

## Session 8: The Motivation in Mission

### **Objective:**

- Examine the motivation of mobilization that leads to lifelong transformation
- Compare and contrast different models of mobilizing children

**Teaching Time:** 30 minutes, 45-50 minutes with translation

### **Materials:**

- Session 8 handout for every participant

### **Getting Ready:**

1. Pass out the Session 8 handout to participants before the session begins.

## Introduction

In the past few sessions, we have looked at many practical ways to mobilize our children to join with God in His purposes. Discipleship takes place both in actions, what we do, and words, what we say.

Our mobilization activity, whether with our children or with other parents in our church communities, must include both.

We need to mobilize through practical actions and application - like learning about an unreached people group and praying for the nations.

We will also need to mobilize with the way we use our words to cast vision for God's big story and invite others to join Him in that story.

The words you use can be a powerful tool in helping your children and other families in your community step into a life-long pursuit of Jesus and His global purposes.

## How We Communicate

Let us review the illustration we used in Session 4. (Reposition the circle diagrams at the front of the room. If you need to redraw them, do so now.)

If you recall, we discussed how often, in church culture, we view missions as an activity that is a segment of the Christian life. Maybe it is a short-term trip or one-time giving opportunity.

However, as we saw in God's Word, mission is not an activity, but God's global purpose. This purpose should be at the core of how we understand and experience God.

The things we do – worship, Bible study, tithing, serving – overflow from our love for a God who desires to be known and worshiped among the peoples of the earth.

Prior to this training, the majority of us have probably viewed missions as caring for the poor, as evangelism outreaches, or as other experiences that allow us to go beyond ourselves to serve others.

Mission work does include all these things. But when it comes to our children, or the families in our churches, what are we using to motivate them to step into their part of God's big story?

Our motivations cannot be based in emotional responses or getting people involved in one-time experiences that will make them feel good. Often, when we do this, we are not even aware we are.

Neither should our motivations be based in legalism. We want people to be a part of God's mission out of an overflow of their love for God, not because they feel guilty or ashamed that they have not obeyed a divine command.

When we utilize these emotional motivators, whether positive or negative, we end up using words that continue to create a micro-narrative, perpetuating a small view where mission is defined as activity, and seen as a small segment of the Christian lifestyle.

Instead, we need to choose words that are rooted in the idea of mission being a relational collaboration with the King of kings.

We join with God in the work He is *already* doing, out of an overflow of our love for Him.

We keep our mobilization efforts aligned with the greater story, or the macro-narrative, in which God Himself pursues His purpose among all nations throughout all generations.

### Two Common Ways We Communicate Missions

Here are two examples of common ways we expose children and families to missions. Think about the narrative our words are creating.

Example 1: Exposing children to needs by showing pictures of people in extreme need or unreached peoples without access to the gospel:

Here are things we say that create a micro narrative:

- Talking about how hopeless these people are and how much they need our help. These words evoke emotions of compassion, pity, sadness or despair and put the responsibility on us to remedy these situations through our own actions.
- Talking about the future outcome for unreached peoples if we do not act in obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus. These words invoke feelings of guilt or fear, scaring listeners with the eternal consequences for unreached peoples if we do not obey God's command to go. Again this puts the focus on our efforts.

In response, our hearers may participate in a one-time service project to feed the poor or go on a short-term trip to help a family of global workers serving among the unreached. Having met needs and fulfilled their part, they check missions off their list of Christian activities.

Here are things we could say to keep our words rooted in God's mission:

- Talk about how the people in the pictures are created in God's image and how much He loves each one of them.

- Emphasize that true hope comes from Jesus who is at work redeeming these people to Himself.
- Talk about the Great Commission commands in the context of our relationship with Jesus and the joy of obedience.
- Share that God is bringing forth His Kingdom on earth and invites us to join with Him in extending His hope.

Example 2: Exposing children to stories of those doing mission work by giving children models of Bible characters or famous global workers:

Here are things that create a micro narrative:

- Recounting stories or examples of believers who have done great and daring things in a way that portrays them as heroes and idolizes their own character and efforts more than God's power working through them.
- Describing actions in missions as exemplary in a way that infers that global workers and those who do short-term mission work belong to a higher subset of believers.
- Challenging our children to become like these heroes by doing great and daring things for God as an end, in and of itself.

These words may inspire at first, but they also lead to a view of mission as one-time mountain-top experiences or daring adventure that requires Christians who are risk-takers with superior abilities. Again, this shrinks the narrative by limiting mission to certain activities and a certain small section of believers.

What we could do instead to keep our words rooted in God's mission is:

- Emphasize God's ability to accomplish His purposes without us, but His grace in inviting us to join Him in His work.
- Highlight how God used ordinary Bible characters, people in history, and current day believers, inviting them into His story and enabling them by His spirit.
- Acknowledge that we are each called to our own unique journey where we will be asked to do different things and be given different blessings. What is important is a life of consistent faithfulness.

Being a part of God's mission means joining God in accomplishing His global purpose.

We must be intentional to communicate that engaging in God's mission is a lifestyle. It is not isolated to an experience, or a life season, or limited to a certain group of people.

Our desire is that God's mission would become part of who people are. It would be ingrained within them in such a way that they could not detach or separate it.

We want them to think like this: I am a follower of Jesus. Therefore I am a part of His story, and join with Him in making His name great among every nation, tribe and language.

When we talk about God's mission this way with children or parents, we develop for them a vision for the great story *by* and *for* God in order to describe the mission given to us.

We cultivate a passion and love for God.

The focus is on God receiving more love and worship as we serve Him out of our own love and worship of Him.

## Conclusion

Parents and leaders, your words and actions have a profound impact on the children in your life.

When we rely solely on emotional responses or mountain-top experiences to motivate our children's actions and understanding of mission, spiritual transformation will fall short.

Emotions are temporary. One day, the guilt or fear or even excitement wears off. The distractions and desires of this world detour us.

When the emotions are gone, what will keep us committed to God's mission?

In order for long-term transformation to occur, mobilization must be rooted in Biblical hope and our relationship with Jesus.

We need to encourage our families to do it with Jesus, not for Jesus. (2 Corinthians 6:1)

We want to live each day as disciples of the Savior of the world so that every Christian family would confidently be able to say their life reflects God's heart for all peoples.

## Processing Activity

(Have participants form groups of 12-20 and have these groups spread out around the teaching space. Then have each group form two lines with equal numbers of people, facing each other. If you have an odd number of participants, one group can have 3 people.)

The person facing you will be your first discussion partner. After each discussion topic is finished, one line of people will move to the right so that you are facing a new discussion partner.

The person at the end of the moving line will walk to the front of the line and face his new partner. (Demonstrate movement with one of the groups, if needed. Participants will probably recall this activity from Session 3.)

I will pose a topic for discussion. You and your partner will have 4 minutes to share your ideas.

When it is time to switch partners, I will say "move". Then I will give you a new idea to talk about.

(Ask at least 3 of the following questions.) Think about the past four sessions: God's World, God's world, God's work, and the kind of mobilization that lead to long-term transformation. Respond to each of the following:

- The most important thing I learned is \_\_\_\_\_.
- One thing I learned that I would like to share with others is \_\_\_\_\_.
- The thing that is the most difficult to understand is \_\_\_\_\_.
- One thing that I would like to apply in my own life is \_\_\_\_\_.