



GLOBAL KIDS



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Shall Lead the Way

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Global Kids

Shall Lead the Way

“Global Kids, who Are you?”

If you are a global kid, just the mere title would strike a cord in your heart. You would have had experiences the majority of children in the world do not have. However, though much of this discussion is about you who surf the world geographically, we would like to include the newer type of Malaysian global kids, those who surf the world electronically. No matter which category you fall under, the author believes that God has a special purpose for you in this world, a large part of which will be to fulfill the role as peacemakers in a divided world and church. Jesus preached ...

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God!”

If you do not have any idea at all who global kids are, please bear with us for global kids need your help to help them understand your unique cultures in as much as they are keen to help you understand theirs! Together, the multicultural world community will become more and more like the new earth and new heaven community when Jesus comes again.

Jesus shared in Luke 13:18-19 ...

“What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?

It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden.

It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched on its branches.”

Globalisation of Communities in the 21st Century

People from many nations live together in close proximity in many parts of the world today. One familiar example is in our very own Malaysia.

We just do not stop learning till we die, some say. After over 22 years after I left Melbourne, Australia, in 2001, I revisited my former “second home” and stumbled on a book entitled: *‘Strangers in my Homeland’*. In it, the various writers described the lives of children who have followed their parents to live in foreign lands due to the latter’s careers or vocations. When these children, who eventually grow into adults, followed their parents back to the country of origin, they could not feel at home in these countries. Some were born overseas and had never known their parental homeland. As for their parents,

they may not be able to accept that both the society they earlier left behind, and they, have changed so much; some long to return to the adoptive countries which they have grown to love, be it Asia, Africa or Australia.

However, if they revisit those “foreign” places so close to their hearts, to their horror, they find out that things and people have also changed and moved on without them. Such discoveries may tear their wounded hearts apart. Some recover and get on with life more mature, due to their wider world views. Others succumb to intense loneliness for the rest of their lives.

I cried my heart out in great relief as I discovered parts of my son and myself in that book. This has led me to really want to reach out to those who have undergone similar experiences at various stages of their lives. I want to tell them that it is OK to miss our friends, familiar sounds, smells and sights. I want to let them know that such pains can be redeemed for the Creator, others and self. If only someone else understands them and walks with them, till they begin to see the value of such unique places in their hearts. Please read on as a multicultural kid or adult, or even as one who wants to accept them and simply be

their new friends. Aren't we called to love one another as Christ has loved us and to love our neighbours as ourselves?

Definition

Global kids are children who have *crossed several cultures* by virtue of their having traveled to and lived in several countries during the tender years of childhood. Sometimes they are called multicultural kids.

At other times, they are also called *third culture kids (TCK)* as the assimilation of various cultures in their lives makes them feel as if they are from another world, another culture ¹. I just met one teenager who, at 18, has lived in South and North America, Canada and several Asian countries. Usually, this is due to their parents' change of job or study location, or due to family migration. These kids eventually grow up into adults. It is not easy to recognize them unless they share with you who they are, how they feel about life and how they look at the world. In many ways, they are human chameleons. Why? This is because if they look the same as those people around them, as when they return to their homeland, they feel lonely and ignored as they are different inside by virtue of their wider cultural exposure. If

they look different, as when they live overseas, they become the centre of attraction! What a difficult life, especially for growing children who have to keep on accepting others and their ways instead of being accepted, since they are also often the minority in town.

However, we must note that times have changed with regards to cross-cultural experiences. Before the television and internet era, one has to be present at a certain geographical location to cross distinct cultural borders. Today, a person in a rural place may have his cultural horizons enlarged by using the electronic facilities. Therefore, some who have not lived overseas, for example, but have a wide general knowledge of sights and sounds through the media, may also consider themselves as having crossed cultures, though in realistically much milder tones.

Note: TCK are reckoned to have a third culture in that they have multicultural experiences that most of the others around them do not have. This fact leaves them with a unique mixture of cultures, which by itself, becomes a third culture. Theirs is neither the culture they leave behind nor the culture they will enter ahead.

Why Talk About Global Kids?

Four Reasons

1.

Globalisation of people is inevitable, following the globalization of economics. We will probably either flow with the current of potentially fruitful personal, family and social changes of today and not lose our identity OR be swept by these same currents which may destroy our precious lives if, one day, they prove too strong for us. In case we feel overwhelmed by even the thought of such possibilities, let us remind ourselves that we will not be alone.

