

*For we know,
brethren loved by God,
that He has chosen you.
(1 Thess. 1:4 NIV)*

IN FOCUS

—Rosemary Sabatino

Within the heart of each human being lies the God-given desire to be “chosen”; to be wanted and valued as an individual having significant purpose and worth. One only has to look in the eyes of those left behind at an orphanage, while others go off with their new mommies and daddies, to understand the devastating effects of perceiving one’s self as one of the “un-chosen.”

Although growing up as a rather awkward child in a middle-to-upper-class neighborhood, with parents who were just making it financially, cannot be compared to the example above, I understand the angst of the child left “un-picked” for the team; left out of the “friends” circle; and left “un-noticed” in the classroom. Then, one day, my name was called as the one chosen for the lead in the school play and life seemed to change. A new sense of confidence seemed to be present that helped overcome the feelings of fear and unworthiness—a change, however, that was incomplete. We must realize that the desire to be wanted was planted in us because we were made to respond to something far greater than this world could ever offer

In the scripture above Paul felt it important to remind the Thessalonian believers, while under attack for their life of faith (1 Thes. 2:14), that they were “chosen” by the God who loves them. A truth just as important for believers today as it was then.

The Greek word translated chosen in this passage (*ekloge*) means to pick and choose out of many for one’s self and it carries the connotation to call by name and to direct, maintain and affirm on a continual basis. Strong gives this extended definition: *God choosing whom He judged fit to receive His favors and separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly His own and to be attended continually by His gracious oversight; the ground of the choice lying in Christ and His merits alone* (Strongs Gk. #1589).

The use of this word in Ephesians 1:4 tells us that He chose us (called us out by name) before the foundation of the world. This is, by definition, a perpetual choice—in other words there is never a time when we are “un-chosen” as the merit of the choice rests, not in us, but in the finished work of His Son.

This choice or election is then continually and graciously maintained and affirmed through the presence of His Spirit by which He set His seal upon us as His beloved (Eph. 1:13,14) and by which He is continually calling and wooing us to Himself. Calling us to: holiness (1 Cor. 1:2), freedom (Ga. 5:13), peace (Col. 3:15), friendship (Jn. 15:15) and even to endure suffering (1 Pet. 2:20), in order to conformed us to the image of His Son (Ro. 8:29). Why? For loves sake: that we might walk before Him blameless in the light of His love as chosen sons and daughters, to the praise of the glory of His marvelous grace (Eph. 1:4-12).

Such love cannot be complete without the reciprocal choice of the beloved. Our only response to so great a salvation is to present our bodies as living sacrifices, Holy and pleasing to God, that we might be transformed into the person God created us to be (He. 12:1).

As we are called so we are also continually affirmed and equipped by the power of His Spirit in whom we are given everything we need for life and godliness (1 Pet. 1:3). All of this and more that we might, as a chosen people belonging to God, declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Yet each one individually gifted (Ro. 12:4,5,6) so as to take our unique place in the Body of Christ.

It is only here, “chosen” as the beloved in Christ, that we find our true identity and significant purpose as we are invited into participation with God in advancing His kingdom on earth!

As we focus this quarter on *Child Participation* we discover that, as children take an active role in the kingdom and community, they find healing and significance as they minister in their gifting to others. You will be blessed by the input of our contributing authors who collectively present a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience in order to help us define and implement important strategies that will enhance our ministries to the children of God’s heart.

Chrissie Wilkinson, of VIVA Network, introduces *Child Participation*. First, as an integral part of dynamic parenting, then as the catalyst that is propelling children at risk to take-on leadership roles that are having significant impact in the Church and communities as well. Next, in his article *Child Participation and the Peace Process*, Mike McGill demonstrates how children are already participating in and contributing to society—some in a violently negative way. He challenges us to consider, as adults, the opportunities we are giving children to positively affect the outcome of their involvement.

Irma Chon, Children and Youth Pastor, gives us an inside look at a ministry orchestrated by the Lord in which children, encouraged in the Word, are becoming some of the most passionate prayer warriors for the Kingdom. Then, in the Training Tips section, Paul Stephenson, in an excerpt from his book *Child Participation*, defines and explains the subject and examines ways that we can engage children in meaningful participation.

Finally, our hearts are deeply touched and encouraged by Marissa Phelps in her article *Prayer: Empowering children to be active participants in the kingdom of God* as we learn how children are finding their security and significance through the person of Jesus while bringing healing and hope to their community and the world.

