

## PRAYING FOR MISSIONARIES' KIDS

*by Dr. Will Bruce, in consultation with many who work extensively with MKs*

When God calls Christians into ministry, he desires the whole family to be part of his witness in the community they serve. Strong Christian families can endure hardships, overcome difficulties, persevere in the face of discouragements, and be a powerful witness of God's love and grace through their daily lives. Unfortunately, Satan is also aware that one of his most effective strategies in hindering the Lord's work is to destroy the witness of the family, by taking advantage of the vulnerability of children. Missionaries' kids (MK or third-culture kids, TCKs) are extremely important members of the missionary team although often not recognized as such. Effective, strategic, knowledgeable prayer on their behalf can prevent the significant loss caused by their not adjusting to God's will for them.

### **DAY 1**

#### **Spiritual Life and Maturing**

As with every individual, MKs must personally acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior. The MKs' #1 priority must be to establish their true personal identity in Christ. Only then can they grow and mature in Christ. Pray that MKs will have a personal relationship to Christ and put him first in their lives, maintain a vital devotional life, and have a thankful attitude, while still not denying difficulties or griefs; that they will be teachable and willing to accept spiritual guidance from parents, dorm parents and others, so that they will grow up secure, well adjusted and having a self-image based on who they are in Christ, able to remind themselves that Christ lives in them, fully assured of their salvation, and not pitying themselves because they are MKs. Like all children, MKs are seeking personal worth and success which is usually found through encouragement from their parents. Pray that the MKs will recognize the skills they have as valuable; that they will have courage to pursue their interests; that the parents will positively reinforce the children's good behavior and encourage development of transferable skills; that MKs will at all times keep their priorities in line with the mind and the will of God; that their self-worth will be based on being children of God and not on human success.

### **DAY 2**

#### **Family Dynamics**

Sometimes lack of stability in missionary families can come from: (1) Failure of each family member to appropriate or understand their position in Christ or to be constantly alert to the deceptive attacks of Satan. (2) Long separations. (3) Rootlessness due to frequent moves. (4) Disunity and poor relationships within the family. (5) Failure to feel part of the ministry and consequent resentment when there are necessary separations. (6) A sense of neglect when letter writing is left to only one parent. (7) Failure to balance responsibilities toward ministry and family, resulting in the MKs feeling neglected. Pray that missionary parents will make their children feel a part of their ministry; that parents

of MKs will provide the love and attention their children need; that parents will balance ministry and family needs; that the MKs will learn the value of the parents' ministry; that parents (especially fathers) will spend quality time with each child one-on-one and with the family alone.

### **Dealing with Losses and Relationships**

Due to constant changes and moves MKs may "lose" friends and have to cultivate new friendships much more often than their peers at home. Some grow reluctant to establish meaningful relationships and withdraw in despair. MKs need a sense of stability. The parents need sensitivity to any potential confusion of the MKs. Pray that the MKs will accept the challenge of separation if it is necessary to live away from their parents, and will have courage to face loneliness and fears; that they will know it's okay to cry or be sad or lonely, but be sure of God's promise to "never leave them nor forsake them" (Hebrews 13:5); that they will form close healthy relationships and mutually supportive friendships with both nationals and their peers; that they might be protected from any who would wrongly influence their thinking; that the MKs will find good mentors; that they will feel free to openly discuss problems, doubts and confusion; that the MKs will reach out to others who need friends, too; that prayer partners will be faithful in praying for the MKs as well as for their parents. When families return for furlough or home assignment, the MK is exposed to new people, unfamiliar places, different culture and expectations, and thus also needs prayer in these areas. MKs need prayer for grace to relate to the many visitors in their homes as well as to those who host them.

### **DAY 3**

#### **Personal Standards**

MKs must develop godly principles and standards. They will need to be firmly grounded in God's word and develop their own values based upon it. The MKs need to adopt and maintain high biblical values in order to enable them to resist godless circumstances and pressure from their peers, the media and Satan. MKs must be taught to accept themselves, their bodies, their urges, as part of God's plan. Healthy sexuality must be positively taught, first in the parents' acceptance of themselves, and then in parents initiating healthy discussions appropriate to the needs of the kids. Pray that the MKs, if subjected to destructive temptations such as drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, and unedifying movies and videos, will resist them and set good examples for weaker peers; that when Satan tempts them they will resist him (James 4:7) and claim their position in Christ. Pray that they will view themselves as God's creation and walk in the light with Jesus in all relationships.

### **DAY 4**

#### **Cultural Adjustment**

There is the continuing trauma of not quite belonging anywhere. When the MK is serving with his parents, he is singled out as a foreigner, but when he returns to the so-called "home country" he may not feel at home and may have difficulty fitting in. The MK

needs to accept or at least tolerate different ways and customs and be willing to adapt. Language may also be a problem. Being able to cope is a great challenge to the MK. Pray that the MKs will have an appreciation for the unique experiences they have had; that they might see how future ministry or vocation can be enriched by these experiences; that the parents will encourage their children to see their lives in a broad, global sense, encouraging them to consider ministry, whether at home or abroad, but being very careful not to put undue pressure on them, realizing that the Holy Spirit, through the scriptures, must lead them individually.

