

BRIGHT HOPE for DARK DAYS

2008 California Mission Offering Children's Study

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to help children understand the importance of teamwork among California Southern Baptist churches, in praying, financing and volunteering. Ultimately children should be inspired and led to pray, look for ways to give, and think about their own involvement in sharing the Gospel.

Agenda:

This study is open to any number of scenarios: anything from a one-time, hour-long program in conjunction with the rest of the church to an extended afternoon full-out event. It is designed to be adapted to meet the needs of the individual children's group.

Decorating:

Find and display various maps of California: road maps, curriculum maps from teacher supply stores, blow-ups of the CSBC associational map, etc.

Interest centers could be set up around the room featuring: pictures of migrants working in fields or orchards, migrant camps where they live, volunteers distributing clothing, food, etc., or doing day camps; foods they help harvest would also be interesting to children; replicas of the units and tools used in disasters (a toy tractor, shovels, rakes, chainsaws, steel-toed boots, gloves, laundry detergent, toy semi-trucks made to represent feeding stations, health and dental clinics, etc.); school supplies that college students might use (a backpack, Bible, theology textbook, Hebrew Bible, CBU publicity, etc.).

Refreshments:

If you are serving a meal, do a typical Disaster Relief menu: beef stroganoff, spaghetti, stew, tri-tip, etc., salad, roll and dessert. Stress that the goal is to give people what they might eat at home to help ease their pain.

A snack menu should also center on the study: foods that migrants might have harvested: fresh fruits or vegetables, or dried fruits like prunes, peaches, apples, raisins, etc.; foods that summer missionaries might only get in California: fresh guacamole and chips, almonds, raisins, sweet potato chips, etc.

(Note: Always let parents and children know what you are serving and ask if any of them have food allergies to any of the food(s) being served.)

Activities:

Badges: Invite children to cut 3-4" circles from bright yellow or orange "fun foam." While using markers, sequins, glitter or whatever is available to decorate the circles into bright suns, talk with them about how important it is for people to learn about Jesus. Remind them that Jesus changes people and gives them hope. Also remind them that Jesus is the "Light of the World." Share stories about how He changed:

- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- The woman at the well (John 4:4-42)
- Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)
- The widow's son (Luke 7:11-17)
- The bleeding woman (Luke 8:43-48)

If children have used glue, allow the suns to dry. Then using a safety pin, secure each sun to the child's clothing. Encourage them to wear them during the entire month of September to:

- remind them to pray for California
- encourage them to give an offering to CMO
- prompt them (as people notice the badge) to share what Jesus means to them

If time allows, have children make extras and give them to youth and adults to wear (or sell them to adults in your church to help children raise CMO funds).

CMO
CALIFORNIA MISSION OFFERING

September 2008
State Goal: \$500,000

Banks: Using plastic frosting containers or powdered drink cans, precut a hole in the lids. Give each child a bank and have them decorate it with stickers (suns, starbursts, lightbulbs, candles, etc.), markers, etc. Have them print "Bright Hope for Dark Days" around the bottom edge of the plastic. Talk about how important it is for California Southern Baptists to generously give to CMO. Discuss "generosity" and help children understand that the idea refers to an attitude of cheerfully giving beyond what is expected.

Bookmarks: Using a "California" shape have children cut it out and decorate it appropriately as a bookmark. Have them write the verse from I Peter 2:9 somewhere on California and talk with them about what it means to be called out of darkness into God's wonderful light.

Discuss ways CMO money is spent to help Baptists in California bring light to a dark world:

- Starting new churches
- Summer missionaries
- Working with migrants
- Disaster relief
- Scholarships for college students

Refer to the CMO stories and allocations page for more ideas.

Games:

Matching game: cut out 16 lightbulb shapes from construction paper. Write one of the following on each: I Peter; 2:9; into; chosen; royal; holy; people; out of; declare; darkness; nation; people; belonging to God; priesthood; light; praises. Turn them upside down and have the children take turns turning them over two-at-a-time and matching the "phrases" from the Bible verse. Each child or team keeps the ones they match until the end of the game. The one with the most wins!