As we serve the Lord together we will, as the Thessalonians, experience times of trial and tribulation. Let us find encouragement and confidence in the knowledge that we are “chosen”—called by name to this time and place, and continually maintained and affirmed—**by the God who loves us.**

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Child Participation

—Chrissie Wilkinson



Short term loss, long term gain

People were amazed here in the UK when they found my then two year old daughter sitting up at the kitchen counter peeling potatoes with me. She was keen and I had run out of ideas to keep her busy. Now at the age of 11 she is a more competent chef than many of my adult friends. I have to confess it was more by accident than design, but it did set me thinking—what if we were more intentional about allowing children to participate from an early age?

I admit that it did take longer to peel a pan of potatoes with a two-year-old. And there was the risk she could have cut herself on the peeler, fallen off the counter, or dropped the pan on the floor. But as I look back I recognize that it was a short-term loss for a very long-term gain! The small time invested in allowing her to work alongside me has now produced a child who cooks our family meals and who can knock up a cake in minutes.

To my delight I have since observed a similar principle being worked out through many ministry and project leaders working with children “at risk” in the network of projects with which Viva has the privilege of associating. Rather than having low expectations of what children are capable of, the bar has been raised. I observe children around the world who have been encouraged and empowered to become powerful intercessors, evangelists, prophets, teachers, and leaders. Children previously considered a problem are becoming the solution and communities are being transformed as more people are enlightened to see the hidden treasure inside of each child.

Starting with the ones in front

Last year I was privileged to attend an international consultation on ‘Children in Prayer’ held in Chennai, India and meet up with some 153 leaders from 35 nations including 30 child/youth prayer leaders. One African child leader stood out particularly as she confidently and with great authority led the whole group of us in prayer! This child had been encouraged to participate and trained in leadership through the ministry of Terry Andrews. Terry had begun Children in Christ (CIC) clubs as a result of the many children she found on her doorstep when she and her family first moved to Conakry, Guinea (a Muslim nation) in 1997. After three months the number had grown from 60 to 120 children meeting weekly to be taught God’s Word and join together in praise songs and prayer.

Church leaders were inspired by what they observed through CIC and the ministry has since grown to incorporate courses to train child workers in running clubs and to train children in leadership. CIC now operates in 16 countries, many across the 10/40 window. Terry believes that encouraging churches to reach children in their communities and empowering children to

lead is so close to God’s heart that the vision is easily caught and enthusiastically implemented by those adults called to children and those children called to lead.

CIC’s fundamental belief is that children are important in God’s Kingdom, ready to hear the gospel and receive Christ, and are capable of operating in the five-fold ministries just like adults. By allowing children to develop in their gifting, the clubs act to unleash the children’s potential as agents of transformation in their homes and communities.

Having met one of these child leaders, I am encouraged to know that over 900 other such children have been empowered to lead children’s churches, bearing much fruit. When children see their peers develop a sense of purpose and improved self esteem, they too want a positive change in their own lives and are responding to Christ through these child role models.

Giving children a voice

Later on in the year I plan to visit Cochabamba in Bolivia where the network has recently undertaken a campaign to raise awareness of how children are treated. Children from the projects have been involved in developing this campaign as child ‘ambassadors’ or spokespersons for the various projects and ministries represented. These child ambassadors have impressed hardened businessmen as they confidently stand in front of groups of people with presentations far more efficient and effective than many adults are capable of. In May 2007, child ambassadors from some projects and leaders from Viva Network Cochabamba visited the offices of Dr Elia Tellez (Judge of Child and Teen Affairs) to raise awareness and publicize the World Weekend of Prayer on behalf of children and teens at risk. Judge Tellez said afterwards: “I am grateful for your visit. Never stop shaping your dreams and achievements. In you rests the destiny of our country.”

I hope to see firsthand what the projects are doing to encourage child participation. Far from being an academic exercise I plan to take my own 13-year-old daughter, convinced that this is a generation who, if encouraged, can go further than we ever have. By allowing them to participate with us we could possibly be empowering them to become more than we ourselves might ever be.

So why bother?

If all the above doesn’t persuade one of the significance of allowing children to participate then maybe the fact that, under international law, children have the right to be consulted in all decisions concerning their lives will convince us to be intentional in this area.

By encouraging children to participate we will be instilling principles and practices which will enable them to take their place in society with a strong sense of self-worth and well-being. This will benefit not only their future families but their communities and nations as well.

Children are becoming the solution and communities are being transformed

Chrissie Wilkinson describes herself as a worshiper and lover of Jesus, a wife, and a mother of two teen girls. She’s been involved with prayer mobilisation at Viva Network since 1997 where her husband serves as COO. She is a nurse and a teacher and has worked with children at risk for many years over a varied career.

Child Participation and the Peace Process

—Michael McGill

Avoiding Destructive Participation

When pressed to extremes by adults, either through poverty, manipulation, threats or violence, children will be forced, or exercise some level of choice, to use their participation power to harm self and/or others. Gang violence is one place where child initiated and led community involvement takes place in a destructive way. One of the most brutal and shockingly common places where extremely violent child participation takes place is in the context of developing nations in civil war.

