



Dear parent:

You've made the decision to help your children develop a broader world-view and recognize the needs of orphans around the world! That's wonderful!

While your children will be learning about the world at school and learning about a lot of things at church, what you reinforce at home is vital to shaping your children into boys and girls that love the Lord and love others well.

The following are some "Mission Moments" you can have with your children. They build upon each other, so start with #1 and as you feel a teachable moment coming on, or plan this as an activity for your children, move onto the next one. If you have any questions along this journey, simply e-mail me at jon@sweetsleep.org and I'll be glad to help you help your kids connect with their calling to minister to orphans.

Blessings!

Jon

Jon Merryman
Sweet Sleep

A bit about me:

I live in Nashville, Tennessee and work for Sweet Sleep – this awesome ministry that provides new healthy, comfortable beds to orphaned and abandoned children around the world.

Before Sweet Sleep, I led Jr. High Bible Study at Centrifuge at Carson-Newman College in 2000 and was one of the first Camp Pastors of Centri-Kid in 2001, our Inaugural Summer, and also in 2002. I spent the next 7 years in full time children's ministry at Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee and helped start Rolling Hills Community Church in Franklin, Tennessee -- growing and shaping this church plant's dynamic ministry to children and families. I also helped shape Centri-Kid since its inception and created camp themes like Absolute Zero, Spin Cycle, Extra Mile and Lights, Camera, Action as well as M-Fuge's Underground. I have also written curriculum for LifeWay Kids including Worship KidStyle, G-Force, VBS, Club VBS and TeamKID.

I am an ordained minister and hold a B.A. from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. I enjoy traveling and speaking to children and students as well as leading mission trips with church volunteers from around the country to build beds in Third World orphanages through Sweet Sleep.

My wife Emily and I attend Mosaic Church in Nashville and live in South Nashville with our 17-year-old son, Dennis, whom we adopted from Moldova in 2008, and our Miniature Schnauzer, Max.

For information about Sweet Sleep and their work to provide beds for the world's orphaned and abandoned children, visit www.sweetsleep.org.

Missions Moment #1 (approx. 30 minutes)

Say: "I want to spend some time thinking about what God wants us to do as a family to help orphans around the world. Let's watch this video together and then we'll talk about it."

Show the video "Hope for the Nations."

After the video, ask your kids:

1. What was your favorite part of the video?
2. What did you see that made you sad?
3. What did you see that made you happy or have hope for these children?
4. What were the different parts of the new beds the kids received?
5. Did you see the kids getting new Bibles?

Say: "Sweet Sleep is an organization that helps orphans get out of those old, broken beds you saw and give them healthy, comfortable beds to sleep in! They also give each child a Bible in their language – which might be Romanian or Russian – Lugandan or French Creole... Kids around the world are being helped by Sweet Sleep and hearing about Jesus – many for the first time!"

Grab your Bible and **read James 1:27** aloud to your children. Help them look up the verse and follow along in their version if they are readers.

Say: "According to this verse, pure religion is to look after _____ and _____ and refusing to let the world corrupt you." Allow them to follow along and fill in those blanks.

Say: "An orphan is someone who has lost one or both of their parents. Usually, we think of children who are orphaned. Widows are women whose husbands have died."

Ask: "Why do you think God wants us to take care of orphans and widows?"

Say: "God is not asking us to just think about doing these things or to do this if we have time. And He's not just asking adults like me to do this. He's asking each of us to take

care of orphans and widows. He even asks this of orphans and widows! They can take care of other orphans and widows, too!”

Spend some time praying with your kids. Thank God for being your Father and for being Father to the fatherless. Pray for any orphans or widows you know in your church and community. Ask God to help you think of ways to meet the needs and care for orphans and widows you may know.

Make a list

Say: “Can you help me think of ways our family can help orphans and widows? (Jot them down on a piece of paper and place it on your fridge.)

Missions Moment #2 (approx. 10-15 minutes)

Grab your Bible and **read Acts 1:8** aloud to your kids.

Draw 4 circles – one small one in the middle, bigger one around that, and so on...]

Ask your children these questions and fill in the circles.

1. “What town do we live in?” (In the smallest circle in the middle, write the name of your town.)
2. “What state do we live in?” (In the next circle out, write the name of your state.)
3. “What is the name of our country?” (In the 3rd circle, write the name of your country.)
And in the 4th circle, write “the world.”

