Session 7: God’s Work

***Objectives:***

* Understand that God is the author of history and is always active in the world
* Know that God invites our kids to be a part of what He is doing in their generation
* Explore habits that exemplify a World Christian
* Learn ways to give children opportunities to partner with God in His work

***Teaching Time:***  1 hour, 1 hour 30 minutes with translation

***Materials:***

* Bible
* Session 7 handout for each participant
* container of water with yellow food coloring
* container of water with blue food coloring
* one empty plastic bowl
* one bowl filled with clear water
* small cup
* one piece of fruit heavy enough to make a splash
* Session 7 People Outlines from Teaching Aids folder (Moravian Children, Indonesia children’s teams, Hope Smith, Today’s Child)
* scissors
* four clothespins
* Puzzle Piece handout to refer to

***Getting Ready:***

1. Decide where you will do the “How God’s Kingdom Spreads” activity. ***Option 1:*** Use a large, flat area outside. ***Option 2****:* Use a large table or floor area. Make sure to cover the area with a large plastic tablecloth or paper.
2. Print out the Session 7 people outlines teaching aid. Cut out each person outline.
3. Pass out the Session 7 handout to participants before the session begins.

Introduction

In the last session, we talked about God’s World. We learned about the peoples of the earth that God created and loves.

This session is about God’s work. Knowing that God has always been working throughout history, and is still at work today, will affect the way our children view God and themselves.

What is history? Most of us, including children, define history as events that have happened in the past.

Children live in the here and now. They ask, “How is history relevant to my life? How does it help me understand who I am and why I am here on planet earth?”

We need to introduce a new meaning of history to our kids.

God is the Author of History

The author of history is not like the authors of other ancient books who are dead and gone. We do not visit God’s gravesite. The God of the Bible is alive.

The author of the Bible does not change. Hebrews 13:8 says,

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (Hebrews 13:8)

We should not put the writings of God in a museum in a special glass case to be admired, but never read. God’s Word is as relevant today as it was when it was written.

All of history is God’s story. Because God is alive and because He does not change, God is still at work.

God is Active in the World

God is always active. God’s plan and work did not end when the last page of Jude was written. From Jude to the present day, God has been at work fulfilling His mission to make Himself known among all nations.

What if our children could look at history from God’s perspective?

They would see that history is not a series of random, unrelated events, but as a purposeful strategy of God to advance His kingdom, both by voluntary and involuntary means.

If God is always working, what strategies does He use to extend His kingdom? Let us do a demonstration to find out.

How God’s Kingdom Spreads Activity

(Set the two bowls, two containers of colored water, piece of fruit, and cup on the floor or on a large table in the front of the room or in a large space outdoors. Invite the group to gather around so that they can see. Choose four participants to help during the demonstration and invite them to stand near you.)

1. How did God plan for the good news about Jesus to spread to people in every culture? Mark 16:15 says,

*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.* (Mark 16:15)

Believers are to share God’s Word with people who do not know Him yet, in near and far-away places. When we look at history, we see that God’s people did not always follow His plan**.**

(Give a participant the container of yellow water and invite him to pour it into the empty bowl until the bowl is halfway full.)

Just as the sides of the bowl contain the water, believers often keep the truth of God’s Word to themselves, choosing to hold onto what is familiar and safe rather than go to unknown areas to share God’s Word with strangers.

1. What strategies does God use to get His Word to more people?

Sometimes He drops scary situations into the believers’ world that force them to move to other places.

Listen to Acts 8. (Read verses 1-4 to the group.)

*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria … those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.* (Acts 8:1-4)

(Invite a participant to drop the heavy piece of fruit into the bowl of yellow water and let some water splash out.)

In the early church, God used persecution as one way of spreading His Word throughout the Roman Empire.

1. What other strategies does God use to advance His kingdom?

Sometimes God brings outsiders to live in the lands of His people. Barbarians invaded and took over the Roman Empire. Many of the conquered people living in the land were believers.

(Point to the container of blue water.)This blue water stands for the Barbarians. Watch what happens when they invade the Romans.

(Invite a participant to pour the blue water into the bowl of yellow water. Discuss the color changes.)