Youth Participation in Peace Processes

Nearly 90% of the world's 2.2 billion children¹ are in developing nations. Of the world's 20 poorest nations, 16 have experienced a major civil war over the last 15 years. There is an unfortunate but compelling correlation between children, poverty and violence that seems to perpetuate continued civil war. Much research shows us clearly that children are more likely than adults to change their ideas and behavior. Yet, almost no significant research has been done on how to effectively and ethically engage youth as peacemakers in nations of poverty and internal violence and few projects even attempt the task.

There is a complex dynamic of ethical and functional factors involved with child participation in peace processes. Nevertheless, I believe that offering young people opportunities to build peace in contexts of violence is critical to breaking the dynamics that perpetuate violence and building cycles that perpetuate peace. Children are given so many opportunities to wage war. Should not opportunities to wage peace be more readily available?

Youth Peace building Research in Colombia

In the summer of 2008 I conducted twelve interviews and nine focus groups with children directly impacted by the violence in Columbia. The following is a brief overview of some of the findings from this youth peace-building research. The children who participated developed the themes beneath each question.

What are some examples of effective youth peace-building strategies in family, school and society?

- Parental support and obedience
- Personal responsibility
- Programs with mutual respect/harmonious coexistence
- Marches, workshops and discussion groups

What motivates youth to build peace?

- Death and suffering
- Hope for a better world

- Examples and encouragement, especially from adults

What prevents youth peace building?

- Much violence
- Lack of peacebuilding examples, ideas, or know-how
- Lack of confidence in children and lack of support
- Adults do not listen to children
- Drugs
- Spiritual reasons

What things help make youth peace building more possible?

- Laying down arms
- Support and encouragement from adults
- Participation in projects
- Education
- Children knowing their rights
- Examples
- Desire for a better world

What things should children not do in an attempt to build peace?

- Violence
- Seeking support from bad-company
- Adult work
- Leaving school
- Engaging in early sexual relations

Moving Forward

It can sometimes be a bit awkward for adults and organizations to begin looking for opportunities for children to impact their world to a greater degree, but the result is almost always very rewarding for all those involved. Some changes in society may only have an opportunity to occur when children are given the chance to help bring them about.

Together we can grow in our understanding of how to responsibly and meaningfully involve children in decision-making and action, even in some very difficult circumstances.

Michael McGill lives in Seattle with his wife Kate. He holds a BA in Communications, a MA in Counseling, and is a PhD candidate at www.Fuller.edu researching child participation in peace processes. He has invested time in 40 countries, started The Asha Forum addressing response to child sexual exploitation, and currently works with www.visionSynergy.net.

¹ The UN Convention on the Rights of The Child

Children and Prayer: my journey into the heart of God

—Irma Chon

My journey with children and prayer began with God as He touched my heart with His compassion for lost children around the world: those who do not know their Abba Father and are suffering from poverty and war; and those who are abused and used as child laborers and child prostitutes. The more I researched the more I realized that my heart was breaking over what broke God's heart—the deplorable condition of children around the globe.

As I prayed for these hurting little ones, the Lord confirmed that the best people to pray for children's issues were children themselves. God was saying if we were to call the children together and show them the world as He sees it they would become some of the most passionate prayer warriors for His kingdom and purposes, for He has created them to respond to His heart of compassion.

In response to the Lord's leading, I began a Kid's Prayer Club for children in my church (grades 1-6). The prayer club meets for a little over an hour a week and is called "Time with Abba." We begin our time with reading God's Word. The children are encouraged to read the Bible at home in addition to prayer club time and each child is given a journal with selected Bible readings. Leaders explain what it means to hear God's voice when they read Scripture and pray. The children are encouraged to journal what they hear God say is on His heart.

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After reading God's Word, the group spends time praying. The boys and girls love their huge map of the world that covers the floor of our small church auditorium. The children declare who God is over the nations. Sometimes they have a very specific prayer focus like hunger and I help them identify places where children are suffering in this way.

One of their favorite things to do is to "go anywhere in the world" to pray. For instance, if they have a special burden for



North Korea they head over to the North Korea area of the map to pray. Sometimes they will prayer-walk around the world on their floor map. Other times they will sit on a certain country with a Bible and just pray John 3:16 over that nation. Periodically, leaders may give them little flashlights and the children pray as they shine their light over a nation. For example: "Jesus said 'I am the light of the world' so we pray that Your light will come to Turkey or North Korea."

Another aspect of the children's praying involves writing in our special journals, each designated for a specific situation or location. For example, at the club we have a presidential journal, a journal for missionaries in Peru working with the street children in Lima and a journal for North Korea. These journals are lying about and often the children will write the prayers that God is giving them to pray. Occasionally the journals are sent to the designated missionary so they can read the children's prayers and write back to report how God is responding. Right now we don't know where or to whom the journal for North Korea will go, but the children keep writing and praying!

