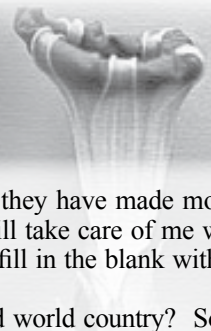


Encouragement to Our Elders

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You have white hair, you have finished raising your children. They are successful, they have made money. They are now grown up. Now they want to be a missionary. "No," you think. Who will take care of me when I am old? I sacrificed so that they could attend the best schools and attend Stanford (or fill in the blank with the elite most desirable university of your choice).

Now they want to throw it all away and set up tent with some remote tribe in a third world country? Sound effects: (sigh, whine, cry...) When will I ever see my grandchildren? What type of ragtag and barefoot children are they going to bring home? Will my grandchildren even know how to speak my language? Or will their hearts remain forever in the jungles as they spend the rest of their days teaching people who don't wear clothes how to read?

Do not fear. Have hope. Your future grandchildren may just be the next prime minister or leader of your society. Take the case of Moses.

Moses in the Bible was like an MK (missionary kid). He was pulled out of his mother's culture (Jew) as an infant, and raised by an Egyptian woman. Then as an adult, he had the audacity to re-enter Jewish society, confront the ruler of his adoptive culture (Egypt) and then lead his society to the promised land. The Bible makes no mention of awkward cultural faux pas as he tries to learn how to talk in Jewish street lingo. Or of the first time he tries to haggle over the cost of something at the local Jewish market. Or of how he secretly may have despised some Jews for being ignorant or uneducated (in the ways of Pharaoh). Moses surmounted these struggles. He became an effective communicator. He was bilingual, multi-cultural and hand-picked by God for that time in his society. Do you ever wonder why God didn't choose Moses' cousin who grew up in Jewish town, Egypt? Let's call this hypothetical cousin Jacob. God chose Moses. Moses was chosen, while fully Jewish Jake wasn't.?

These days in our global economy, it is important for countries to train its citizens to behave and communicate cross-culturally. Global dialog is happening within companies, on the street, and even in the home. Our world is getting smaller. The non-Christian business world values global competence. Our God values it even more.

Here's my encouragement if you hesitate to encourage your grown son or daughter to consider a career in missions. Your missionary will bring home mks. When you talk to your mk grandchildren, you will find a treasure. MKs are linguists, global communicators and innovators. They are global activists. Many are deeply spiritual and care about social justice. These children's brains have been programmed with the skills they will use for cross-cultural communication in a global marketplace.

All they need is some time to adjust back to their parents culture. And when they finally figure out who they are and work out all the frustrations with their parents' culture (Moses had some stuff to work through in the desert, too), they are going to impact your society. They will impact your society with their compassion, their sense of civic awareness, sensitivity to the marginalized and under-represented. They are truth-speakers in our midst. Their perspectives help our societies grow in racial equality, tolerance and justice. They will change our country, and they will change our world.

Barack Obama. He spent some early years in Indonesia, then in Hawaii before he eventually studied law in North America (U.S.). Later, he met his wife, he was a lawyer, he rallied communities in the Chicago area, and entered into politics. No matter if I agree or disagree with his politics. I just use this as an illustration that growing up in another culture as a TCK or mk is just fine. It's more than fine, it's great! There may be some challenges and transitions, but can we deny that this is the stuff of greatness, the training ground for future leaders?

A message to older parents: Let's not hold the next generation back, and the generation after that. Let us give a gift to society and to God's Kingdom: the gift of our children and grandchildren.

God promises to give back to us. I think it is all right to assume that if you let your children and grandchildren to go to the mission field, you will also be rewarded by God because the grief of separation goes both ways: Matthew 19:29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." Because you will experience the hurt of separation, you will receive much from God as well.

If you agree with your missionary son or daughter in your heart and release them to serve the Lord, you are "receiving" a prophet or a righteous person. You are giving them a refreshing break, a cup of cold water. Matthew 10:41-42 "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

None of us will bring our stock portfolio, our social status, our achievements, or our educational degrees to heaven. But if you want to gain huge heavenly returns on your earthly investment, give a chance (a cup of cold water) to one of these righteous ones.