

Raising Up A New Generation to Transform Our World

Please join with the many, many others around the globe who are seeing the tremendous needs of this remarkable group. Read the Scriptures and see that not only are 4/14ers present, but indeed they are throughout the Bible—often in transformational roles. We must care for and nurture children because they are so close to the heart of God. Take the 4/14ers seriously, because God surely does!

May you have a transforming moment when you realize the need for change. And may you say “yes” to intentional engagement in raising up a new generation from the 4/14 Window to change the world.



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*You have established a stronghold
from the mouths of children...
to silence the enemy
and the avenger.*

— Psalm 8:2 (HCSB)



Raising Up a New Generation from the 4/14 Window to Transform the World



The 4/14 Window “The Core of the Core”

At the end of the last century I wrote a pamphlet entitled *The 10/40 Window: Getting to the Core of the Core*. In the first years of this new century, I am urging a new missional focus: **The 4/14 Window**. Although in a different sense, it too can be called “the core of the core.” The 10/40 Window referenced a *geographic* frame; the 4/14 Window describes a *demographic* frame—a life season comprising the ten years between the ages of 4 and 14.

Christian leaders from around the globe are coming together to make an urgent appeal to consider the strategic importance and potential of the **1.2 billion children and youth** in the 4/14 Window. It is a plea to open your heart and mind to the idea of reaching and raising up a new generation from within that vast group—a generation that *can* experience personal transformation and *can* be mobilized as agents for transformation throughout the world. Our vision and hope is to maximize their transformational impact while they are young, and to mobilize them for continuing impact for the rest of their lives. I invite you to join with many others who are making a commitment to fulfill this vision and realize this hope.

To maximize the transformational impact of children and youth in the 4/14 Window we must address the spiritual, mental, physical, relational, economic, and social issues they face. We must also confront their “ministry poverty”—the scarcity of opportunities for them to exercise their gifts and achieve their potential in ways that honor God and advance His Kingdom.

It is crucial that mission efforts be re-prioritized and re-directed toward the 4/14 age group worldwide. This requires that we become acutely aware of what is taking place in their lives. We must also endeavor to understand their nature and the essential means to nurture them. Only with this kind of informed awareness will we be able to reach them, shape them, and raise them up to transform the world.

To meet this challenge we must comprehend the needs, nature and potential of children and youth in the 4/14 Window. We must also recognize the very real

opposition and obstacles to raising them up as a transformational generation. However, we must not be defeated by the opposition or deterred by the obstacles; and as we engage in strategic global thinking and answer God’s call to catalytic action, we must do so within a biblical framework.

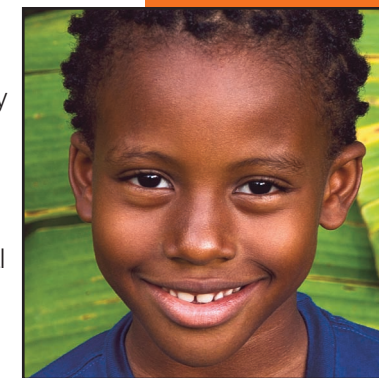
Such global transformation will only take place as God’s people are individually re-made through the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1-2). Then they will discover the good and perfect will of God, this will be their “spiritual act of worship,” and they will be led to engage in God’s mission.

The transformational mission of God involves bringing together all things under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10) through the church, which is His body. The body of Christ world-wide—including children and youth

in the 4/14 Window—are God’s agents of transformation under the headship of Jesus Christ. Every Christ follower in every community and nation—even children and youth—are called to involvement in Christ’s transformational mission.

As we approach this bold initiative, engaging and seeking to equip a new generation to transform the world, we do well to adopt the watchword, “*transformed and always transforming.*” This simple phrase reminds us that transformation is a process and is not fully realized until Jesus comes again. We are co-laborers with Christ, under His headship, collaborating with Him in His transformational mission to raise up a new generation from the 4/14 Window to transform the world.

May God renew our minds through His Word and the vision presented in this brief introduction. May we be God’s change agents to transform the world for the glory of Christ. And, by God’s grace, may the world as we know it be transformed.



Luis Bush
Luis Bush

The 4/14 Window: Ages of Opportunity and Challenge

In human development there is no more critical period than the decade represented by the 4/14 Window. It is a profoundly formative period when perspectives are shaped either positively or negatively and when a view of one's own significance (or lack of significance) is formulated. The needs and potential of this age group should inspire a purposeful response by those charged today with forming the world of tomorrow.

The Intersection of the 10/40 Window and the 4/14 Window

The **10/40 Window** is the geographical area with the greatest need and opportunity. The **4/14 Window** is the demographical grouping that is the most open, receptive, and moldable to every form of spiritual and developmental input. The most compelling fact regarding the relationship between the 10/40 and the 4/14 windows is that our efforts should be refocused on *the 4/14 within the 10/40* in order to reach the most receptive persons in the area of the greatest need and opportunity. In so doing, we are also recognizing the importance of children and youth in God's work of transforming the world.