The Barbarian culture changed much about the Roman Empire.

In addition, when believers shared their faith with their conquerors, some Barbarians embraced the true God. This changed the hearts, lives, and culture of the Barbarians.

1. What other strategies does God use to make Himself known to new groups of people?

Sometimes God takes His people by force to live in another culture. Viking raiders from Scandinavia invaded the Christian lands.

They kidnapped people and carried them home to become their slaves and wives. Some of those who were taken were believers.

(Point to the bowl of clear water.)This is the land of the Vikings. Let us see what happens when believers come to live in Viking homes and towns.

(Give the cup to a participant. Invite him to dip out some of the green water and pour it into the bowl of clear water. Discuss what happens.)

As believing men and women told the Vikings about Jesus, little by little, God’s Word spread, changing the hearts, lives, and culture of the Vikings.

These are just a few of the strategies that God has used and still uses as He works to spread His truth to the peoples of the world.

(Have all participants return to their seats.)

Partner Discussion

Get with a partner and discuss Question 1 on your handout:

*Think about the history of your country. What events might God have used to position believers so that they could share the gospel in new areas and with new people?*

(After about five minutes, invite a few pairs to share their ideas.)

The children in our churches and homes need to embrace a new way of thinking about history – that it is God’s story, a story that is still progressing, not in a random way, but in an intentional way.

God Uses People in His Plans

Children also need to know that as God continues to write history, He uses people in His plans.

Our place in history is not random. It is no accident that we were born into a specific time and place.

God appoints the times and places that each of us lives. God raises up individuals and groups of people for His purposes in every historical era.

Think about the events in the book of Esther. When Mordecai encouraged Esther to go to the king on behalf of the Jewish people, he said,

*Who knows? It’s possible that you became queen for a time just like this.* (Esther 4:14)

Children need to know that God uses not only adults, but also children. In some cases, children have been pivotal.

Historical Movements Where Kids Were Pivotal

1. *The year was 1727. The place was Germany -* The Moravian community was fasting and praying. Just like at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved, bringing revival and focus, first among the adults, and then the children.

One historian said, “All the children were seized with an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit, and spent the whole night in prayer. No words can express the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit upon these children, whose lives were so transformed.”[[1]](#endnote-1)

The entire Moravian community began a prayer meeting that lasted for 100 years - this included the children. Night and day, at every hour, believers took turns interceding for the nations of the world. From that century-long prayer meeting, came the beginning of the modern missions movement.

(Hang people outline #1, Moravian Children, on the timeline after Paul.)

Did God use children in history? Yes He did.

1. *The year was 1965. The place was Indonesia -* Revival swept across the island of Timor, not only among the adults, but among children as well.

One observer said, “Boys and girls wept and prayed for the nations, laid hands on the sick, and went into the jungles to preach Christ in the villages. We called them our children’s teams.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

(Hang people outline #2, Indonesia Children’s Teams, on the timeline after Moravian Children.)

Did God use children in history? Yes He did.

Not only does God use groups of children. He also uses individuals.

1. *The year was 1997. The place was the United States -* Hope was a nine-year-old girl. For a school assignment, she researched the country of Mongolia.

She was sad to learn that in a country of three million people, there were only five known believers of Jesus. Most people had never even heard of Jesus. They did not worship the true God, but prayed to little idol statues in their tents. Hope also learned that people in Mongolia did not have Bibles.

Hope began to pray for the people of Mongolia. She asked God to send Christians from other countries to Mongolia. She prayed that inside their homes, the Mongolian people would have Bibles instead of idols. Hope prayed every day for two years.

In 1999, Hope saw a magazine article about Mongolia. The title said, "Hope for Mongolia." The article reported that 500 Mongolians had believed in Jesus. God had answered Hope’s prayers.

Today, thousands of Mongolian people believe in Jesus and worship Him instead of idols. There are churches where people can read the Bible in their language and learn more about God. The largest church in Mongolia is in the capital city. It is called Hope Assembly.[[3]](#endnote-3)

(Hang people outline #3, Hope Smith, on the timeline after Indonesia Children’s Teams.)

Does God use children in history? Yes He does.

