

Parenting Tools:

Knowing the Needs of Our Mission Field



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*How Do I Teach My Family to Know the Needs of
Our Mission Field?*

Let us begin with a warning. If you truly desire to know the needs of your mission field, then you may be coming dangerously close to cultivating a missional culture in your family. If that is the case, the results may cost your family more than you might imagine. Why? Because God is personally in conversation with every single person on the planet, and He desires to use people like me and you to bring His message in a very personal way. When we talk about knowing the needs of your mission field and creating a love for others in our families, the ramifications may run deep.

Psalm 37:4, Matthew 9:35-38 & Joshua 1:1-9

Where do I start?

It makes sense that we would begin by looking outward, yet knowing true needs (as well as knowing how to best meet those needs) requires discernment and wisdom. This can only come from the Lord Himself; therefore, we must begin by looking inward at ourselves and cultivating a heart for God. We must then slowly allow His heart to develop within us, which will, in turn, give us a heart of brokenness for others combined with a genuine love for others. Read Psalms 37:4. What does it mean to truly delight yourself in the Lord? How are His desires different than your desires? If He were to give you the desires of your heart, what would that mean? We begin by looking inward at ourselves, then upward to God.

Is having His heart enough?

Now that we have asked Him to make our desires the same as His desires, we are now ready to look outward to others. Take a moment and read Matthew 9:35-38. How did Jesus describe what He saw? How was this different than the disciples' reaction to what they saw? Which is your reaction tendency to crowds like these?

To truly understand the needs within our mission field, we must see others the way that Jesus sees them. In other words, just as we must have His heart, we must also have His eyes. Having His eyes keeps us from the danger of only seeing a person's physical condition, but instead allows us to see a person's spiritual condition. Samuel said it well in the Old Testament when he said, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." A person may not look needy on the outside, but may be desperately hurting on the inside. In the same way, a person may look poor, needy, and destitute on the outside, but be full of joy and the Holy Spirit on the inside! In order to truly meet needs like Jesus, we must be willing to see both the physical and the spiritual – and then be willing to share good deeds (genuinely serving and helping others) and good news (sharing the Gospel message) at the same time. Regardless of outside appearance, the true needs within our mission field are always connected to people; and sometimes people can be messy, needy, stinky, and downright inconvenient! Just like the crowds that Jesus and the disciples saw in Matthew 9.

How do I put together a simple game plan for meeting needs?

Now that you are mentally and spiritually prepared, the rest is easy. You can begin by getting involved in GO opportunities right within your neighborhood. Here are a few ideas:

- Offer to mow your neighbor's yard.

- Sit on your front porch (with the kids playing in front yard) and greet all of those who walk by.
- Prayerwalk or Prayer-jog your neighborhood, asking for a blessing for each home
- Offer to tutor younger students at the neighborhood school.
- On Thanksgiving, offer to serve the elderly and the homeless while praying with those you meet.
- Ask your neighbors, "We're trying to teach our kids to be good neighbors. Can you tell us your birthday so that we can remember it?"
- Take family vacations to key urban centers in U.S. and spend one fully day serving others.
- Sign up for the daily e-mail from Joshua Project entitled "Unreached People Group of the Day" and pray, as a family, for these groups during your family devotion times.
- Take family fun nights to local international restaurants, then study and pray for the people group while you are eating the food of that culture!
- See below for more ideas on practical ways to meet needs in your mission field.

We are so busy already! How can we make this fit in our schedule?

Take a few moments and discuss this question, "What does our family's 'rhythm of life' look like?" Next, ask the question, "How might the Lord be leading us to alter or change our 'rhythms of life' to fit His agenda?"

In Joshua 1:1-9, the Lord reminded Joshua to be bold, courageous, and obedient, “that you may be successful wherever you go.” How do you define “success” when it comes to leading your family on mission? Much can be learned from these words in Joshua about the Lord’s definition of success. God is reminding Joshua that he is guaranteed success as long as he obeys. By obeying the Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28, you cannot fail – and in doing so, you can model for and teach your family that God can be trusted with the consequences of your obedience.