Say: “God’s call to us is to tell the world about Jesus starting with our city (Jerusalem) our state (Judea) our country (Samaria) and the whole world!”

Prayer Time

Spend time praying with your children for your city, your state, your country and your world.

Missions Moment #3 (for use with older children – approx. 15 minutes)

Grab your Bible and look up John 3:17. Ask one of your children to read it aloud.

Ask: “How did God save the world through Jesus?”

Ask: “What must it have been like for God to have to give up his only son to save us – to save you?”

Ask: “If God is saving the world through Jesus, what role do we play in His plan to save the world?”

Say: “Think about these things... “Are you grateful for his sacrifice? Do you think about it often? Let’s pray silently together, and then I’ll pray to close. First, let’s thank God for the sacrifice he made for us. (pause for silent prayer) Now, let’s thank God for the way He allows us to be part of his plan to save the world. (pause) Close in prayer.

Activity

Say: “How has your life been changed by Jesus? Let’s each write Him a thank-you note.” After everyone has written a note, have them place it in their Bibles.

Missions Moment #4 (approx. 15-20 minutes)

Read Isaiah 1:17 together. After reading, ask your kids to help you fill in the blanks below. (It’s written out below in case you need to look at this translation.)

Encourage _____;
Defend the cause of _____;
Plead the case of _____.

Encourage the oppressed; defend the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
Isaiah 1:17

Say: “What have you learned about ministering, or meeting the needs of, the orphan, the fatherless, the widow and the world in our times together?”

Prayer Activity (for writers)

Say: “Let’s Write out your prayer to God today. If you need help, this can be a guide for you.”

Tell God you love Him.

Ask Him for forgiveness.

Listen to Him -- What’s He saying to you?

Keep talking. – Pray for your needs, the needs of others, etc.

Missions Moment #5 (approx. 10 minutes)

Read Proverbs 28:27 together.

The one who gives to the poor will not be in need, but one who turns his eyes away will receive many curses. Proverbs 28:27

Ask: “Have you ever given something to the poor? How do you think God feels about the poor?”

Say: “How do you feel about the poor? Do you turn away when you see people begging for money on the street? There are definitely people out there that are faking their poverty to get our help or money. And there are some people out there that may not make good decisions and those decisions brought them to this place of poverty.

But God doesn't say – give to the poor only if you're sure they're not faking or that they will use what you give them the best way you can imagine. He simply asks us to give to the poor.

When you feel God nudging you to give to someone in need, talk with me about what to give, when its safe to help, etc., then we can consider trying to give something to help that person, trusting God that through our faithful response to Him, He will bless each of us and the ones we help.

Prayer Time

Lead your children in prayer. Thank God for his provision in your family – for providing you a place to live, a family – anything you know is from Him. Pray for the poor. Ask God to give each of you wisdom and help you know who He would have you help and how.

Activity

Say: “Now that we have learned as a family about the needs of orphans and the poor, now we can make a plan to meet the needs of orphans together.”

Lead your family to make a plan together.

Say: “What can we do to help orphans and the poor? At home? Around the world?”
Allow kids to answer and make a list.

Sweet Sleep has many ways for your family to be involved in meeting the needs of orphans and we are thankful for your partnership to help us continue toward our goal of providing “a bed for every head!” Here's how you can help:

1. **Raise money for beds for orphans.** Hold a yard sale, make things and sell them to benefit Sweet Sleep. Be creative and help kids sleep sweetly!
2. **Get your church or school involved!** Make Build-A-Bed or INSOMNIA part of your VBS or youth ministry program. Find out more at www.sweetsleep.org.
3. **Ask friends and family to give to sweet sleep** in your honor in lieu of birthday gifts or Christmas gifts. Even better – when it's time to give a gift, go to www.sweetsleep.org/givethegift and give an orphan a mosquito net, a mattress, a blanket or a whole new bed in your friend or family members name! You can even have a birthday part where everyone brings donations for beds. For more information, e-mail jon@sweetsleep.org.

4. **Go on a trip to build beds for orphans!** Could your family join one of our teams that builds beds for orphans throughout the year? Find out more information at www.sweetsleep.org/trips.

All these ideas are great, but I know your family will think of more. Spread the word! And don't forget to make plans to minister to the orphans and widows in your community, too!