Yet, as we see all around us in today's world and, especially in our nation, loving relationships are getting scarce in the rush to be someone else. What does globalisation have to do with those who merely need daily food, water, shelter and clothes? If you allow trade globalisation, is there no meaning for ordinary people like them and us?

2.

Those of us who have reached middle-age were born soon after the Second World War. We are the generation that

has seen both the pre-multimedia age and the current IT age. However the younger generation was born right into our amazing Bangsa Malaysia culture many have little stability of a deeply rooted sense of belonging to their parental culture. Therefore, while the newly integrated Malaysian culture is evolving, they will need help from the more typical global kids who have become adults. We will be the ones to interpret the road-signs for them when they feel lost; we will be the ones to explain to them the differences between, for example, race, culture and religion, so that they may not develop an identity crisis so common among global kids who break down under frequent changes of environment. Sometimes, adults find this painful too.

Example

Race, we cannot choose. It is God who gives us our parents and we have to accept our genetic endowment with thanksgiving.

Religion is one's search for God, no matter how one does it. Having found Him, religion also represents how one worships, loves and serves Him. We may be as creative as we want as long as we do not fall into idolatry where, for example, worship methods and

theological hobby horses have taken over the first love for Christ in our hearts. *Culture* forms part and parcel of any one who lives with others. If they sing, dance, or speak in similar ways, that behaviour becomes part of their culture. If, in their search for God, they develop certain behavioural routines, then their routines become their religious culture. If, because of the same family roots, they cook, eat and wash and celebrate the same way, then that is their racial culture.

Culture is like a vehicle for the expression of a people's way of life. Some of those ways may be good, some bad for a given community. If we are newcomers to a certain culture-1 and wish to introduce what we believe are some better aspects of our culture-2, then we need to get near enough to the local culture-1 before both sides can assess each other and then make a personal choice of which parts of culture-1 and culture-2 to accept or reject for themselves, not for others. No force must be used by the people of culture-2 on the people of culture-1 to conform to the newcomer's culture. Therefore, we may see that culture by itself is a neutral vehicle. It may be used for good or bad, according to the character of the people practising that particular culture.

3.

Many become fearful when observing and thinking about the rapid changes in our society and world. However, we must not fear because:

- a. God, who allows or even ordains such changes at such a time as ours, will be with us.
- b. Having been made in His image and plucked out of a broken world to live as His children, we know that those who know Him can stick together and do His will to fulfill His purpose for mankind (Acts 17:22-28).
- c. If we remain faithful to Him, He may even open doors for us to help many others in our respective multicultural communities, We shall attempt to help our neighbours know God's all encompassing holy love and compassion in the midst of confusing trends of ideologies and economical difficulties, of natural disasters and uncontrollable man-made environmental tragedies. How exciting to live in these times when we may use His gifts in our hands to bless all our neighbours in His Name.

4.

Global kids have been statistically known to become excellent diplomats. They have got so used to getting along with people that they become really good and mature at arriving at negotiations through peaceful means. This will be the greatest reason for this paper so that God's people will become effective instruments of reconciliation in His hands for a sin sick divided world and church, the latter being prepared for her Bridegroom (Revelations 21).

The typical global kids would probably be the natural peers to show the way forward for our Malaysian global kids to have a broader worldview of people and cultures. Together, they will become more flexible, compassionate and not just tolerant towards other human beings in our nation and earth as well.

For Christian global kids, who believe that God loves all and desires all to be saved through the blood of the Lamb of God, their task is even more specific i.e. they would have been unintentionally yet specially trained to be instrumental in preparing the Bride of Christ, which will consist of peoples from all tribes and nations (Revelations 5:9, 7:9, 14:6-7 & 15:3-4).

The Call to Walk with the Global Jesus

Imagine Jesus walking a little ahead of a child walking on His right side. As He walks, He stretches out His right arm and hand sideways as if for the little child to let Him hold her left hand. In that position and companionship, she feels safe to follow Him at His pace. If you are that little child, will you let Him do that? Jesus loves little children and reminds us, on a number of occasions, to trust Him like a child. Will we follow Him into the hearts of global kids who will or have become adults?

Viewed this way, the gospel of Jesus belongs to no culture and yet belongs to all i.e. He is above cultures. This is because God is the One who has placed men and women in various locations in this world to live according to the dictates of the environment in which they live. For example, in temperate lands, much of their lifestyle follows the changes of weather over four seasons. However, in the tropics, where the weather does not show such extreme changes, our lifestyle may remain relatively the same throughout the year if we choose for it to be so, as far as planting and harvesting of crops and clothing are concerned. Perhaps, only

those involved in farming will follow the rhythm of the rain and crops.