Partner Discussion

Get with a partner and discuss Question 2 on your handout:

*Think about the children in your family or church. How would knowing stories of how God works through kids impact them?*

(After about five minutes, invite a few pairs to share their ideas.)

The Benefits of Knowing History

So far we have seen that God is the author of history, that God is always working to advance His kingdom, and that God uses people, including children, in His plans.

Why do children need to know these truths? Here are four benefits of knowing history.

1. Knowing history gives children an identity. Do our kids just read about Bible characters, or do they know that they *are* Bible characters? They stand on a timeline together with …
* David who killed the giant who was blaspheming the God of Israel
* Daniel and the friends who refused to bow down to a human king
* Josiah who turned the hearts of His people back to the true God
* and Hope who interceded for the Mongolian people

Our children’s lives are not isolated. They are connected to a whole community of believers through the ages. God has used children in every century.

It is *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* [insert the current year] and it is their time.

1. Knowing history gives children a purpose bigger than themselves. Their lives are not random, but have meaning and direction. We are making history every day of our lives.

God had purposes for the Moravian children in the time and place that they lived.

Our kids are a part of history now, in the time and place that they live. God wants to use them to carry out His purposes for this generation.

It is their turn.

1. Knowing history gives children a valuable role. God has created each of us with the need to be needed, with the desire for a significant task.

History helps children to see that God has given important jobs to children in past generations.

God also has meaningful roles for the children and youth of this generation, in this place. No one else can fulfill those roles.

It is their job.

1. Knowing history gives children perspective. It helps kids think beyond themselves, to see how their part fits into the bigger scope of God’s plans. It is their piece of the puzzle.

It is their part.

It is their time. It is their turn. It is their job. It is their part.

How do you cast a vision for the part children can play in the Great Commission?

Bible Basis

Begin by using Bible verses to show children that God wants to use boys and girls and that He has jobs for them to do.

[Ephesians 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2:10&version=NIV) says,

*For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* (Ephesians 2:10)

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)

Think of the faces of the children in your life – in your home, in your church, in your group.

Imagine them saying, “I am a world changer and I have an appointed place in God’s kingdom.”

World Christian Habits

If our kids have the potential to be world changers, what are some ways that God may use them?

Let us talk about five different ways that children, or adults, can be involved in God’s kingdom. We call these practices World Christian Habits.

* *World* because these practices are grounded in a biblical view of God’s heart for the world and His global purposes and flow from a desire to see God glorified among the nations.
* *Christian* because these practices are for all believers, not just a select group—not just for pastors, or seminary students, or missionaries, or grown-ups.
* *Habits* because these are not a one-time action, but are ongoing practices that become
part of everyday life.

Here are the five habits and examples of children who are serving in these ways in their churches or homes:

1. *Pray-ers:* People who consistently intercede for specific global workers, for unreached people groups, and for more laborers to go and spread the gospel where it has never been heard.

\_\_\_ [Insert a boy’s cultural name.] is a pray-er. At church, he heard about a tribal group in India who worshipped spirits. Every night before bed, \_\_\_ [insert same cultural name] prayed for them to come to know Jesus.

1. *Senders:* People who volunteer their resources to support the work of global workers and the overall task of completing the Great Commission. Senders serve global workers by praying for them and their work, giving money, and caring for their needs.

\_\_\_ [Insert a girl’s cultural name] and her Sunday school class are senders. At church, they learned that national workers in Tajikistan needed a sturdy vehicle to bring the good news of Jesus to people in remote mountain villages.

The adults at \_\_\_’s [insert same cultural name] church began collecting money for a van. The children decided to buy the van’s tires. Some kids gave money they had already saved. Some kids did chores to earn more money.

\_\_\_ [Insert same cultural name.] and her class collected enough money for six tires—four tires for the van and two spares.

1. *Welcomers*: People who take the time to get to know people from other cultures – students, professionals, refugees, and families – who are in their country. Welcomers practice hospitality, meet needs, and look for opportunities to introduce their international friends to Jesus.

\_\_\_ [Insert a boy’s cultural name.] is a welcomer. His family invited a young man from a Muslim country to their home while he was studying at a nearby university.

