



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON THIRTEEN: MISSIONS

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LESSON THIRTEEN: MISSIONS

OBJECTIVE: To help families understand how to follow Jesus by becoming involved with his mission in the world.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations and to pursue steadfast love, justice and righteousness on the earth. Missions is about righting what is unjust, especially those who do not know that salvation can be found in Jesus Christ.

([Mark 16:15](#) “He said to them, “Go into all the world. Preach the good news to everyone.”)

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

The gospel changes our lives and fixes what is wrong in us – this is good news for everyone everywhere! Missions is about bringing this message to everyone, and righting what is wrong in the world.

([Acts 13:47](#) “For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” ESV)

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

When I was a little girl, I heard about missionaries. They flew away to hot steamy jungles and never returned to their families. They were eaten by cannibals or starved or martyred. They couldn't speak the language, they ate grubs, and they didn't *even* have a television. Consequently, there was a period of time in my childhood where I vividly remember closing my bedtime prayers this way, "God, please bless mommy and daddy and *please* don't make me a missionary!"

Of course, I had it all wrong. The stories I was told were meant to inspire awe and gratitude, I'm sure. But they frightened me and failed to give me the full picture of the sheer honour of putting my hand to the work of God and doing whatever God designed and desired of me. I'm not sure my life would have been any different had I received a better understanding of what it means to be a missionary as a child – but I do know that in the world today, there is still work to be done and not enough hands to do it. Missions requires sacrifice from every one of us – those who go, those who fund and those who send.

Think about that for a moment. As a parent with young children, I'm sure you have a dream for who they will one day be. Maybe your only hope is for them to be happy and follow Jesus. But maybe you've thought of a vocation they would excel in, or that they could develop their God-given talents in athletics, art or music. Have you dreamed for any of your children a life in missions or ministry? This idea can be very difficult for many. The greatest thing that may be asked of you as a parent in your lifetime is to release your child to serve as a missionary – to release your dreams for them here, to not see your grandchildren grow up, to not be able to keep your baby out of harm's way.

But I must often remind myself that 'releasing' is exactly what our children were given to us for. Psalm 127:4-5 says, "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them." Whether your quiver has a single arrow or more than it feels like you can count, some days we must remember what those arrows are for. Jim Elliot, a missionary famous for his death on the field, once tried to convince his parents why he would leave his career and family behind to be a missionary in South America. He said, "What is a quiver full of but arrows? And what are arrows for but to shoot? So with the strong arms of prayer, draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly – all of them, straight at the Enemy's hosts."ⁱ Our children are spiritual weaponry, who are given to us to refine and train but then eventually to release to fulfill that purpose. Even if it means missionary work. Our theology of vocation must result in allowing God to direct our children to fix the wrong in the world and bring about on earth the Kingdom of God through their response to what God has laid upon their hearts.

At the same time, missions is changing. No longer is it a life-sentence of non-contact. Some missions agencies consider 3-5 year term a long-term missionary! Short term stints of a summer or year are increasingly common, as are 'finishers' who join the field after retirement to use their skills and energy in the Kingdom of God rather than spending their winters beachcombing. Missions organizations in our own city employ many people in our own church in skills as wide-ranging as customer service, finance, graphic design, translation, management, communications and sound technology. The need in the world is as great as it has ever been, but there are new ways to reach the lost and more opportunities for every Christian to be involved.



Oswald J. Smith was one of the great missionary pastors and evangelists of the 20th century, and he was raised just outside of London, Ontario. Have you ever heard his name? I recommend you take a few minutes to read up on him sometime – I think you'll find him inspiring. He attended London Bible College and set out to try for a place overseas as a missionary. Because of his weak health, he was routinely turned down. So he began to pastor local churches in the London and Toronto area. Finally, at the age of 38, he founded *The People's Church* in Toronto – a church dedicated to missions and evangelism. He wrote over 35 books, composed over one thousand hymns, and set up new models for how Church would operate, including a commitment to giving over half of the church income to overseas missions. The People's Church exists with the same mission today, and if you visit it you will see walls of quotes and paintings of Oswald J. Smith's life. He was not able to work full-time in missions himself due to his health, but instead travelled the world, preaching and recruiting missionaries. Before he died in 1986, he inspired and enabled more ministry to be done on earth because of his passion for the work, than if he had been a full-time missionary himself. His life philosophy was a commitment that if he couldn't go himself, he would send someone else.

