two questions. You have five minutes to talk to your partner. Then we will share ideas with the large group.

*What are common proverbs about children?*

*How are children thought of and treated in your culture?*

(After five minutes, have a few participants share some observations.)

# How God Views Children

Now let us look at how God views children and the potential they have to partner with God in His mission.

Let us begin with a familiar parable in Matthew 18.

***Option 1****:* Show the Parable of the Lost Sheep video first (2:09 minutes). Then review the story using the script from Option 2 and the cotton balls/rocks.

***Option 2:*** If you are not using the Lost Sheep video, tell the following parable using cotton balls/rocks:

A shepherd had 100 sheep.

In the evening, he brought them down from the pastures where they were grazing and put them into the sheepfold for the night.

As they entered the fold, he counted them. (Take three cotton balls/rocks outs of the bag.) 97 … 98 … 99 —one sheep was missing.

What did the shepherd do?

Did he say, “It is getting late and I am tired. I already have 99 perfectly good sheep?” (Hold up the whole bag of cotton balls/rocks.) “I am not going out in the dark to search for one sheep.”

Was that his attitude?

No. Matthew 18 says that the shepherd left the 99 sheep and went to search for the one that was lost … and then he brought that sheep home and celebrated.

(If you chose Option 1, then pick back up here after the video.)

Find the Cotton Ball Activity

There is a sheep missing.

(Hold up a cotton ball/rock.) It looks just like this and it is somewhere in this room. Will you help me find it? (Have the participants hunt for the cotton ball and bring it to you. Cheer together.)

Just like the shepherd in the story, you kept looking until the missing sheep was located and then we rejoiced together.

Discussion

In this parable, 99 sheep were safe inside their pen. One was lost.

If this story about lost sheep were told about the children in your community, how many would be safe in the fold, following Jesus? How many would be lost? Turn to a partner and come up with a number.

(Gather some answers from the participants.)

At the end of the parable, Jesus says in Matthew 18:14,

*In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.*  (Matthew 18:14)

If the shepherd was willing to go looking for just one sheep, what might he be willing to do for \_\_\_ [customize to numbers shared by participants] who need to be found?

What might God want us to do?

How does God view our ministry to children?

Let us look back at Matthew 18.

(Invite a participant to read Matthew 18:5 to the group.)

*And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes Me*. (Matthew 18:5)

Think about this verse. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes *Me*.

When we welcome and serve *children*, it is the same as welcoming and serving *Jesus*.

That is a high calling.

What you do matters, not only because you reflect God’s heart, but also because children are strategic in God’s kingdom.

# Potential of Children

Let us think about the potential of children using a demonstration.

Suppose the electricity goes off in your village/community. You go to the store to purchase candles. Which one of these would you buy?

(Show the tall and short candles. Allow answers. Most people will choose the tall candle.)

(Hold up the taller candle). But this one is bigger and will cost more. Why would you buy this one?

(Allow responses.)

This taller candle is worth the investment because it will burn longer in the darkness.

Both of these candles represent people who have come to know Jesus and had their lives transformed.

(Point to short candle) This candle stands for a person who comes to Christ as an adult.

Surely God can use him in mighty ways, but half of his life has already been consumed in worldly living.

He will not have as long to impact his world for Christ.

(Point to taller candle) This candle represents someone who came to Christ as a child.

This boy or girl has their whole life to live for God and to impact their world for Christ, to be a light in the darkness.

Think about children who are learning to follow Jesus with their whole heart.

Think about children who embrace God’s heart for the world and understand God’s big story.

God can use them to impact their families, schools, neighborhoods, and even the world.

# Agents or Objects of Ministry

Pastor \_\_\_ [Insert cultural name] cannot figure out what is going on with the adults involved in his church.

Every Sunday they come and sit quietly and listen to the sermon, but most are not involved in active ministry or mission.

Pastor \_\_\_ [cultural name] does not understand why it is so hard to get his congregation to get involved.

Meanwhile, in the children’s area, 50 boys and girls are talking loudly, waiting for something to begin.

The teacher comes to the front and says, “OK children, sit down and be quiet. We are ready to begin.”

The children do as they are told, sitting quietly while they are sung and read to.

Let us go back to those adults in Pastor \_\_\_’s [cultural name] church.

Could it be that the adults in his church are only doing what they were taught to do as children?

They sit quietly while Pastor \_\_\_ [cultural name] ministers to them.

If we train up children to sit quietly and listen while someone else ministers to them, it will be difficult to change that attitude when they become adults.

How about us as pastors, teachers, and parents?