How then do we approach such a rare specie - Global Kids, and a common topic - Globalisation of Peoples? We will need some guidelines.

Safety Net for our Response to Cultures

Central Principle ²

God accepts all who sincerely come to Him through faith, whether Jew or Gentile e.g.:

1. Acts 10:34-35

Peter concluded, “ ... I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.”

2. Acts 15:8-9

Peter later stated, “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as He did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for He purified their hearts by faith.”

Other Principles ³

1. Learn about our neighbouring cultures as much as possible e.g. Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament, without indulging in idolatry (anything or anyone that takes the pre-eminence of God in our lives and in the world.)
2. Treat those from cultures different from yours with gentleness and respect. *“Respect takes into consideration the worldview held by someone from another culture. Respect responds with sensitivity in recognizing the pride of ownership another person possesses toward his own culture. Respect acknowledges that God has the same amount of love invested in every human being on earth. Respect esteems another as better than oneself.”*
3. Show genuine interest in another person, whatever his culture, as this indicates you value him. *“Jesus set such an example when He demonstrated the same interest to each one of a broad cross section of persons including tax collectors, children, the woman taken in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well, and wealthy Nicodemus who visited Jesus at night because common values exist almost universally; whatever culture, pertinent subjects of genuine mutual interest always exist.”* Thus, it is more constructive to chat about

issues common to both than differences when we meet someone of another culture e.g. concern about children or parents.

4. Flexibility of lifestyle, especially by the newcomer to another culture, will bring relief to the new and old in any community. We have no right to impose our foreign guest culture on to our host culture. We may influence them directly only when we are welcomed to do so by our hosts. Even then we need to do all to help but not to dominate them.
5. Love, not condescension, is necessary for friendship to form and grow between peoples of different cultures. Ultimately, it is not the cultures that we love but people, the practitioners of those cultures.

Some Characteristics of Global Kids ⁴

1. They learn to accept that *being different is their identity*.
2. *Parental and others' worldviews affect global children* (especially those born overseas and then return to their parents' country of origin, which may not be theirs.)

3. *Adults born at home, and then cross cultures, see the world differently from their children who are born overseas and then 'return home'.*

4. *Parents, on returning home, find their roots in old friends, not so much in places, which may have changed. They also tend to become observers in their homeland because they are now different from old friends who did not share their experiences in foreign lands. If they just pay short visits home, it is like having a holiday and differences are better tolerated. But they often find it hard to adjust to feeling at home again if they are back for good. If not recognized, such feelings may lead them to become mere observers living on the surface of real life. This may further lead to them not taking responsibility for their local community.*

5. *As a child, the global kid reflexly tries to fit into his new environment and becomes a "cultural chameleon". Global adults, however, reflexly challenges the locals' world views and may soon create enemies unnecessarily.*

Therapy and Resolution of Inner Conflicts for Global Kids ⁵

1.

The global kid needs to plant one's own feet in personal truth i.e. who and what I believe and not be dependent on external circumstances (changing cultures). A global kid has reached maturity when he is able to say,

“This is what I believe, regardless of the cultural context in which I find myself. I may alter my behaviour according to changing circumstance, but my truth remains my truth ... who I am.”

2.

He needs to develop *a rubber band* nationality as he is so unique and does not seem to fit 100% into any one culture.

“Hi, is there a passport for global citizens?”

An individual's nationality is learned in early childhood, and it becomes part of the personality e.g. stateless people undergo a certain type of stress that we who have a fixed free citizenship cannot grasp.

3.

If TCKs should enter college, older teenagers tend to feel at home with other multicultural kids on campus as they feel that they are from a similar mold.

4.

Lessons learnt by adults who live in foreign lands tend to dilute their own outlook when they return home. This enables them to more naturally develop greater cultural- religious-racial tolerance with those who are different from them i.e. accept inter-racial harmony better. Surprisingly, they tend to have a reduced tolerance for those of their own background e.g. the way their mothers or siblings talk. The re-entry process *“can be much harder for adults because they are aware of the specific ways in which they differ from those around them, rather than having a vague feeling of being from outer space.”*

5.

The global kid has to deal with the sense of a lack of belonging or having roots, especially for introverts:

“Where will I build my nest?” or “Am I a freak?”

