



## The Big I.D.E.A.: Training Children to Serve

by Melissa Woltmann

*“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed they strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.” ~ Psalm 71:17, 18*

David had lofty goals. He learned about God and from God as a child; his desire in old age was to teach the next generation about the Lord. Are we doing that today? Are we training our children, ours and those God has placed in our ministry, to serve God even unto old age?

Not many years ago, churches were training their own people, both young and old, to serve. Pastors and missionaries were called out and sent out from churches not mission boards, Bible colleges and seminaries. At some point, though I can't begin to establish when or where, the educating became more important than the actual sending and serving. How many churches do you know that have home-grown missionaries and pastors sent out from their pews? Advanced learning is necessary now more than ever. But are we truly sending out from our pews or are we hoarding workers? I'm afraid we have too many "over educated" church members and not nearly enough servants. There are groups of believers right now in urban cities in the North and West, in rural areas of the Midwest, Rockies and Dakotas, and in tribes and villages around the world who are without a pastor or missionary. Why?

One of those reasons can be directly related to how we are, or I should say are not, training our children. But I have a big I.D.E.A. that may help us teach our children about serving Christ. It won't solve the immediate servant shortage but it will help the outlook for tomorrow. We must **Instruct**, **Demonstrate**, **Enthuse**, and **Activate** our children in service.

### I – Instruct.

*“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* (Proverbs 22:6) Deuteronomy 4:10 shows us how God brought together the Israelites and taught them how to fear Him. They were then expected to teach that knowledge to their children. But it wasn't a casual teaching; they were to do so constantly, "diligently". (Deuteronomy 6:7) Matthew 28:19 tells us we are to "teach all nations". For our purposes, we can infer we must not only teach our own children but those bus kids and children whose parents are unsaved and un-churched. We are to cease not to teach and preach Jesus. (Acts 5:42) We are to be consistent; we are to teach the same every where to every one. (I Corinthians 4:17)



We are to make sure the children, and adults, know the basics about the Bible: salvation, doctrines, people, places, things. These aren't simply stories. They are life lessons. Our children need to know more than "obey", "be ye kind", and the Golden Rule. We are the generation to pass on this knowledge. We cannot fail. We must explain, over and over again, the importance of the lessons. We can no longer assume children know the basics. From what I have seen they don't, and many teachers do not know either.

### **D – Demonstrate.**

Teaching the lessons, however, is not enough. We must demonstrate; we need to be examples. The Bible has a great deal to say about being an example. Jesus Himself gave His disciples an example of service when He washed their feet. (John 13:15) In Paul's writing to the Corinthians he reminded them of what happened to the Israelites in the wilderness. He told the Corinthians that the Israelites were examples of how not to behave. (I Corinthians 10:1-6) Paul (Philippians 3:17) and Peter (I Peter 5:3) both speak of how pastors are to be examples to the flock; the same could be said of parents and teachers regarding children. In II Thessalonians 3:6-9, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he was an example to them to follow. Paul also instructs Timothy to be an example in his faith and life style among other areas. (I Timothy 4:12) We can be no less responsible in our teaching of children. Children are great imitators. We need to provide worthwhile examples to imitate.

Are you teaching the children around you how to serve? Do you provide jobs for them to do for the glory of the Lord? Do you show them how even picking up trash, though seemingly a lowly job, can be done in service to Christ?

### **E – Enthuse.**

Enthusiasm is a great tool of service. No one is more enthusiastic than a child. In the Bible, enthusiasm is known as zeal, it is intense enthusiasm for something. The Bible tells us there are certain things we should be zealous: for the Lord (Numbers 25:11-13), for others' salvation (Romans 10:1), for missionary work (Romans 15:18-25), for the changing of one's character (II Corinthians 7:11), for spiritual gifts to be used for God's glory (I Corinthians 14:12), and for good works (Titus 2:14).

Do the children around you see you excited about serving the Lord? Do you direct the childish enthusiasm you face in your class toward learning about God and service to Him? Do you encourage your students when you see them serving the Lord in even the smallest of ways? We need to be excited about God, His Word, His service, and His people so that the children will learn to be enthusiastic about God.



# Church Helps

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## **A – Activate.**

If we have instructed, demonstrated, and excited our students about God and serving Him, then activating them, or sending them out, will naturally follow. Jesus gave us a clear example of this. He taught twelve disciples. He spent time with them. He helped them with their strengths and weaknesses. He then sent them out. (Mark 3:14) We need to do no less. The smallest child can begin to serve God by picking up trash (act), not running in church (holiness), and holding a door open for the elderly (respect). School age children can help in Sunday school with attendance (responsibility), sing in a children's choir (service) and play an instrument they are learning (talents). Teens can go on visitation (evangelism), assist in Junior Church (training for youth work), or participate in a rest home ministry (compassion). Actively involving children in service will create a desire in them to do MORE for Christ. We cannot wait until our children are teens to train them.

David learned as a youth, a boy, about God and declared His works from that time. God told the Israelites to teach the children diligently. Jesus said to "suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not." There are too many other examples and verses to ignore this simple truth: To train servants of God, we must begin when they are children. It is never too soon.

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. ~ III John vs. 4*