Do we see children as objects of ministry or as agents of ministry?

Is It Possible?

What would Pastor \_\_\_’s [cultural name] future congregation look like if we began to equip children to serve in the church and participate in outreach and missions while they were still young?

Is this even possible? Let me tell you four reasons why I think it is.

1. *First, God has created children in a special way*.

* Their hearts are soft towards the things of God.
* Children have great faith that acts.
* They lack fear and barriers—fear of rejection, lack of Bible knowledge, barriers of race or social status.
* They love to be committed to causes greater than themselves.

1. *Second, God has empowered children to serve.*

* Children who follow Jesus have the same Holy Spirit as adults who follow Jesus.
* The Holy Spirit gives children gifts and abilities and places them into the Body of Christ.
* These gifts are not eggs waiting to hatch when children become adults.
* They are ready and ripe for use.

1. *Third, God has given children spheres of influence.*

* Children can minister in places where adults cannot.
* I cannot go into a child’s classroom or onto the \_\_\_ [insert popular sport here] field with his team, but he can.
* I do not spend hours in his home, but he does. Children who follow Jesus are one of the best bridges into a home where parents are unbelievers.
* A child is the best one to share Jesus with his teacher, classmates, and friends.
* A child is the best one to recruit other children to join him in ministry.

1. *Fourth, God uses children in His kingdom.*

Let us look at three situations where God gave children important jobs in His story:

Samuel

In 1 Samuel chapter 3, we meet Samuel. (1 Samuel 3:1, 8-10)

When Samuel began to serve God, he was probably around three or four years old.

God does have a requirement before children can serve him … but it is not their age.

God requires obedience.

Messages from God were rare in Samuel’s day because the people were sinning against God.

God chose to speak through a young boy who was following and serving God.

(Hang people outline #1, Samuel, on the timeline between the Nation of Israel and the Psalmist.)

Today, God still speaks to children and invites them to serve Him.

Naaman’s Servant Girl

In 2 Kings chapter 5, we meet Naaman’s servant girl. (2 Kings 5:1-3)

We do not know her name, but we know her situation.

Enemy soldiers took this young girl from her home and country.

She was torn from the family she loved to become a servant in the home of her enemy.

And yet, she had complete trust in God and a capacity to forgive.

God used her to bring hope to an unbelieving family.

(Hang people outline #2, Naaman’s servant girl, on the timeline between the Psalmist and Isaiah.)

Today, children are living in areas where wars are raging.

Some children are slaves or live in other situations beyond their control.

How do we look at these children?

They may be the very ones God wants to use to point needy people to Him and bring hope.

Josiah

In 2 Kings chapter 22, we meet Josiah. (2 Kings 22:1-2)

Josiah became king of Israel when he was eight years old.

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David. He did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

God used Josiah to bring the people of Israel back to the straight path, the path of obedience to God’s laws.

(Hang people outline #3, Josiah, on the timeline between Naaman’s servant girl and Isaiah.)

Raise your hand if you have an eight-year-old child in your home or class.

When you look at that eight-year-old, what do you see?

Do you see someone who has the ability to change a nation?

Today, God still uses children to stand up for what is right and show other people, including adults, how to follow God.

In the Old Testament, God’s used children in His big story – to proclaim His truth in their generation, to reveal His glory to unbelievers, and to turn back those who had wandered away from Him. God can also use the children of our generation in His big story.

Turn to a partner and say, “God can use the children of \_\_\_ [insert country name] in His big story.”

Mobilization

We have seen that children have the potential to be strategic in God’s mission.

However, this will only happen if we, as children’s leaders and as parents, come alongside to mobilize them.

What is Mobilization?

What is mobilization? Mobilize is a word often used in war.

To mobilize means to make ready for active service, and to release for use.

Why is it important that we prepare children and families and release them to be used in God’s kingdom?

Let us do an activity to think about this question.

Participation Activity

I need three volunteers.

(Choose three people to come to the front of the classroom.)

(Turn to the three volunteers.) You three represent pastors, missionaries, and evangelists.

(Point to the large group.) These are unreached people who have never heard about Jesus.

You can go select one person at a time and bring them to Jesus. Take their hand and bring them to the front of the room.

If you are selected, come to the front and stay here until the activity is over.

(Turn to the volunteers again.) Once you bring someone to the front, you can go back into the group and repeat this. Keep bringing people to Jesus until I say *stop.*

I will give you two minutes. Ready? Go.

(After two minutes, if they have not finished gathering the whole class, stop the activity and have everyone return to their seats except for your original three volunteers.)