\_\_\_ [Insert same cultural name.] taught him some of his favorite games and showed him his room. \_\_\_ [Insert a cultural name.] asked questions about his country and learned how to say a few words in his Arabic language.

1. *Goers:* People who labor to reach those of a culture significantly different from their own with the truth of Jesus. Most often, this involves traveling or moving to a distant area.

\_\_\_ [Insert a girl’s cultural name.] is a goer. Her family went to the Philippines as a part of a ministry team.

\_\_\_ [Insert same cultural name.] prayed for sick people in hospitals, shared the gospel with school children, and gave her testimony at a large meeting.

Most children who are goers begin by sharing the gospel in their own communities with their unbelieving friends and neighbors.

1. *Mobilizers:* People who are passionate about God’s global heart and purposes. They live in such a way to advance God’s kingdom and help other believers to get personally connected to a role in completing the Great Commission.

\_\_\_ [Insert a boy’s cultural name.] is a mobilizer. When \_\_\_ [insert same cultural name] turned 11, he planned his birthday party to be a day of prayer for China.

His family invited some missionary friends from China who made dumplings and rice for the party guests.

After dinner, \_\_\_’s [insert same cultural name] family showed a video about different cultural groups in China and their need to know Jesus. Afterwards, \_\_\_ [insert same cultural name.] led a time of prayer for China.

God wants to use our children as world changers and He gives them different roles.

(Hang people outline #4, Today’s Child, on the timeline after Hope Smith.)

Partner Discussion

Get with a partner and discuss Question 3 on your handout:

*Think about a child you know who is serving Jesus and has a heart for God’s world. What world Christian habit or habits does this child demonstrate? How? (pray-er, sender, welcomer, goer, mobilizer)*

(After about five minutes, invite a few pairs to share their ideas.)

Opportunities to Partner with God

If we want to build these habits into our children while they are young, we need to go beyond teaching them *how* to do things. We need to also give them the opportunity to actually *do* those things.

We want to empower our children. The most empowering thing you can do for children is to let them see God at work for themselves.

Do not just tell them how great God is. Let them see it and know it on their own.

I would like to tell you a story about an eight-year-old girl named Alexandra.

Every week, she was saving coins in her piggy bank. She wanted to use the money she found and earned for God, so she told her parents.

They could have just taken the money and given it for her. Or they could have told her to put it in the offering at church.

They even could have taught her about giving but then told her she could keep it since she was young and it was not very much money.

But they did not do any of those things. They told her to pray and ask God what she should do with it.

They had taught her about prayer and listening to God. They had taught her about being a good steward and giving back to God. Now was Alexandra’s chance to put into practice what she learned.

Alexandra prayed every day.

At the end of the week, she told her parents what God was telling her to do.

That Sunday, she walked into a classroom at church and stood there, holding a tattered white bag in her hands.

When her former teacher walked in, she held the bag up to her and said, “God told me to give this to you for your ministry.”

Inside the white bag was a smaller, clear bag filled with coins and dollar bills.

Tears filled the teacher’s eyes.

What Alexandra did not know was that her teacher was wrestling about where God was leading her.

She felt like God was calling her to go into missions, but was scared to raise support and depend on others. She was afraid God would not provide for her needs.

Alexandra had given her teacher $72.47, about \_\_\_ [Insert amount converted into host country’s currency. For example, 1,397 Ethiopian Birr.]

It was not very much money in the grand scheme of things.

But more than money, God used Alexandra and her obedience to give her teacher the courage to step into His mission.

The next day, her teacher signed a contract with a mission organization and began full-time ministry as a missions mobilizer focused on children and family.

Five years later, that teacher and her team launched this very training we are doing today.

We are here today because two parents gave an eight-year-old girl the opportunity to live out her faith.

I believe she is a partner with us in all God has done through this training.

God has built the desire for meaning into our lives.

We each crave a significant task, a special assignment that demonstrates an individual’s worth to the people he considers important.

It is a desire God places in us.

“When we help our children take on significant tasks, they have the freedom to find true contentment in who and what they are, in why they were created, and in what they were created to do.”[[4]](#endnote-4)

Where can you find ideas and opportunities for your children to partner with God? How do you begin?