It is so exciting to see their compassion grow! They love to learn about the nations and the world. There are times when we encourage our children to fast. We explain what fasting means and then ask them to decide how they want to fast—perhaps from candy or video games or they may fast from food for a special time of prayer that we have declared.

During our church's mission conference a time is set aside for the children to gather around the visiting missionaries and pray. Brian and Rachel Langley, with Word Made Flesh ministering in Peru, had this to say: "The Kids Prayer Club is always excited to see our family. They know our names and we know theirs. As we sit together in a prayer circle in Sunday school and show them pictures of the children we work with, the boys and girls know their names and their stories. As we talk, they make notes in their journals."

“We see local churches emphasizing teaching children how to pray correctly rather than on receiving from their prayers,” the Langleys note. “One of the hallmarks of The Kids Prayer Club is their emphasis on the spiritual capacity of children. We have been blessed by this ministry, but we also have learned from the prayers of these young children. Every time we visit,” the Langley’s continue, “we have been privileged to have them lay their hands on us and send us back into ministry in Peru. Their prayers are one of the pillars of support for our family and our ministry among the poor in Lima.”

Children can and should take their rightful place in God’s Kingdom work, which starts with prayer. As they begin to know God through prayer, to recognize His voice, and to experience the love of the Father for themselves, God gives them His prayer agenda for lost people and for the suffering. As they learn, their heart of compassion grows, and God can put them in places of opportunity and positions of power.

The impact of this one group of praying children has reached far beyond what they could have imagined. In September of 2007 five youth from our church (5th grade through high school) were invited to join 40 children and 150 adults from around the world to come to the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The children heard firsthand from some of the ambassadors, and they were invited to be part of a historic moment of prayer. They stood in the UN building praying for the children of the nations and the victims of AIDS and of war. They declared who God is and prayed that the nations will come to know Him. A number of ambassadors welcomed the children to pray for them.



When former President Bush’s wife, Laura, visited our city, she was told about children who pray for the nations, and she invited them to meet with her in a private place away from the press. There they gathered around her and prayed for her and for the nation, simply verbalizing once again what God had already challenged them to pray many times before.

There is an awakening to the untapped resource of children’s prayers ... boys and girls are beginning to take their rightful place in God’s kingdom work.

The mounting strength and impact of children’s prayers have been compared to a silent tsunami hitting the earth—this time for good. Around the globe there is an awakening to the untapped resources of children’s prayers and time and again boys and girls are beginning to take their rightful place in God’s Kingdom work.

Recently, I was invited to Chihuahua, Mexico to take part in a one-day missions conference for over 1,500 children in the city convention center where churches across that area worked together to present the nations to the children. I was asked to have a House of Prayer with the children and I included many of the things we do in The Kids Prayer Club. The Mexican children spent all day going from station to station, learning about the people of the world. Then they came to the House of Prayer where they prayed with passion for the nations, clearly bearing a new sense of urgency God had given them for needy people.

When a short-term mission’s team returned to our church from Ecuador, we listened to a report of what they experienced. At the conclusion, I asked for a child to pray. One of our little boys enthusiastically waved his hand. He could have prayed right where he was; we didn’t ask him to move. But he got up, walked to the front, dropped to his knees, prostrated himself, and started to pray. He just followed his heart! That’s the kind of prayer that moves mountains—
the faith of a child.

Irma Chon is currently serving as the Children and Youth Pastor at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Hilliard Ohio with the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

God is on the move! He has entrusted to me and my team the privilege and joy of being His hands, His feet, and His voice for the children. As we get to know the Father’s voice and His heart in our own lives and experience the transforming power of His character, we are overwhelmed by His love for the least of these. God has specifically asked us to tell the children that they can and already do hear the Father’s voice quite well.

We affirm them as well as give them many opportunities to hear their Heavenly Father who has many, many things to share with them. This is fostered through spending daily time With Abba; a time where they get to meet with their “Daddy” God through the reading of His word and wait to listen in on the secrets He has for the day. God reveals His very heart to the children as they pray (talk and listen to the Father). He shares His hurt, pain, sorrow, joy, hope, and love for the nations. As the children arise from this place so do their prayers as a blessing to people all over the world.

Training Tips

*Plans fail for
lack of counsel,
but with many advisers
they succeed
(Proverbs 15:22 NIV)*



An Excerpt from:

Child participation

by: Paul Stephenson with Steve Gourley and Glenn Miles

Editor: Rachel Blackman

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Introduction

A definition of child participation is *children influencing issues affecting their lives, by speaking out or taking action in partnership with adults*. The energy behind child participation comes from:

- the growing emphasis on child rights.
- good community development practice which enables people to address their own problems.

