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THE SCHLEHLEINS

Missionaries to the Tsongas of South Africa

MISSIONARY KIDS HAVE IT BEST

Something for Parents and Children to Think About

Some have told us it's not good to raise our children in a little African village. To that I say, ha, ha, ha. And I might add, ho, ho, ho.

The mission field is the best place in the world to raise kids. There are exceptions. But the rule is true. How do I know? Missionaries often have the biggest families. Here are a few more reasons.

1. Missionary Kids See the World

Many of today's kids view the planet by passing the next level of Grand Theft Auto. They look at the world through a 50" plasma screen. Our boys get to see hippos bathing in a Zimbabwean river. Or Afrikaners cooking steak. Both exciting if you don't get too close.

Our eleven-year-old has already crossed the Atlantic eight times. Missionaries, pastors and locals from all kinds of cultures and skin colors have sat at our dinner table. I sit arms akimbo as the tykes ask away.

2. Missionary Kids Love Languages

The old joke still makes me laugh. The speaker of two languages is bilingual. Three languages is trilingual. The speaker of *one* language? An American.

Our brood has heard Tsonga sermons every Sunday morning since the day they were born. A German lady lived with us and taught them to *sprechen.* Now they learn Deutsche online. Got a good arm? You can hit a whole different language group from our front porch.

3. Missionary Kids Get Adventure

As I write, my nine-year-old entered my study. He's holding his pellet gun. "I missed the baboon climbing our wall. He's stealing our papaya again." This same boy spotted three cobras in our yard in the span of 15 minutes. Who needs Six Flags?

Not far from our house is a park full of lions, rhinos, elephants, warthogs, giraffes and zebra. Parents, why confine your kids to such a boring life in the US?

4. Missionary Kids Love the Lost

I almost never go anywhere in the 4x4 without one of my kids along side me. That means they hear loads of Bible studies. They learn the importance of winning sinners to Jesus. Their entrance into a stranger's home is endless.They learn the go-to-parables and their references. They also learn the object lessons that bring the stories to life: rocks, chairs, cell phones, fruit.

Each week my teammate takes his kids to build a little church out of rock in a Tsonga village nearby. In comparison, laser tag is lame.

5. Missionary Kids Develop Thick Skins

The locals laugh at their accent. They touch their hair. They stare. They pick them last in soccer. They tell inside jokes. Good—they learn not to fear man.

I tell my children they should be happy just to be alive. Most missionary kids of the past didn't live long. Nicolaus Von Zinzendorf helped launch the missionary movement before the Great Century of Missions. He and his wife had twelve children; eight died in infancy. The Goforths had eleven children. Five died in China.

The lesson: don't cry when you're skipped in soccer.

6. Missionary Kids See the Difference in Cultures

No culture is perfect, which is not to say all cultures are equal. Some cultures take a bigger bite of the Christian worldview than others.

Someone that lives and dies in only one culture cannot as easily see the difference Christianity makes in every sphere of life: marriage, street signs, clothing, customer service, education, language and death.

Thankful for your prayers,

Paul & Lindy,

Audrey, Nate, Law, Owen, Juju, Clara, and Luke

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