Generally, third culture kids respond to the same changes in a variety of ways, even if they are in the same family. This is probably related to individual personality and the stage of growth when changes take place e.g. a pre-school kid may adjust better as long as loving family members are with her whereas teenagers hurt deeply when they lose their childhood-teenage friends.

Dilemma of a TCK's Struggles on Re-entry

If he ...

“Looks like and thinks like his home culture, he is like a mirror or chameleon” and loses his own inner integrity, identity and peace.

If he ...

“Looks like but thinks differently from his home culture, he becomes an immigrant in his own country” and becomes very lonely because nobody notices his struggles.

If he ...

“Looks different but thinks alike in his host culture”, he is an adopted immigrant.

If he ...

“Looks different and think differently in his host culture”, he is a foreigner.

Question for the Multicultural Kid

Where are you in the process of facing changes?

Pause in God's Presence

Psalm 19:1- 4 shows us that God speaks to all.

Let His warm embrace comfort and hold you in His secure and unchanging love

Jesus, the Supreme Example of a Global Kid turned Adult?

Jesus of Nazareth did not step out of the Middle-East region, as far as history records His life. But Jesus' worldviews were global. By His examples recorded in the Bible, He has fulfilled all the requirements for being a global kid ⁶. He was born in Bethlehem of Judea, brought up in Egypt till past two years old, returned to the Palestine of those days as a pre-school age child and grew up in the town of Nazareth till adulthood. He had got so used to meeting people of various cultures. He could relate with them so well that they began to feel understood and opened up their hearts to Him. The Samaritan woman at the well was one such person (John 4:1-42); the centurion was another (Luke 7:1-10).

Read Luke 4:14-30 ...

In all aspects, Nazareth was Jesus' hometown because He grew up there after Joseph and Mary returned to Palestine with Him. In a smaller town, everyone knew his neighbours well. Further, His filial piety, shown by His care of Mary and His younger siblings, after Joseph died, must have touched many hearts. However, trouble started when, after a short period away down south for the start of His public work, He came

home to old friends who rejected Him. To them, the young carpenter, the late Joseph's son, had changed; to Jesus, He was just obeying the God whom both they and He worshiped, honoured and wanted to obey (John 5:19). It was really not easy for Jesus to make those adjustments in His own *kampung* (Malay term for 'village' or, colloquially, for 'hometown'). But try He must if He were to fulfill God's purpose for Him on earth.

Lesson Gleaned:

God knows what He is doing when He allows us to suffer misunderstanding and/or anger and spite from those whom we think should accept and trust us when we are undergoing culture shock and reverse culture shock. Unless the other person has undergone such adjustments, do not expect him to see things from your point of view.

Read Luke 7:1-10

The Roman centurion in Luke 7 was a foreigner among the Jews of Jesus' days. He belonged to the ruling sovereign. Yet, he could identify with the newly known teacher and healer for who He was and sought His help. He must have heard something about how Jesus' own people rejected Him. Therefore, he wanted to go out of his way to let Jesus know that he respected and trusted Him. The centurion

was perceptive and humble enough to acknowledge that this well known carpenter from Nazareth has authority from a higher authority to heal. He was willing to set aside cross-cultural barriers on his side *because* this holy, powerful and good man has first set His aside. Otherwise, why should he? After all, he was on the foreign Emperor's pay roll.

Lesson Gleaned

Jesus experienced the greatest culture shock when He came to us as a human infant (Philippians 2:6-8). Humility before God and man, and persistent faith in the Father who has a purpose for His experiences, took Him through the thick and thin of crossing cultural barriers to emerge faithful and full of loving mercy for all.

God allowed Jesus to learn things the hard way as Jesus observed and pondered on the cultural differences between the ruling Romans and local Jews, the country and city folks, the rich and the poor, the high and mighty and the needy. Finally, at thirty years of age, when it was time to commence His public mission, He was ready to love all and to welcome all who came to Him for help. Dare we do less instead of letting ourselves wallow in self-pity and depression?

Challenge for Those with Kaleidoscopic Multicultural Experiences

- Enjoy them! It is your life being shaped. There is so much to your experience that can be shared with others. This makes you into a creation that has the greatest ability to accept people, any type of people, but especially those that are overlooked or not generally accepted. So, if you can, share your life experiences and others will learn from you!
- Cherish the positive outcome of your enriching exposure. If you do carry a heavy burden read Romans 8:28 ...
“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”
- Work with God as agents for the Globalisation of Human Relationships, culminating at the Grand Finale when all will know that Jesus is Lord!