The extent of child participation should depend on the age, experience and maturity of the child. A baby cannot be expected to make logical decisions, while a child of seven years old should not be expected to take on the burdens and responsibilities of an adult. However, all children should be involved and consulted in some way on matters that affect their lives.

Children are people with dignity. Their views should be listened to and respected in the same way as those of adults. Their participation can enable development projects to meet the needs of all in the community. Children often want to participate but are not allowed to by adults. This may be due to cultural and social perceptions of children as lacking skills and being unable to express their thoughts. There is also a fear that children may become too independent and disrespectful of adults.

Child participation is not something that should be done only because it is the current fashion but as an essential part of good development practice. The involvement of children in development projects and community life can reveal new perspectives on problems, create more unity and trust within the community, and develop the skills of the next generation of community leaders and members. Child participation can also provide the roots for sustainable development.

A Biblical View of Children

In many cultures children are undervalued. However, God values children as much as adults. All human beings are made in his image. God recognizes that children are vulnerable, trusting and dependent and uses this to teach adults about the kingdom of God (Mt. 18:1-6; 19:13-15).

The Bible places the responsibility for the raising of children on the family. Ideally this should be within the immediate or extended family, but where this is not possible, the family of believers (church) should take on the responsibility (Exodus 22:22; James 1:27).

The Bible teaches that relationships between adults and children should be loving, just and based on respect. These principles should guide parents and caregivers to appropriately discipline children. This allows children to explore their environment within trusting relationships and a set of safe and healthy boundaries (Deut. 4:9,10; Pro. 4; 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4).

In summary, children are a blessing from God. They should be nurtured in a protective environment, ideally within a family situation, to enable them to gain independence, to serve God and others and to reach their God-given potential.

Why Child Participation?

In order to encourage children to serve others, we need to ensure that they can participate in family, church and community life. In addition to remembering the biblical basis for involving children, we should be aware of the legal and logical reasons for encouraging child participation:

- Under international law, children have the right to be consulted in all decisions concerning their lives. This is in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and should take into account the 'age and maturity of the child.'
- Children know a lot about their own lives. Often, decisions are made about children's lives based on information provided only by adults. Yet adults cannot think, feel and see life as a child does. Adults often make assumptions about what information children are able, or not able, to provide. If adults do not listen to children, the decisions that they make for children may have a negative, rather than a positive, impact.

Children's natural environment for growth and well-being is the family. However, due to pressures on families around the world, many children grow up with one or no parent or in situations of abuse and neglect. This can result in children taking on responsibility to provide for their brothers and sisters, or being forced to live on the streets to avoid domestic violence and poverty. These children have to become independent earlier than other children. Participation in community life becomes particularly important for these children. They need to be able

to make good decisions and protect themselves. Development organizations have a role in ensuring that children are given an opportunity to participate. This might involve:

- empowering families to care for, and listen to, their children
- giving children an opportunity to participate in community life, such as helping them to set up a children's club or council
- involving children as stakeholders in all types of community development projects
- developing projects with children who may not have families to care for them
- enabling children to represent their concerns in conferences or consultations at local, regional and international levels.

All children should be given the opportunity to participate, but some children are often excluded due to their gender, physical disability or ethnic group. For example, girls should be given as much opportunity to participate as boys.

Examining Participation

In order to involve children in the planning and implementation of projects and in community life, we need to examine ourselves and our roles in relation to children. We should ensure a balance between the type and quality of participation that occurs. Children should be involved in a way that respects and supports their roles as decision makers. This is not an easy task.

Types of Participation

There are many different types of participation. The diagram to the right shows what these are. Tokenism is the lowest level of participation, where children are involved in some way, but not very meaningfully. The fifth type of participation is the most genuine participation by children, where they take a leading role. This means they have clearly defined decision-making powers within an agreed structure, such as a children's club. It does not mean that they are in charge and in a position to ignore advice from adults which is in their best interests. It may take time for children to feel comfortable at a higher level of participation. Some may not want to take on this responsibility and agree to let adults take the lead at different times. We may decide to work at different levels of participation for different activities. However, it is important that staff and children work together to bring change.

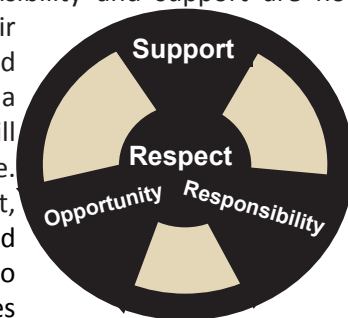
The Wheel of Participation

The Wheel of participation helps to ensure that children's participation is effective. A wheel is constructed from supportive spokes attached to a hub. The spoke must be balanced and keep the wheel perfectly round if it is to roll smoothly. The Wheel of participation consists of three spokes: the principles of opportunity, responsibility and support. Each of these spokes is necessary to support children in the

process of participation as the diagram below shows. The hub represents respect, which forms the basis of the three principles.