The 4/14 Age Group Around the World

A country-by-country comparison of the nations with the most 4-to-14ers is revealing. India, with almost 20% fewer people than China, has over 30% more children and youth. This is largely due to China's controversial "one child" policy. Nigeria and Indonesia, with half the population of the U.S., actually have more children and young teens in absolute numbers. In the U.S., 25% of the nearly 42 million school-age children are Hispanic—though Hispanics comprise only 15% of the general population. In Africa and in places such as Gaza, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 40 to 50% of the population is under age 15.

Characteristics of the 4/14 Window

From a missions standpoint, our interest in the 4 to 14 age group is not only because they are the most *receptive*, but also because they are often the most *effective* agents for mission. Of course, Jesus

understood their worth: "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth," He said, "because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure" (Matthew 11:25-26).

The Modern Context of the 4/14ers

The 4/14ers are riding a technological wave into the future. More than any previous generation, they are plugged in—all the time—with a world of information at their fingertips. Says one expert, "The youth of today, due to the strong influence of technology in their everyday lives, are constantly confronted with the problem of self-definition. To most adolescents, technologies such as mobile phones are implicated in the production of individuality and personhood."

There is much that is frightening and disheartening in the exposure and "flatness" in this "brave new world." But, as uncomfortable as we in the older generations might be in the Internet culture, it is undeniable that the 4/14ers are very much at home there, and will be ever more so as it continues to unfold at an unprecedented pace. We must understand and accept that this very connectedness and instant access and sharing is part of the great potential of the 4/14ers to transform their world.

The 4/14 Challenge: Maximizing Transformational Impact

We face a multi-faceted challenge, and it can be met only with a holistic approach. In raising up the 4/14 generation for transformational impact, we must address their physical needs, their intellectual needs, and all the relational, social and spiritual dimensions of their lives. **We must embrace the whole person**, endeavoring to see 4/14ers as God sees them. In relating to those who live in impoverished conditions we must look beyond the lack of assets and advantages and see the individual. And we must recognize the cyclical, negative forces at work—the disempowering systems that result in ongoing or even intensified poverty.

1. The Spiritual Challenge

George Barna's research verifies that a person's life-long behaviors and beliefs are generally developed during childhood and early ado-



lescence. In the overwhelming majority, moral and spiritual foundations are in place by age nine. Fundamental perspectives on truth, integrity, meaning, justice, morality, and ethics are formed at this early stage of life.

In the 4/14 age group we also see the natural confluence of evangelism and discipleship. Barna observes, "By the age of 13, one's spiritual identity is largely set in place." If we can reach children and youth and disciple them when their life perspectives and worldviews are being shaped, we will set them on a rock that cannot be easily moved.

2. The Mental/Cognitive Challenge

Educators worldwide understand the critical importance of the correct formation of children; however, despite the efforts of many governments, untold millions of children receive little or no education. This problem of substandard education is exacerbated by other factors—the disintegration of the family unit, poverty, ill health, poor nutrition, to name but a few. This then results in masses of unmotivated, poorly educated men and women, barely capable of earning a meager income. And the situation is further complicated for children whose own parents deprive them of an education by forcing them to work in order to help support the family.

3. The Physical/Health Challenge

One of the motivations for focusing on children is that more so than any other segment of society, the world's children are suffering, often as a result of the sins of adults. Key statistics reveal the critical nature of this problem:

- More than 91 million children under 5 suffer from debilitating hunger
- 15 million children are orphaned as a result of AIDS
- 265 million children have not been immunized against any disease

Health interventions during childhood can prevent damage that is virtually impossible to repair later in life. Addressing the physical and emotional health issues of the young can result in significant advances in lifelong well-being and personal development. Working to improve the health of children not only provides them a more promising future, it is also an invaluable opportunity to minister to their families and communities. In fact, strategic efforts to improve children's health can lead to the stability of an entire nation.

4. The Economic Challenge

The physical health needs of children and youth are closely related to the broader problems of poverty. The stag-

gering reality is that more than one billion of the world's children—56%—are living in poverty or severe deprivation! A stunning 37% of the world's children—more than 674 million—live in absolute poverty. Additionally, children living in what is defined as "severe deprivation" struggle with a lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. They are also victims of hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited access or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion.

Raising up a new generation from the 4/14 Window to transform the world demands that we address the physically poor among the 4/14ers.

5. The Relational Challenge

Of course, it is not just poor children who are at risk. Actually, all children are at risk. Millions are at risk from poverty, but millions are also at risk from prosperity! Many children and young people today have everything to live *with*, but nothing to live *for*. At the deepest level, poverty is what happens to people whose relationships do not work for their well being. A person's well-being is rooted in wholesome relationships.

6. The Social Challenge

Children and young adolescents can contribute much to positive social change. What often prevents this from occurring is an absence of adults who believe in them; as a consequence, many 4/14ers do not believe in themselves. Nevertheless, most children and young people respond well to challenges and can participate in opportunities to better their surroundings and their societies.

Where children and young people are given a significant challenge intentionally by wise adults or "accidentally" through necessity or disaster or obligation, they usually readily adapt to such demands.

7. The Ministry Challenge

The ministry challenge is about encouraging and equipping the children and youth of the 4/14 Window to use their gifts and potential as agents in transforming the world. They represent an enormous untapped pool of influencers with sensitivity

to the voice of God and willingness to do His bidding. God can and does use children and young people—their prayers, their insights, their hands and their feet—in changing the hearts of mankind.