Start with your church. Find out what they are already doing to bless global workers and reach the unreached. Look for opportunities for your children to join in and own a part of the ministry.

[Insert your own story of children who joined a global project sponsored by their church. Here is an example.]

My church sent a family to serve as global workers to an unreached people group in Kenya. The water near their home needed to be filtered.

The older children at church decided to work together to collect money for the filter.

These children usually had snacks and drinks at the beginning of their class. We replaced their juice with six pitchers of dirty water taken from a nearby pond – one pitcher for every person in the global worker’s family.

Every time the kids collected $25, we replaced a pitcher of dirty water with a clean one.

We let the children write the name of one of the family members in Kenya on that pitcher.

The class collected more than $150. By the end of the project, they saw six pitchers of clean water, each one bearing the name of one of the family members in Kenya.

There was much cheering and rejoicing on that day!

It is also possible for your class or family to participate in global projects outside of what your church is doing.

[Insert your own story of children who participated in a global project. Here is an example.]

Jana, a 10-year-old girl living in the state of Montana, read about collecting pre-owned English Bibles to send to an organization called Bible League International.

This organization would take those Bibles to English-speaking countries that did not have a lot of copies of God’s Word.

Jana wanted to include her family and church in the project. She called her pastor and told him about what she and her two younger siblings were doing.

She asked if she could share about her project with the adults in her church and get everyone involved.

One Sunday, she stood up on the stage in front of her small church and told them about the project. It was the first time she ever used a microphone.

Together with her church, Jana collected 90 Bibles to send overseas.

The project was child-led. Jana learned the skills of communication, teamwork, and mobilizing others as she rallied her church.

Even more, the adults in that church saw the potential and power in a child that God could use.

Be sensitive to specific callings that God may be placing on children’s lives.

[Insert your own story of a child that God has called into ministry. Here is an example.]

I know a boy who was called to be a global worker in China when he was seven years old.

He knew he would need to speak Chinese. He and his mom enrolled in a local Mandarin language class.

Then he talked about Jesus so much that he led his younger sister to trust in Jesus.

He and his family began to pray for an unreached people group in China.

Then God began to move in his parents’ hearts. The whole family took a short trip to China to look at different opportunities for global workers.

They found out that there was a small team of global workers focused on the unreached people group they had been praying for.

Through this seven-year-old boy, his entire family was called to China, where they have been serving for four years.

If God places a specific call on one of your children’s hearts, listen, encourage, and pray with him.

The Heart

As you begin to involve your children in ministry, keep in mind that we are trying to develop a lifelong habit of serving that flows from the heart.

* A humble heart that always places others above myself.
* A heart of sacrifice that goes above what is expected.
* A heart that is not self-seeking, but serves when it does not benefit my own desires.

Serving is about finding true joy in helping someone else … because that is what Jesus would do.

Conclusion

In this session, we have learned about God’s work. God was at work in Old Testament and New Testament times. God has been working in the period since the book of Jude concluded, and God is still working in our day.

Our kids need a view of history that puts God and His work in a central place and invites them to be a part of what God is doing in their generation.

When you empower them to serve, you are shaping their view of themselves as agents of ministry, children who God desires to use in His big story.

Puzzle Activity

We are going to work on our puzzle handout again. Look at piece four. (Point to the fourth puzzle piece on the handout.)

I am going to ask you a question. Discuss your thoughts with one or two people around you.

Then, write or draw your responses on the fourth puzzle piece. Remember, your answer can be one word, a picture, whatever you want to express.

Here is your question: Think about the past two sessions on God’s world and work. How does knowing that God desires to use their generation to accomplish His purposes for today’s world empower our children?

(After completing the puzzle, instruct participants to look at the completed handout.)

Together, you have created a picture of what World Christian children look like when all of these components are a part of their lives and development.

As we lead with this vision, as we intentionally teach and instruct them in God’s mission, as we empower them to be agents of ministry, not objects … this is who the children in our homes and churches will become.

1. *The History of Revivals of Religion* by William E Allen. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *Like a Mighty Wind* by Mel Tari. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Kids Making A Difference* by Pete Hohmann. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Rite of Passage Parenting* by Walker Moore. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)