

Save a Child—Save a Nation

by Thomas E. Trask

One never knows what or who a child will grow up to be. One cannot tell from looking into the eyes of a child what potential he has or what gifts are contained in his heart. But God knows, and that is why Jesus said, “Suffer the little children...to come unto me” (Matthew 19:14).

It is imperative that we reach children when they are young, for in so doing we might be saving the next world leader. The Word of God tells of two such children. One became the leader of the great nation of Israel. No one would ever have dreamed that when the infant was placed in a basket of bulrushes that had been covered with slime and pitch then hidden in the reeds along the riverbank, the child was destined to become a savior of a nation. But God knew.

God doesn't let us see what the future holds for a child, but He does let us have a part in shaping that child's future, first by presenting to him the need of having Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior while he is tender

and young. Second, by training him in the ways of the Lord. It could be you are teaching and training the next leader of a nation.

The second child preserved in childhood was none other than the Son of God—Jesus. The Scripture states that Joseph was warned by an angel of the Lord to take the Child and His mother, Mary, and flee into Egypt, for Herod sought to destroy Him.



As a result of Joseph's obeying the angel, Jesus later went to the Cross and became the Savior for all mankind.

One must remember, all the tyrants of the world were once children. If they could have been reached as children, it is possible that history would read differently today.

Researcher George Barna

has just completed a three-year study on ministry to children and released his findings in a book entitled *Transforming Your Children into Spiritual Champions*. It is a study that we would do well as a church to heed very carefully. In his book he identifies four life-long patterns of spiritual development that are established in the early years.

1 A person's moral foundations are generally in place by the time he or she reaches age nine.

2 A majority of Americans make a lasting determination about their personal response to Christ's death and resurrection by the age of 12.

3 In most cases people's spiritual beliefs are irrevocably formed when they are preteens. What you believe by the time you are age 13 is what you will die believing, Barna asserts as the norm.

4 Adult church leaders usually were involved in church life and training when they were young. He notes that four out of five lay church and staff leaders,

when they were children, had consistently been involved in the church's ministry to children for an extended period of time prior to age 13.

Barna's study has had a significant personal impact on his views about church ministry. Thinking for many years that

the church's most important ministry is to adults, now Barna has come to the conclusion that children are the single most important population group for the church to focus upon.

So when we see a child saved, it can be that we are going to save a nation in days to

come, if Jesus tarries.

Questions for Further Study—

1. How have the results from George Barna's study of children's ministries impacted your views about church ministry?
2. What changes would you make within your ministry as a direct result of George Barna's study results?