### **For Physical Safety and Health**

Disasters such as typhoons, volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, drought, fires, as well as murders, kidnapping, robbery, unstable governments and hazardous travel, threaten many missionary families. Many underdeveloped countries have very high pollution or lack adequate medical care or nutritious foods, causing some families to leave the field because of illness. Pray that when MKs experience crisis situations their trust in God will not be shaken. Pray for safety. Pray for the measure of health that will best glorify our Lord. Pray for protection from indigenous and common diseases and that the MKs and their parents will remember that the only really safe place is in the will of God.

## **DAY 5**

### **Dealing with Sin**

MKs, like all kids, need to learn what sin is and how to deal with it victoriously. Due to circumstances on the field or at home, bitterness may develop. It must be recognized as sin, admitted, confessed, resisted and cleansed (1 John 1:9). When not dealt with, bitterness especially causes disastrous, long-lasting results (Hebrews 12:15). Pray that the MKs, if guilty, will recognize and repent of their sins, i.e., bitterness, lying, stealing, cheating, unnecessary anxiety, sexual sins, worry, or sinful anger. Pray that they will walk in the light with Jesus and not in the darkness with Satan from whom they have been freed; that they will mature in Christ as they come into a deeper awareness of who they are in Christ and all that it means.

### **Satanic Influences**

Satan, as the “god of this world,” uses the influences of the cultures in which we live and work to draw us away from the Lord. Pray that parents will be prepared to provide strong spiritual defenses for their families; that the MKs will learn early to exercise their authority as children of God to resist the attacks of the enemy; that they will choose the truth of God’s word as their defense against the deceptions of Satan; that they will submit to God and resist the appeal of the world that opens the door to the activity of evil spirits; that they will refuse the temptation to dabble in occult activities.

## **DAY 6**

### **Finances**

Many MKs have been raised on limited financial resources (by home-side standards), yet may have lived in very undeveloped countries where they may even have felt rich. This dichotomy has an effect on the MKs' view of wealth. Pray that they will accept their financial status without assuming attitudes of "the world owes me a living" because their families have been supported by others; that MKs will not become bitter at the lack of "things" while growing up; and that financial limitations will not cause them to make personal wealth their life goal.

## **Education and Development**

MKs may not realize that their education on the field is often superior to that in their home countries, and that their cross-cultural experience is an education in itself. Pray for homeschooled MKs: for protection of their study hours from undue interruption; arrival of their study materials in good time and condition; self-discipline for mothers in patiently holding children to their prescribed work; friendships outside the home; and extra pressure on the mother. Pray for MKs living at home and attending local national or international schools for: ability to keep up with classmates where possible or to accept themselves if they fall behind. Pray regarding mission schools, that God will give special wisdom for mission leadership in regard to personnel who teach and care for the MKs and wisdom in carefully supervising the school personnel. Pray that MKs who are in a boarding school adjust, get along with the house parents and other MKs, and look to the Lord when struck with homesickness; that the caregivers will have godly wisdom to care for the spiritual and emotional as well as educational and physical needs of the MKs. Pray for MKs who have concerns, fears and anxieties about the future, regarding their careers, further schooling, life partner, etc. Pray that the MKs will have assurance that the Lord will adequately meet their academic, social, school, emotional, and physical needs just as he is able to meet all their spiritual needs. Pray that the MKs will be protected from psychological, physical and sexual abuse in every situation.

## **DAY 7**

### **Reentry to the Home Country**

Most MKs reenter their home country after completing high school. Proper reentry is crucial to the MKs as they enter adulthood. They need to find a campus support group, an extended family and friends and a supportive church, especially if they are not living with their relatives. It is important that they attend a reentry seminar if at all possible to assist in the adjustment to a lifestyle that will often be different from the one in which they grew up. Pray for good self-images rooted in their relationship with God that will not be threatened by cultural adjustments; for keen observation skills; for a desire to know and understand others; for courage to ask appropriate questions; and for a special friend to whom they can go for information and clarification. MKs often view the home-country kids as self-centered, affluent, shallow, living in a fast-paced environment and unaware of the rest of the world. Pray that, rather than becoming cynical, the MKs will prayerfully choose their standards based on God's word and will not judge those around them, and that they will demonstrate godly priorities and principles and influence others for Christ. Pray that MKs will not be proud or withdraw in disappointment, but realize that the

majority of their new friends have not had the opportunity to see the world as they have; that God will give them boldness in sharing the things they have witnessed and the ways they have seen him work; that they will take the challenge to inform and expose the church to world needs and not expect everyone to be excited about their lives and experiences as MKs.

### **Accept Your Responsibility**

Effective, strategic, specific and regular prayer for MKs is absolutely essential. Missionaries do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission in obedience to Christ's command—it is essential that you as the prayer missionary accept responsibility for praying for the MKs effectively. Write to the MKs or to their families, find out about them and let them know you care. Ask them for requests. Communicate regularly even if the MK does not write to you regularly. Use prayers in scripture as a model for praying for MKs. Make the prayer personal by inserting the MK's name or specific situation. Ephesians 1:15-22, 3:16-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-14.