As parents, it would be a great honour if God chose our children for special lifelong service, even though it would mean great sacrifice on our part. Because the work isn't done. Oswald J. Smith was known to ask in his sermons why should anyone hear the gospel twice, before everyone has heard it once. Therefore, we should desire to raise missions-minded children, ready to respond to whatever call God places on their life. Successfully raising children in the Lord is not raising children who settle into a normal, balanced, quiet life; rather, raising those whose hearts are broken for the things that are not right in the world, and who have the curiosity, courage and compassion to do something about it. It is raising children who seek glory in God's Kingdom rather than the kingdom of this world.

Have you considered how God would use your life to make the gospel known? Who can you support, pray for or send? Are you willing to go yourself if an opportunity presents itself? Children learn from their parents what is important in this world, and what is worth spending time on. Reflect this month on your attitude towards missions. Are you willing to send your own children as arrows into the enemy camp?

Consider these Questions:



1. What did you think of missionaries as a child, if you grew up in the church? What impression do you want your children to have?
2. What would be your biggest fears in sending out your own children?
3. What area of the world (or your city), or what people group (or station in life!) has God laid on your heart to pray for, give to and maybe even go to serve?
4. Is there a unique opportunity your family has been given to go somewhere, serve in some way or support mission work around the world?

ⁱ Jim Elliot, in Elisabeth Elliot, [*Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot*](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1958/2008), 182-183.



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- **Text inside this box is a short activity or task**

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- A 'lost sock' or collection of them

WHAT IS WRONG IN THE WORLD?

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!



Look online for a "What's Wrong with this Picture" image. Highlights magazine used to produce these for kids each month, and many can be found on the internet. They are silly, but help kids to remember they are great at picking out what's wrong, and remembering God's purposes of making things right!



When someone leaves a toy where it doesn't belong in our house, what happens?

Some of us are great at noticing when things are out of place, or when something isn't where we left it. Some of us notice when objects are out of place, and some of us notice when people are feeling sad when they are usually happy. There are lots of things we can notice!

Start off with a short activity.

Look at a "What's Wrong with this Picture" image together as a family. Sometimes we know something is wrong and we don't know what it is – or why. Other times it is really easy! Can your family find 5 things in this picture that aren't the way they are supposed to be? Who can find the most?



This is a pretty silly picture. But in the real world sometimes we see things that are not right that are *not* silly. They are serious! **Not everything in our world today is the way that God wants it to be, or designed it to be.**

Last week we learned that we need God's grace because we sin and mess up. We still don't obey even when we know God's rules. That's why we needed God's good news – the gospel!

The gospel is the word we use to mean 'Good News' – that good news has a lot of parts to it. That God made us for a purpose, that God loves us, that he wants us to be part of his forever family, and he has a solution to our sin and bad things that keep us from him. One by one, God is making this world the way it should be as people choose to follow Jesus and help Jesus in the big work He is doing to fix everything that is wrong and broken.



What has been broken in our house that needed fixing?

What was broken? Who fixed it? Did you have to call in someone to help or take something in to be repaired? Does it work now?



What are some of the things that are 'broken' in our world?

(Think about people who don't have enough food, people are sad, people are sick, etc.)

Well, today we're going to talk about people who God uses to help fix things that are broken in our world. ALL of us can be helpers to God. We can fix things right where we are, like some of moms and dads can fix things around the house. But God has given some people special jobs of fixing something that's not right!

Hold up a single sock. Talk about how socks come in pairs. What is a sock's job? Is a sock where it belongs, doing what it was supposed to do if it is lost?

A sock might not think it is lost! It knows right where it is! (Well, if socks could think!) But the sock wasn't where it was supposed to be. It wasn't where it belonged or doing what it was made to do – be on our feet! Sometimes we lose socks in our houses! They can only do what they are supposed to do if they are in the right place.



Take answers from your kids and remind them about things they might have forgotten. Ask – did mom or dad fix it themselves? Did we need to ask someone to help us fix it, or take it somewhere to be fixed? You can share about car repairs, malfunctioning dishwashers, etc.