Answers: I Peter — 2:9

- Chosen — people*
- Royal — priesthood*
- Holy — nation*
- People — belonging to God*
- Out of — darkness*
- Declare — praises*
- Into — light*

Traveling California: Secure a large map of California at least poster size. Cut out sunburst shapes from orange or yellow construction paper. Write one question on each paper. Play as follows: Divide into teams and give each team a small car for a marker. Place 10-20 small stars on the map starting near Mexico and wandering up to Oregon. Have teams take turns drawing a sunburst and answering the question. If correct, they move their car up the map 1 place. If incorrect, give the other team a chance and let them move if correct. (If no one can answer, tell the answer and put the question back in the pile to answer again.)

Continue play until a team has successfully traveled the length of California.

All About California: Place all the sunbursts upside down on the map. Take turns choosing a sunburst. If answered correctly, the child keeps the sun, if incorrect, place it back on the map. Continue play until all questions are correctly answered. The winner is the child with the most suns!

Game or Review Questions

1. *According to I Peter 2:9, who do we belong to? (God)*
2. *How many Baptists in California are trained to help with Disaster Relief? (2,100)*
3. *How old are summer missionaries? (college age)*
4. *Who are BATmen? (theology students at CBU)*
5. *What is the 2008 goal for CMO? (\$500,000)*
6. *Name two things summer missionaries do. (VBS, Bible clubs, camps, street ministries, youth groups, feeding centers, migrant work, resort ministries)*
7. *Name one thing Disaster Relief volunteers do. (feed victims, laundry, property cleanup, childcare, counseling)*
8. *How does CMO help BAT students? (scholarship money)*
9. *What percentage of CMO goes to help start new churches? (37%)*
10. *What are BAT students studying to be? (pastors, church leaders)*
11. *How does Disaster Relief spend their 12% of CMO dollars? (maintaining their equipment)*
12. *How long are summer missionaries in California? (June-August)*
13. *From I Peter 2:9, what are we supposed to declare? (God's praises)*
14. *How much does Disaster Relief charge people for help? (nothing)*
15. *What is a summer missionary's main job? (share Jesus)*
16. *What is a BAT student's main job? (share Jesus)*
17. *What do Disaster Relief volunteers want to do most? (share Jesus)*
18. *What will the 2008 CMO help California Southern Baptists do? (share Jesus)*
19. *According to I Peter 2:9, who are we? (chosen people, holy nation, royal priesthood)*
20. *What is the CMO theme? (Bright Hope for Dark Days)*

Memory Verse:

Make a large "lightbulb" shape from orange or yellow poster board and print the verse on it. Display it in a prominent place and refer to it often.

Set up a display that has different sources of light (lightbulb, CFL, candle, lantern, flashlight, glow sticks, matches, shapes of a sun, a star, a moon). Discuss how and why each is used.

Sitting in a circle read the verse and briefly talk about what it means to be a chosen people ... belonging to God. Talk about the responsibility that goes along with this verse, and how important it is for California Southern Baptists to spread Bright Hope for Dark Days. If children are old enough, talk to them about the signs of darkness around them and how they have to be careful to protect themselves from it. Repeat the verse together several times. Pass a flashlight around the circle and have each child say one word of the verse as they shine the light up (from their lap) onto their face.

CMO Stories:

The following stories about California missions can be integrated into the lesson as appropriate.

Disaster Relief: Disaster relief and mission action projects receive 12% of all the money collected from the California Mission Offering. Part of this money goes into maintaining the equipment used: vehicle maintenance, registration, licensing and insurance. According to Don Hargis, director of Men's Ministries for California Southern Baptist Convention, more than 30 truck and trailer units are available to help with disasters – everything from large kitchen units that can prepare thousands of meals per day, to shower and laundry units that allow people the dignity of cleanliness at an otherwise desperate time. There also are trailers that haul equipment used to help clean up property after fires, floods and earthquakes, including chainsaws, shovels, rakes – whatever it takes to do the dirty job of helping people put their lives back together. Even a "bobcat" (small tractor) helps.