**Participate in the Development of
Cross-Culture Worldviews
so that *God's Mission Possible* will be
Fulfilled.**

*The Globalisation of Relationships
on Earth*

*Goals for a Neglected Mission among Malaysian
Believers:*

- To identify and share hope with multicultural kids.
- To be more prepared and not be overwhelmed by the rapid changes of worldviews through rapid cross cultural human encounters and through personal/impersonal contact.
- To ask God for direction as to how to be His ambassadors as His Global Kids, if we really believe in what John recorded in Revelation 5:9, 7:9, 14:6-7 & 15:3-4.

It is highly likely that the King of all creation and the Bridegroom of the church does not mean the above prophecy to be for evangelism only. As we watch world events in recent years, it is very likely that it is meant for the preparation of the bride of Christ for Him. Most probably, He wants us to gradually familiarize ourselves to living with our multicultural neighbours and relatives on earth so that we will not suffer from culture shock in heaven! Think about this.

General Actions

- Involve Global Kids in the Mission-Possible of Bride Preparation
- Consciously advocate the globalisation of relationships on earth starting, with The Malaysian church community.

Specific Actions

1. *Read the Bible* to pick out and study about cross-cultural people and events
2. *Intercede for people all over the world* without having to get out of our closets
3. *Reflect your history*, starting from Genesis 1:1 ...

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

There is a Chinese saying which states:

"To understand a nation, one must understand its memories."

Therefore we must study the history of peoples also.

4. Even if you cannot afford to travel widely, here are some ways of knowing the peoples of all nations ...

A. *Enjoy your face to face encounters with multicultural peoples and events:* e.g. through books, radio, TV, VCR, Internet, VCD, DVD, etc.

B. *Watch Cross-Cultural Films* e.g.

a. *Kandahar* by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Persian language with English subtitles

b. *Empire of the Sun* directed by Steven Spielberg

c. *Three Seasons*, Grand Jury Prize, Audience Award, Cinematography Award 1999 Sundance Film Festival

d. *Music of the Heart*, Nominated for 2 Academy Awards

e. *Quo Vadis*, Cinematic Sight-Seeing Spree Time

f. *Gandhi* 1988's Winner of 8 Academy Awards, including Best Picture Filmed on location in India, 'Gandhi' is a feast of visual splendour, outstanding performances and human drama.

- g. *The Gods Must Be Crazy I*, An Epic Comedy of Absurd Proportions
- h. *The Gods Must Be Crazy II*, This Time, Everybody's Going Crazier!
- i. *Chariots of Fire*, Winner of four 1981 Academy Awards, including Best Picture
- j. *Children of Heaven*, Best Picture 1998 Montreal Film Festival
Nominated for Grand Jury Prize at the Los Angeles international Film Festival Academy Awards
Nomination: Best Foreign Language Film

C. *Read Cross-Cultural Books* e.g. (Non-Fiction)

- a. *Do They Hear You When You Cry*, Fauziya Kassindja, Bantam Books 1998
- b. *Life and Death in Shanghai* by Nien Cheng, Grafton, 1986
- c. *Siberian Dream* by Irina Pantaevea, Bantam 1998
- d. *Falling Leaves* by Adeline Yen Mah, Penguin Books, 1997
- e. *Daughters of Arabia* by Jean Sasson, Bantam Books, 1994

- f. *Daughter of China* by Meihong Xu and Larry Engelmann, Headline Book Publishing 1999
- g. *The Girl in the Picture* by Denise Chong, Simon and Schuster UK Ltd, 2000
- h. *Daughter of Persia* by Sattareh Farman Farmaian with Dona Munker, Bantam Press 1992, Corgi Books 1993
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Conclusion

The Best is Yet to Come: The Certainty of Hope

The writer to the Hebrews exhorted his readers in Hebrews 10:19-25 ...

*“Therefore, brothers,
since we have the confidence to enter the
Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,
by a new and living way opened for us
through the curtain, that is,
His body, and since we have a great priest
over the house of God,
let us draw near to God with a sincere heart
in full assurance of faith,
having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us
from a guilty conscience and having our
bodies washed with pure water.
Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we
profess, for He who promised is faithful.
And let us consider how we may spur one
another on toward love and good deeds.
Let us not give up meeting together, as some
are in the habit of doing, but let us
encourage one another
– and all the more as we see the day
approaching.”*

And again he reminded us in
Hebrews 11:1-3 ...

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.”

Thank you, Father, for faith and security in the unchanging God of a changing people and world!

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