

Another Bright Idea from



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The Great KID Mission

Children's Ministry is Cross-Cultural Ministry!

Iki na-gagalok a-kong, mak ilala ka-yo!

This may sound like nonsense to you, unless you speak Tagalog. Then you know it means "Nice to meet you!" When a missionary travels to a foreign land to minister and share the Gospel he or she must learn, not only how to share the Good News in a new language, but they must adapt to the culture so that they might learn to relate personally to those they hope to reach. If the nationals do not accept the missionary, or worse yet, are offended by the things the missionary says and does, then the efforts to minister will be fall short.

The same is true in Children's Ministry! Many people attempt to reach children for Christ with little or no intentional effort to learn their culture. We need to learn their language. We must be able to speak of Pi-Diddles and Pokemons and Tamagachis. We must learn what things they are into. If it is the recent Yo-Yo Reformation, we need to understand how a built in centrifugal clutch works and the differences between a Yomega Brain or Fireball, a Bumble-bee or a Butter-bee, able to tell a Duncan Butterfly from a Saber Wing. If it is TY Beanies (or Teenie Weenies) we should know the names of the popular ones, and the rare ones. (Just tell an informed Beanie-crazy kid you have a Royal Blue Elephant and watch them nearly go into cardiac arrest. It was last reported to be worth over two thousand dollars!) The world of kids is constantly changing and so it takes constant effort to keep current.

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE WORLD OF KIDS?

People become friends with, and learn best, from people with whom they have common interests. Think about it. Who are your closest friends? Aren't they people you have common interests with, either hobbies, sports, work, or life situations? YES! Also, who do you learn the best from? Those with whom you can relate. An aloof pastor or teacher is difficult to learn from, but one you can relate to you find yourself drawn to. Why would it not be the same with children? If they see nothing of their world in us, we may be authorities they can't avoid, but we remain relationally distant. But when they see that we are interested in what interests them, they, in turn, become interested in what we are interested in. And therein comes our opening into their heart, through which we can freely pour God's Word and our love for God.

HOW DOES ONE KEEP CURRENT WITH THE WORLD OF KIDS?

#1 Be relational, not just informational. Before you get into the content of your lesson, be sure to take some time to find out what is going on in the lives of your kids. Ask what they did the past week, ask for prayer requests (and pray for them!), and listen while they talk to each other - they only discuss what is important to them! You can learn a lot just by listening, and this teaches them that you are interested.

#2 Set out to be informed about what they are in to. Visit some toy stores. Ask what their favorite television shows are and watch a few episodes. Whether you 'approve' of them or not, watching them will not only give you some insight into their world and what is shaping them, but it will also give you some things to chat about during small talk, "Did you see the one where.." (They probably did!)

#3 Talk about things you know interest them. Let them see that you not only know what they like, but that you are 'into it' too. I own my own N-64 so that I can play their games and talk about what passwords I have learned and secret tips I have picked up. Kids who have gotten a new password for Rogue Squadron before church are very attentive to me latter when I teach. I'm not just their teacher, I am their friend.

#4 Keep your eyes open to things aimed at kids. Commercials, printed advertisements, displays in shopping centers. Notice what kids are carrying around and playing with. If you don't understand something, just ask a kid. They love to talk about what interests them, and they love that you are interested.

Join the Great Kid Mission! Become a Kid Missionary! After all, the Apostle Paul did say, "I have become all things to all kids 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." (I Corinthians 9:22-23 slightly paraphrased)