With more than 2,100 trained volunteers in California, some of the funds also go to training people for such jobs as cooking and feeding hungry victims (and volunteers), doing laundry, childcare, cleaning up burnt or flooded homes, crisis counseling (chaplains) and communications (helping people find loved ones or stay in touch with what's happening). No one is ever charged for these services, and Disaster Relief pays travel expenses for volunteers.

Don Hargis, CSBC Disaster Relief director, tells stories of how important it is to help people when they are hurting. Cleanup crews help people sift through the ashes of their burned homes and have found wedding bands – charred but not destroyed – war medals, valuable coins and teddy bears. Even though these things are scorched from the fire, they are precious to people who have lost everything! Volunteers tell story after story of sharing Christ with people because they are touched by Christians during a crisis in their lives.

California Southern Baptists are able to bring bright hope during dark days to people in need because of gifts to the California Mission Offering.

Summer Missionaries: One of the most exciting ministries in California is summer missions. This year 108 college-age students from all around our nation (and some international students) hit our state the first of June and will minister until August. Just like lightning – they brighten for a moment and move on.

While some missionaries have the same location or ministry all summer long, the majority move from church to church weekly, doing Vacation Bible Schools, Neighborhood Bible Clubs, day camps, youth and children's camps, street ministries or whatever a particular church needs. Other missionaries stay in one church or location all summer, ministering in Yosemite, Tahoe or special projects like San Diego. Some work with youth groups or feeding centers or migrant camps the entire time they are here.

At a block party in McCloud, summer missionaries Amanda and Daphne painted children's faces and shared the plan of salvation. Two children prayed to receive Christ!

During a Vacation Bible School in Southern California, Tim led four children to the Lord!

During food and clothing giveaways in migrant camps all over the Central Valley hundreds hear about how much God loves them.

Summer missionaries not only spread excitement all over California, they help people realize that only Jesus brings bright hope for dark days.

It is interesting to note that sometimes being a summer missionary in California changes not only the lives of people they touch, but the life of the missionary too! In 2007 Anna came from Mississippi to California. God gave her such a love and burden for her ministry here that she came back to the same area this summer as a missionary again.

In 1999 Tim came to Northern California to do resort/lake ministry and then in 2000 came back to the Bay Area. After finishing college he attended Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and is now serving as a missionary to a large unreached people group in California.

There is a young lady named Beverly who came to the Central Valley in the early 1970s as a summer missionary, came back after graduation to work in a church there and eventually God called her to Jordan as a career foreign missionary. God brings bright hope for salvation, and it lasts our whole lifetime!

Bachelor of Applied Theology Program, California Baptist University:

Ever wonder what it would be like to be a bat? College students in California Southern Baptist churches have the opportunity to find out firsthand. Obviously not the kind of bats that fly around at night eating bugs, but the Bachelor of Applied Theology program at California Baptist University in Riverside helps train future pastors and church leaders. It is known as the BAT program and students in the program sometimes jokingly refer to themselves as BATmen.

In the BAT program students study in the classroom and learn from serving in churches. By giving to the California Mission Offering scholarships are provided to help these future pastors go to school and work in churches.

The California Mission Offering helped Tim Bohrer and Jourdon Glasper serve as summer missionaries with Inland Empire Baptist Association as part of their ministry internship. Tim and Jourdon worked with 10 churches in the association, leading in Vacation Bible Schools, Bible clubs for boys and girls, and many more important activities.

The scholarships the California Mission Offering provides allow Debra Filpot to go to school and lead children's ministries at Mosaic Church in Chino; help Kyle Logan work with youth and teach the Bible at Shoreline Baptist Church in Fountain Valley; and Luke Wright work with university students at Valley Baptist Church in Bakersfield.

Going to college is very expensive and California Baptist University is no exception! The scholarships that are provided through CMO make it easier for young men and women to get the education they need to be great leaders in our churches.

Carol Bohrer, a CSBC children's specialist, is the writer of the Children's Learning Session for the 2008 California Mission Offering. A graduate of California Baptist University, Carol has worked with children for more than 20 years. She and her husband, John, live in Red Bluff where he serves as pastor of Antelope Home Fellowship.



The California Mission Offering is inspired by S.G. Posey, a CSBC missionary pioneer.