If respect, opportunity, responsibility and support are not always provided to children, their participation will be unbalanced and slowed down, just as a broken spoke or a flat tire will affect the movement of a bicycle. When children are given respect, opportunity, responsibility and support, they will be able to participate in a way that increases their capacity and effectiveness in decision-making. This in turn will enable them to participate meaningfully.

It can be useful to prayerfully reflect on the principles. Then think about practical ways in which they can be applied to specific work with children.



Types of Participation

5 Taking the lead - 'Action By'

—**Child-Initiated and Directed:** Children set the agenda and are active politically

4 Collaboration and Partnership- 'Action With'

—**Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions With Children:** Adults have the initial idea, but children are involved very step of planning and implementation.

—**Child Initiated, Shared Decisions With Adults:** Children and their organizations invite adults to collaborate with them. Roles are defined together.

—**Jointly Initiated By Children and Adults:** Children and adults work in partnership to agree, and work together, towards common goals.

3 Consultation - 'Action With/By'

—**Children Are Consulted and Informed:** The project is designed and run by adults, but they use the suggestions and concerns of the children. Children are informed so they can make good decisions

2 Informing - 'Action For/With'

—**Children Are Given a Task and Told What Is Required of Them:** Children are informed of, and in agreement about, actions that affect them. They might be able to choose to carry out the task.

1 Coercion - 'Action On'

—**Manipulation:** Children do or say what adults want them to, but have no real understanding of the issues. Alternatively children may be asked what they think, and adults then use some of the ideas without telling the children what influence they have had on the final decision.

—**Decoration:** Children take part in an event, such as singing or dancing, but have no influence over how it is organized.

—**Tokenism:** Children are asked their opinions but have little choice about the way that they can express those views or the range of ideas they can express.

PRAYER:

Empowering children to be active participants in the kingdom of God

—Marissa Phelps

The wounds that we received as young girls did not come alone. They brought messages with them; messages that struck at the core of our hearts, right in the place of our questions.

This quote from *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul* by John and Stasi Eldredge¹ comes to mind often as I work with hurting children. In this book the authors describe a child who watched her sister become a fragile mush of a person in response to their mother's abuse and she determined never to allow her mother to hurt her that way again. Instead, she vowed to become tough and hard like a rock. The story serves to illustrate how the vows we make as a result of negative experiences during childhood can shape our personality and ultimately affect our relationship with God. As I recall some of the vows I made during my childhood, I realize many of them were the direct result of painful experiences that I was unable to understand or process. Now, as an adult, I recognize the harmful consequences of adhering to these vows: they negatively shaped my identity and prevented me from receiving God's love and forgiveness.

We have found prayer to be a powerful tool for early intervention in the lives of hurting children—preventing them from “putting up walls” that block children from experiencing the love of God. Through prayer children are offered healing and restoration which enable them to not only receive God's love but to offer it to others as well. Thus the process begins of discovering who God created them to be and helps them find their unique significance through the person of Jesus Christ. Prayer opens the way for the Holy Spirit to restore, heal and free them while affirming their special place in the kingdom of God.

Over the past few years, my husband and I have been deeply touched by the prayers of children offered during camps and prayer meetings. In fact, we have felt our faith and spiritual worldview impacted and challenged by the simple prayers of children as we witnessed their healing, restoration, and affirmation in the body of Christ.

One such time occurred this past June 6 in Lexington Kentucky. We offered children the opportunity to pray as they experienced, in a small way, the situations of children in crisis around the world. Through interactive stations, they learned about street children, child laborers, child soldiers and those in poverty and hunger. We were amazed to see the children grow in their understanding and compassion for others their own age who are in great need. We saw firsthand how prayer provided these children with the opportunity to experience

God's grace, mercy, love, and compassion as they heard His voice for the world's hurting little ones.

The following examples were taken from the actual prayers of children during Kids Prayer Retreat 2008 (ages 6-12). I am overwhelmed with joy as I read the prayers that have reached the very heart of the Father. I wish you could see their little handwritten notes and drawings to Jesus. They are so precious.

Dear God, You are great. O Lord, please help the homelis (homeless), kids with desesis (diseases), and people with no food or money to survive. Amen. —Jennifer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the men and women risking their lives to protect us...keep them safe. And help those children in the middle east realize they shouldn't fight in war, but they should drop down on the ground and worship you

Dear Heavenly Father, I pray in your name for the world. Touch them. Heal them. Care for them. I cry out that you lay your Holy Spirit upon them. In your name I pray. Amen.