Let us try this again. But let us do the activity a little differently.

This time, when our evangelist, pastor, or missionary brings you to Jesus, then you can also go out and bring others to Jesus.

(Stop the activity when no one is left sitting in the class. Everyone has been brought to Jesus. Ask everyone to be seated.)

Discussion

1. Why were we able to reach everyone faster the second time?
2. Are pastors, missionaries, and evangelists the only people who should be participating in the Great Commission? Who else?
3. If we are all active participants, what will we accomplish?

To obey the commands of Jesus, to reach all nations, we will need all believers working together.

This includes Sunday school teachers. This includes parents. *And* this includes children.

At the same time we are introducing children to Jesus, we can be expanding their view of God, His heart for all peoples, and His desire for each of us to be involved in what God is doing around the world.

When we mobilize children, we give them what they need to be involved in God’s mission, beginning now, when they are young.

End Goal of Children and Family Mobilization

What is our goal in doing children and family mobilization? Let us look at four things:

1. First, we want to raise up disciples who follow Jesus for a lifetime and set an example for others. 1 Timothy 4:12 says,

*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.* (1 Timothy 4:12)

When we mobilize children, we both equip them and release them into God’s mission.

We empower them to believe that they matter, and that God can use them in a variety of world-changing ways.

As children embrace both the person and purpose of Christ, we bring greater depth to their understanding and relationship with Jesus.

1. Second, we want to multiply those lifelong followers of Jesus. In Luke 10:2 Jesus told his disciples,

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (Luke 10:2)

Some of these workers are children.

There are 2.2 billion children in the world. That is 1/3 of the world population!

2.2 billion is a hard number to wrap our brains around. Let me show you what 2.2 billion

children looks like.

(Hold up and unroll the dots banner.) Each of these dots represents 100,000 children.

(Point to 10 colored-in dots.) These ten dots represent one million children.

The number one million sounds large, but it is only a tiny fraction of 2.2 billion!

Some of these dots represent children who already know Jesus.

As we begin to mobilize them and their families, they will begin to pass on their vision to their peers who will pass the vision on to their peers.

Think of the potential of 2.2 billion children mobilized to reach the world for Christ.

1. Third, we want to see multi-generational impact.

The vision does not stop with this group of children. It is a long-term vision. Psalm 145:4 says,

*One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.*(Psalm 145:4)

If children grow up knowing and embracing God’s heart and purposes for the world, they will become parents who pass on that vision to their own children.

They will become pastors and teachers who pass on that vision to their congregation and students.

1. Most importantly, we want to reach the unreached.

We already know how God’s big story ends.

In Revelation 7:9-10, the apostle John describes heaven. John saw people from every nation, tribe, and tongue standing before the throne worshiping the Lamb.

As we learned in the last session, all of history has been and continues to move towards this point. It is not a hope of what we want to happen; it is a reality of what *will* happen!

We want children to understand God’s heart for every tribe, tongue, and nation.

We want to show them how to leverage their lives to be in harmony with what God is doing in the world.

Look at the end of your handout. Read the quote there. Ask yourself that question:

If tomorrow’s world of unreached people were waiting for our kids, would our kids have a heart to reach them based on what we are giving them?

# Conclusion

Think about what you have heard in this session.

Do you see children as agents of ministry who God has created and empowered to serve Him in unique ways?

Is this the heart and vision you have for the boys and girls in your church? In your class? In your home?

God has designed children to be active characters in His story. He has a role for them that only they can do.

If we want to see the church have its greatest impact on the world, then we have to mobilize the whole church – including children.

# Puzzle Activity

(Pass out the Puzzle Activity handout.)

During our sessions we are going to work together to create four puzzle pieces that look like this. (Point to puzzle handout.)

(Hold up a handful of real puzzle pieces.) When I just hold a bunch of puzzle pieces in my hand, it is hard to see how they all fit together or what picture they will form.

But if I look at the box top, it gives me the full picture. (Hold up puzzle box top.) It shows me how all these pieces fit together to form something beautiful and whole.

The completed pieces of our puzzle will fit together to form a picture of a World Christian child.

This child has been trained and mobilized to live for God and His global purposes.

We are going to work on the first puzzle piece right now. (Point to the first puzzle piece on the handout.)

In the puzzle piece is a question. With one or two people around you, discuss your thoughts.

Then write or draw your responses in this first piece.

It can be one word. A picture. Whatever you want to express.

Here is your question: Think about what you have heard in this session. How does parenting or teaching with this kind of vision empower children?