Do you have a 'lost sock' pile? Socks that made it through the laundry without their match somehow? Bring these to your Discipleship Lesson time. You may wish to plant a match in the pile. Or choose a pair of socks, and hide one somewhere in your house – the laundry room or in a drawer or under a bed. Send the children to go find the missing sock!



One of the things that is not right in our world is that some people are lost. I don't mean that they don't have a phone that can direct them to the closest McDonalds, or that they can't find directions.

When we say that some people are lost, we mean that some people – many people – in this world don't know that God loves them, and they don't know who Jesus is or that they have a problem called sin in their life, and they haven't heard or don't believe the good news. The good news is that Jesus wants them in his forever family, and that he paid the cost to get rid of their sin problem forever and offers them forgiveness and new life!

There are a group of people in this world that can't sit around while there are things wrong with the world – they want to go do something about it. They are sad inside that people around the world might never ever know about Jesus or have a chance to follow him.



Why don't these people know the gospel and Jesus?

Some people are missionaries. A missionary is anyone who is sent by the church to go to do something about a problem in the world. They are chosen by God for a special mission. All of us can be helpers and fixers, and many people in this world have helper jobs. But missionaries help in a special way on behalf of God's people.



We must be careful not to dismiss what missionaries do by teaching that 'we are all missionaries', and also not to diminish every Christian's responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples. The defining feature is that a missionary is sent by a church (or missions sending agency, funded by the Church) who has recognized their gifts and calling.



What are some helper jobs people can have? (doctor, firefighter, etc.)

Lots of us can have helper jobs right where we live. Some missionaries do their job in the city they have always lived in, but some of them travel across the world to a new country. They may have to learn a new language and eat different foods than they are used to. God shows them who to help in this new place. Whether people stay where they are or travel far away to be missionary helpers, they need money to pay for what they do, and God's people in churches give it to them. It can cost a lot of money to travel far away, and cost a lot of money to help people.



So, because of this, missions is an important part of what the WHOLE church does, not just missionaries! It is important to the church because it was important to Jesus.



What did Jesus say he came to the earth to do?



Luke 19:10

Jesus had a special job to do – but he didn't want to keep the job for himself! He told his disciples and everyone else who wanted to follow Jesus that they had a special job to do too:



Mark 16:16



Psalms 96:3

God wants to use people just like us to bring the most important message to every person in the world! God does this because God cares about every person in every nation around the world! He loves them all, and they matter.

And as long as there are people in this world who don't know about Jesus, we haven't fully obeyed God's commands!



Those people who are far away and even right here in our own city who need to know about Jesus, how will they learn about what Jesus has done?



The Bible asks this question too! In **Romans 10:13-15** we see these verses, "Scripture says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."" How can they call on him unless they believe in him? How can they hear about him unless someone preaches to them? And



Jesus tells us in this verse that his mission was to look for the lost and save them.

The lost people don't know they are lost, because they don't know they are loved by God and can belong to God. The "something wrong" is that people aren't in a right relationship to God.



how can anyone preach without being sent? It is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”



There are lots of jobs listed in that verse! Can you list some?

People need to believe to obey Jesus. But in order to believe, someone needs to teach them. In order to teach them someone has to be sent! This is one of the important jobs of the Church – to tell others the gospel. We need to tell people inside of our church buildings, but also in our neighbourhoods and in neighbourhoods all around the world.

Some missionaries go far away to help people where something isn't right, and they do it because Jesus loves those people. It might be something like children who are hungry and need someone to take care of them and feed them, or a place where there is a lot of war or sadness and missionaries can help in practical ways.

Some go far away where something isn't right, and the thing is that people there don't know about Jesus and need someone to tell them! There might be no churches, or very few churches. There might be very few Christians, or no Christians and they need someone to teach them. These missionaries help in spiritual ways.

Most missionaries do some of both of those things!

Discuss a few of the following questions together:



What do you think would be most exciting about being able to help God and be a missionary?



What missionaries does your family know about? Where are they and what do they do?



What are some problems in the world that you want to be part of helping to fix someday? What can our family do to help right now?

