

What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

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Children are often asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Many times they respond saying they want to be a policeman, a fireman, a schoolteacher, an airline pilot, or some other career that seems exciting and fascinating to them. My daughter Christa always wanted to be an eye-doctor. It is not unusual for children, as they grow in years and maturity, to think about what career they will take up when the day comes for them to be on their own.

Over two-thousand years ago, our Savior Jesus spoke about the need for workers in his Church, a need that is just as urgent today as it was then: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Sunday School is a good time to talk to children about the opportunities for vocational service within the church as a pastor, teacher, deaconess, director of Christian education, or even a foreign missionary. Most men entering the seminary, for example, did not come up with the idea on their own, but became interested in becoming a pastor or missionary after their pastor, Sunday School teacher or someone else suggested it to them and encouraged them: “You would be a good pastor.” Or, “Have you thought about being a missionary?” It is never too early to plant the seed of such a calling to service within the church.

Some good questions to explore with children are: Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live in another country? Do you enjoy traveling to new places? Do you like to try different kinds of foods? Do you find it interesting to meet people from other parts of the world, or who speak another language? Do you speak or do you think it would be cool to be able to speak a second language?

Another way to encourage children to think about becoming a missionary is to invite a furloughing or former missionary to speak to the Sunday School about the satisfying work of speaking the gospel to peoples in different parts of the world. When was the last time your congregation had a “mission festival” with a visiting missionary who can bring to life the adventures and rewards of being a missionary? Those are the times when the missionary himself or herself can challenge the children of the Sunday School to at least think about the possibilities.

With modern technology and the ability to communicate worldwide, you could even arrange to have the Sunday School class conduct a “live” interview with a missionary in another part of the world using a speakerphone in the classroom. The children could think about some questions in advance and take turns asking the questions directly of the missionary and his family.

There are many ways in which you can help children visualize how they might be used by God for the extension of his kingdom. Often all that they need is a little encouragement.

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