

Father-Son Adventures

Missions

With Father's Day coming up, we took some time to speak  with David Horner, pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. Horner is the author of When Missions Shape the Mission, which examines America's role in world missions. Passionate about spreading the gospel abroad, Horner also took his three sons on mission trips as each turned 16 and had memorable and life-changing experiences with them. He details these accounts to us and recommends other ways fathers can give their children a heart for missions.

New Man: Tell us about the trips you took with your sons.

Horner: I've got three sons who are all grown now. When they were younger, my wife and I made a game plan that as each one approached his 16th birthday, I would take him on a mission trip. A mission trip creates a unique bond and leaves an indelible impression on both father and son—I got to see firsthand what my sons were made of and I was impressed! Each experience was so different.

I took my first son to Poland. The wall had just come down and we were supporting a church there. I was teaching a seminary course at the church, and I wanted Jeff to do something more than just go along. Jeff is more

verbal and has a teacher's heart, so I asked him to do one of the classes. He did a presentation on what it's like to be a pastor's kid in America. He actually got far more questions than any other pastor there, because everyone was intrigued by what the life of an American teenager is like. Of course, he learned far more from everyone there than they did from him.

My second son is a little more outdoorsy, so when his turn came I took him on a trip to support churches we work with in Nepal and India.

It was kind of an adventurous, rigorous trip. We literally had to hike up a mountain to get to the first village because there was a transportation strike.

I remember one night we stayed up late talking to the pastor of the church we were working at. Every year this guy would travel into the mountains for as far he could walk for two weeks, sharing the gospel with everyone he met along the way. Later on, if I felt my son was getting too caught up in American culture, asking for specific brands of clothes for example, I would always bring up pastor Osman and ask if he needed such items.

I took my third son on a trip to Zambia, Kenya and Ethiopia. It was an amazing opportunity for him to see these other cultures. When we got to Ethiopia we met with some missionaries there who had two daughters near his age. He got to hang out with them and hear what it was like to grow up for most of their lives in Africa. Between that and eating food right

on the dirt floor
of a church made of manure and sticks, it was quite the experience.

Now, even years later, the stories we share from these trips are priceless. Of course, they tease the oldest brother about having spent his trip on a European vacation.

New Man: Why did you take your sons on mission trips instead of vacations?

Horner: It's about building a balanced, biblical perspective on the world. The American dream is not the driving force behind life. We wanted our kids to see that joy in the Lord does not depend upon an American cultural and economic context. We wanted them to see that what working and living are like for most of the world. We wanted them to have a deeper, more mature view of the world than is often portrayed in American churches.

Cathy and I had been doing this for years and they all knew it was important to us, but there's nothing way to really understand until you see it and experience it for yourself.

New Man: How does this relate to some of the findings in your new book, *When Missions Shape the Mission*?

Horner: One of the main points in the book is that the Western church has not done very well in our call to preach to the nations. We talk about the gospel and our need to bring people to Christ, but we don't actually do it.

So I wanted my sons to see the Acts 1:8 view of missions in practice. That verse says, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." For us, Jerusalem is your hometown, Judea is Western civilization and the ends of the earth are the same. It's important that we reach out to all the different areas we can touch in our lives. God's heart for the nations and His desire for us to reach out to them are evident throughout the Scriptures, all the way back to Abraham.

New Man: What are some things you learned in the book that are important for fathers?

Horner: The first is learning to pray for missions. Not just, "God, bless the missionaries," but really get to know them and how to pray for them. There are so many resources available for this. The Joshua Project or Voice of the Martyrs are good places to start.

I'd also encourage men to engage their families in any kind of missionary activities you can. Get them involved in anything your church is doing, and if you can't afford to travel, work in missions locally.

Show them how to give beyond just tithes and offerings. This is one thing my wife and I could have done better. We encouraged giving to the local church, but not to look for specific opportunities for mission work.

I think the biggest factor is creating a culture in which it is clear what the priorities are in your home. If you live according to

biblical principles, making sure are spending your finances in a way that honors God and teaching the scriptures in your home, you are creating an environment that will encourage real missions in your children.

Finally, the best thing you can do as a father is to love your wife. Make sure they understand that in your life, Christ comes first, your wife second and your children third. There is a complete loss of balance when families revolve entirely around the children. You can give your kids no better sense of security than by making it clear how much you love their mom.

Purchase When Missions
Shape the Mission *here*.