Close by praying together that God would help fix the wrong things in the world through those who follow Jesus – and especially that people all over the world would know that Jesus is God's Son, the Saviour.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God's Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. Use the Bible version your children are used to. NIV is a good one for very young children. With young children, choose just a few questions to ask.

1	<p><u>Mark 16:15</u></p>	<p>Who needs to hear the gospel? (Everyone) Why don't some people know about what Jesus has done yet? If we had a very delicious snack in our house – maybe fancy cupcakes – and one of the people in our family was up in their room and didn't know we had a delicious treat, what would you do? Would you yell really loudly? Would you enjoy the treat and hope they heard about it someday? Or would you go bring the treat to them? Missionaries are people the Church sends to do a job. That job includes bringing the good news of Jesus to people who don't have it yet. They might start a church. What would you miss about being somewhere without going to church? How do church groups make life better for their community? How do they make life better for those who belong to them? How do churches help people to know Jesus?</p>
2	<p><u>Romans 10:13-15</u></p>	<p>How do you find out about new things? (Internet, technology, friends, family...) If you were going to learn something, how would you want to learn it? Many people don't know about Jesus, or the gospel. Or they have wrong ideas about who God is and the Bible. Some missionaries and missions groups use different ways to get the message out to people. Long ago, before radio, tv and the internet, people had to go to far away places to give the message. Now we have other ways to get to people too. Some missionaries use technology, like radio, tv, YouTube, media players, phone apps – all kinds of things! Look for some examples together. What skills might someone need to be a part of this kind of missions work? What are the benefits of using technology to spread the Gospel?</p>
3	<p><u>Matthew 9:35-38</u></p>	<p>What kind of place would you love to visit? What do you think it would be like to live there instead of here? What would be most exciting to you about being able to help God and be a missionary? What would you ask a missionary if you met one? Why do you think more people don't go as missionaries? What keeps them home? Some people go as missionaries, and some people send missionaries. What do the people who send a missionary do? What is their role? How can we as a family be a part of 'sending' missionaries? Are there opportunities for us to 'go' someday?</p>



4	<u>Isaiah 6:8</u>	What problems in the world do you know about? What wrong thing do you want to be a part of fixing? God fixes many things in the world through people who are willing to be helpers, givers and prayers. What can our family do to help with one of these problems? Think of some ideas and make a plan together this week to begin to do something new.
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5	<u>Luke 24:47</u>	Look at a map of your city. Talk together – what are some of the problems your own city faces? Are there people here who don't know the gospel? Pray for some of the needs and people in your own city. What are some problems in our city? How is our church helping with these problems? What are some of the groups or organizations fixing problems in this city? How do they serve God when they do this? Talk about a way your family can help missionaries right where you are.
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DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** When you pray this week, pray for missionaries by name and the people that they have been sent to.
- **Memorize:** Psalm 96:3 together as a family. Talk about this verse in daily life.
- **Daily Life:**
 - Invite friends from another culture over for a meal and learn about their meals and traditions.
 - Eat food that is new to your family (from a restaurant or new recipe) from another part of the world. Learn something about the people who regularly eat this food, and pray for them before your meal.
 - Pray for missionary families by name – put their photos up on your fridge and remember their kids too! Maybe your children would like to send a letter to the family letting them know they are being prayed for!
 - Learn more about missionary life by watching videos together made by missionaries. Two YouTube channels that will give your child a glimpse into missionary life as a family, and also help them learn a little about God’s creation, are “Wild Brothers” and “Diaries of a Missionary Kid.”
 - Operation World is a fantastic resource for families, and the book or app will help you pray for a different people group each day. It is a fantastic way for children to learn about the needs in the world and be a part of the work of making disciples in all nations through prayer! Window to the World is their children’s resource, with age-appropriate prayer helps and a hope-filled look at how God is changing families everywhere as they follow Jesus.
 - Choose a project to support together that will involve your finances, time and prayer as a family. It may be to give towards a specific need a missionary has, to purchase items for a family in need, to sponsor a child through a missions agency, support a media broadcast of children or family programs, purchase a media player through TWR to give to a family so they can have Bible teaching in their own language, raise money to purchase a well for an area that has no water, or think of a need in the world that burdens your family and look for a way to be a part of God’s work in solving it together!