God pleas help the pepull in trky you had shode me a pichr of the flag gust help them. (God, please help the people in Turkey. You showed me a picture of the flag. Just help them).



Forgive me, all my sins. I want to pray for the children without food or parents. Help me give more than I take. I love you.

Lord, for those here who don't know you, overwhelm them with your love.

Empowering children through prayer has the potential to bring healing and significance to themselves, their community and the world! We, the church, must provide more opportunities for children to take their place in the Body of Christ. As we do, we will open the door for the Holy Spirit to plant seeds of compassion and a self-giving love for the nations. When adults listen to children—affirming and validating their capacity to hear God's voice—they are empowered to be active participants in the kingdom of God. Children then find their security, significance, and identity by experiencing the power of a Christ centered community through prayer.

Marissa Phelps graduated from Asbury Seminary with an M.A in Missions and Evangelism and Christian Education. She and her husband Dan have been facilitating and leading prayer conferences for children. Both are passionate about introducing children to the needs of praying for children in crisis around the world. Dan and Marissa live with their two daughters, Abriel and Haylie, in Wilmore, KY.

¹ Eldredge, John and Stasi: *Captivating*; Thomas Nelson;

• NEWS • EVENTS • RESOURCES

Child Participation Resources

Books

- ***Kid's Pray!*** by: Jane Mackie;
available through Irma Chon (Irma@ccfhilliard.org)
- ***Children Can You Hear Me: How To Hear and See God;***
by: Brad Jersak and Ken Save; Freshwind Press; www.bradjersak.com or Irma@ccfhilliard.org; This book will encourage the childlike faith that opens the hearts of children to hear God's voice and see his face.
- ***Child Participation*** by Paul Stephenson with Steve Gourley and Glenn Miles; ISBN 1 904364 43 8; Tearfund, 2004; Download at: [Child_participation_E.pdf](#). International aid agencies and governments are now beginning to search for ways in which children can participate meaningfully and effectively in programs that impact them. This research project intends to contribute further to the debate and practice of children's participation. It documents a participatory action research (PAR) approach catalysed and facilitated by adults, but conceived, planned and researched by children.
- ***A Handbook of Children's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice;*** Edited by: Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas; Routledge, 2009; ISBN 0-203-87107-3
This is a secular publication which, with its many contributors, aims to achieve a better understanding of the diverse ways in which the participation of children and young people is understood and enacted across the world. This book introduces the theory and practice of children's participation in sustainable development and its importance for developing democracy and sustainable communities. Detailed case studies are provided from urban and rural, poor and middle class communities from both the North and South. It provides organizing principles, successful models, practical techniques and resources involving young people in environmental projects.

Articles and Research Projects

- ***Learning to Work Together: A handbook for managers on facilitating children's participation in actions to address child labor;*** Regional Working Group on Child Labor (RWG-CL); electronic version available for download at <http://www.seapa.net/> ; To order copy E-mail: director@cwa.tnet.co.th. Learning to work together combines lessons learned by working children and adults who have participated in child labour programming, with insights from the increasing number of publications on the subject. RWG-CL has learned that children's participation begins by acknowledging children's capacities. Thus, RWG-CL is committed to fulfilling children's rights to participate through a

gradual process of learning and adaptation, with children and adults working together. Learning to work together is designed as a self-study handbook for managers, to help them reflect on their own ideas and to assist them in planning participatory activities, projects and programs.

- ***Our Voice: A Participatory Action Research Project;*** by: Bhima Sangha, Southwest India, with Paul Stephenson; Terafund UK; Download at: [Our_voice_BhimaSanghaPaul_Stephenson.pdf](#). This research project intends to contribute further to the debate and practice of children's participation. It documents a participatory action research (PAR) approach catalysed and facilitated by adults, but conceived, planned and researched by children.
- ***Child Participation: Challenges of empowerment;*** World Vision UK; 2000; Download at: [worldvisionchildparticipation_0.pdf](#). The purpose of this discussion paper is to stimulate some debate about the important issues surrounding child participation. It combines articles which examine the issues from a legal and well as practical perspective with a view helping to move the discussion forward.
- ***The Evolving Capacities of the Child;*** by: Gerison Lansdown; Save The Children-UNICEF, 2005; ISBN: 88-89129-15-8; [UNICEF_evolving_capacities_of_the_child-eng.pdf](#)
This study identifies three separate but inter-linked strands crucial to understanding the concept of the evolving capacities of the child. First, it analyses the developmental dimension of the Convention. Secondly, it analyses the participatory or emancipatory dimension. Finally, the study examines evolving capacities as a protective concept. In publishing this study, the aim is to promote widespread debate around these issues.
- ***Children's Participation in Humanitarian Action: learning from zones of armed conflict;*** by: Jason Hart Ph.D; Canadian International Development Agency; info@acdi_cida.gc.ca; download at: [Participation_in_war_zone_srilankapdf.pdf](#). This document considers the benefits and challenges of pursuing children's participation in humanitarian action. Its findings and analysis are based upon the study of projects in three different locations: eastern Sri Lanka, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Nepal. These projects generally involve adolescents in the age range 12-18 and are supported by international and local organizations. The study also draws upon the observations of informants from academia, donor agencies, governmental and non-governmental agencies.

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Caregiver's Time-out

—Suzanne Manomie

Go Where He sends You ... Be Ready for Anything

*For we are God's workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance
for us to do. (Eph. 2:10 NIV)*

Some time ago, I had been visiting a friend in Victoria General Hospital, in the capital of British Columbia. I left her room in the north tower about 4:00 PM, thinking to beat the rush hour traffic on the 40 minute drive to my home. Just down the hall I noticed a man in uniform standing in a doorway. His shoulder badge revealed to me that he was a Corrections Officer. Since I had spent every Wednesday evening and Sunday afternoon of the previous two years visiting at a local prison, I thought perhaps he might be guarding someone I knew. "I'm a volunteer with the John Howard Society," I said. "Could you please tell me the name of the patient you're with?"

*God assured me I had been sent to
show him the way home*

"David," he replied. I had not previously met him, but at that point we heard his plaintive voice, "Could she please come and talk to me?" As I walked up to his bed, I sensed the love of God coming with me in extraordinary power. It seemed to fill the room so you could almost reach out and touch it. Dave felt it too although at first he didn't understand what was happening. Under the influence of the presence of the Holy Spirit, our conversation was truly amazing. Usually people like Dave have learned over the years not to trust anyone. However, during the next hour or so he shared with me the story of his life. We laughed and cried together. He told me how his nineteen year old daughter, who was attending nursing school, had come out from Ontario to see him. She was very upset by his appearance as his skin and eyes were yellow from terminal hepatitis. When he told her that as a nurse she would probably see much worse, she replied, "Yes, but they won't be my Dad!" Tears of love filled his eyes as he remembered her words.

He explained that he and nine comrades had shared a batch of tainted drugs and the others had already died. Throughout our conversation we spoke of how much God loved him in spite of his lifestyle and that Jesus had given His life so that Dave could be forgiven. Although he did not make any decision at the time, God assured me later that I had been sent to help show him the way Home.

As I left Dave's room that day, I felt as if I was walking on air. "Wow, God," I exclaimed, "What was that all about?" Very clearly in my heart God answered, "I'll tell you what that was all about—fasten your seatbelt and come along for the ride. I will show you what I am going to do. You just have to go where I send you and I will give you EVERYTHING you need to accomplish My will."

For the past three years I have been an independent missionary in Russia, living on my old age pension, and God has kept that promise beyond all I could ask or imagine. I would like to tell you of a recent occurrence that is a classic example. For the last few months I have been volunteering with a team from the YWAM base in Perm, Russia. Every other weekend we leave in the wee hours of Saturday morning to travel to Nirob, a little village 300 or so kilometres north of Perm. On this occasion our team leader Rasheed (Ukrainian), Yura (Russian), Guido (Latvian), and I (Canadian) drove up from Perm, picking up another man, Tolic, from a village near Nirob. We stayed at a house owned by YWAM used for Christian outreach in the community. The men were planning to do outside work and my mission was to make sure that they were well fed.

Just before lunch on Saturday Rasheed told me to divide up the food six ways, not five, because another man had just joined us. He would help with the work in return for bed and board for the weekend. His name was Vitaly and I liked him from the moment we met. He seemed a gentle, quiet, humble man, grateful for anything you did for him. The weekend passed well. Guido saw Vitaly as a providential gift from God as he really needed help with his particular task. Together all the men accomplished a great deal. Along the way they witnessed to a very interested Vitaly and gave him a New Testament so he could discover more about God's love.

*Trust God to give all that is
required for your service to Him*

Only later did I learn that Vitaly, recently released from prison, had been brought to us by a member of the church because he had been beaten and robbed. We drove him back to Perm with us and made sure he was safe with friends.

I know these experiences don't specifically involve children, but I wanted to encourage you to trust God to give all that is required for your service to Him and even to provide opportunities for service totally orchestrated by Him.

*Just go where He sends you and ...
... be ready for anything.*



Crisis Care Training International is a ministry of WEC International.
Phyllis Kilbourn, Director <crisiscare@comporium.net>
Rosemary Sabatino, Editor/ layout artist
www.crisiscaretraining.org

*Suzanne Manomie is grateful to the Lord for opening the
doors for her to pursue prison ministry in
Russia with YWAM*