

Five-Minute Mission Moments – VBS 2008 *“Launch Liberia”*

Day 1 – Preparation

What You Will Need: A large world map, or an overhead transparency with the continents, or PowerPoint slides of the continents of the world. You will also want to prepare the word strips to use during the presentation.

The size of your group should determine your preparation. For a group up to thirty, you may enlarge the enclosed outlines of the continents and cut them out of different colored poster board. For a group larger than thirty it is recommended that you choose a PowerPoint approach or the overhead transparencies. Choose a different bright color for each continent.

Presentation – INTRODUCTION TO LIBERIA

1. Begin by introducing yourself and the “Mission Moments” time of your VBS. Tell the children this is a time when you will be talking about the needs of people in another country and how the children and staff can help. Briefly explain that “missions” is taking the good news of Jesus to people who have never heard the message.
2. Move to your visual. Begin by showing the continent of North America.
3. Ask the children to identify the continent; then ask if they think this is where our country of study will be this year. Move on to another continent. **NOTE: Leave Africa for last, or next to last, so the children don’t lose interest. Show the word-strips as you speak.**
4. Point to the part of the western bulge of Africa that is Liberia. The word, “Liberia” means “Land of the Free” in Latin. We will be learning more about this country throughout the week.
5. In 1822, freed slaves and free-born African-Americans left America and sailed for Africa to start a new colony for those leaving slavery in the U.S. They named their new country, “Liberia.” The freed slaves who settled Liberia became known as “Americo-Liberians.” The settlers were not the first to live in Liberia, though. There were already 16 African tribes living in Liberia.
6. Liberia is close in size to the state of Pennsylvania here in the U.S. **NOTE: Use marbles or ping-pong balls to illustrate the difference in population between Pennsylvania and Liberia.** A little over 3 million people live in Liberia while almost 12 million people live in Pennsylvania. More than half of all Liberians are under the age of 18 years old.
7. The people of Liberia need our help. Liberia went through a terrible civil war from 1989-2003. For fourteen years, three different groups of Liberians were fighting with each other. Many, many people died (including 50,000 children). Things we take for granted were destroyed: good roads, homes and businesses, schools and hospitals. Land that had been used for farming became forest again because there was no one to plow and plant. Today there is very little electricity or clean running water outside the capital city of Monrovia.
8. Liberia is one of the poorest nations on earth. Experts say it will take at least 20 years to rebuild the roads, bring in electricity, and provide clean water. Most of Liberia’s children have never had the chance to go to school – ever.
9. Our mission project this year is called, “Launch Liberia.” The E.C. Church hopes to raise \$110,000 to help the Liberians as they begin to heal and put their country back together again after the long, hard years of the war. Will you help?
10. Close with prayer, asking God to help Liberians heal, forgive, and rebuild after this long, terrible war.

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Day 2 – How Could This Happen?

Preparation - You will need two characters: one straightforward interviewer and one monkey. The monkey can be some type of puppet or someone dressed up to resemble a monkey. (The person playing the monkey can ham it up to make it more fun).

Review: Quickly have the children identify the continents as you show them. Ask someone to tell about the Annual Mission Project (Launch Liberia, \$110,000, to help Liberians rebuild after the war).

Presentation:

Mission Moments Interviewer

Mandisa the Monkey

Mission Moments Interviewer: (Mandisa is visible to the audience but is obviously asleep. The Interviewer steps to the front and addresses the audience in a slight whisper). I think Mandisa is sleeping off some jet lag. I've called and called, but Mandisa doesn't answer. Here's what we're going to do. On the count of three, I want you to stomp your feet just as loud and as fast as you can. Ready? One! Two! Three! STOMP!!!

Mandisa: (Wakes up badly startled). Oh, no! Oh, no! What was that? Help! Help! Everybody, run for cover! We're under attack!!!

Interviewer: (Gently, but firmly). Hey, Mandisa, it's okay. We're not under attack. We're okay.

Mandisa: (Shocked and puzzled). We're not? (Looks at Interviewer). Are you sure?

Interviewer: Yes, I'm sure of it. (Slightly embarrassed). The kids and I were just having a little fun, that's all.

Mandisa: (Almost crying). I'm sorry, but that wasn't funny at all. You see, where I come from, bombs and guns have been a way of life for so long. Just when we thought there would finally be peace, the fighting would start all over again. (Starts crying). My country of Liberia has known very little peace and freedom. (Now sobs deeply).

Interviewer: (Sympathetically). Oh, Mandisa. I am very sorry. I really didn't know. Will you forgive me? (Mandisa stops crying).

Mandisa: (Wiping away tears and sniffing a bit). Yes, I forgive you.

Interviewer: (Gently). Mandisa, how did all of this start?

Mandisa: It all goes back to the beginning of modern Liberia. Remember those freed slaves who came back from America? We call them Americo-Liberians. When they came back to Africa, they came with an attitude of pride.

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Interviewer: (Puzzled). Why was that?

Mandisa: Although they had been slaves, many had been taught to read, write, and do math. These were things the native Africans knew nothing about...

Interviewer: Oh, I see...

Mandisa: For almost 150 years, the Americo-Liberians ruled the country. The tribal people had no say in what happened in their government because they were not even allowed to vote! They became angry and impatient as the Americo-Liberians became richer while they struggled just to survive. Many of the leaders borrowed a lot of money from other countries just so they could make themselves rich and throw parties. This left the people very poor.

Interviewer: (Cautiously). Uh-oh. That doesn't sound good.

Mandisa: It wasn't. One tribal group decided to force the Americo-Liberians out of office. They fought until they took over the country. However, their leader was **no better**, so a third group began to fight against the first two groups. It went on like this for nearly fourteen years. Many people have died and many have left the country.

Interviewer: Oh, Mandisa, that is **so** sad.

Mandisa: It **IS** sad. What's worse, boys as young as eight and nine years old were kidnapped and trained to use guns and knives and do **terrible** things. If anyone said anything bad about the President or the government, they were arrested and sometimes killed.

Interviewer: (Shakes head and sighs). That's awful!

Mandisa: What's worse, though, is what happened to our churches.

Interviewer: What about the churches, Mandisa?

Mandisa: The soldiers went into the churches and stole everything inside. Then they smashed out all the windows. The rebels even took off the tin roofs and melted them down so they could make more bullets and continue the fighting. Some of our pastors and youth leaders were killed because they spoke out about all the bad things that were happening. We were nearly destroyed and yet my people still hold on to their faith in God.

Interviewer: That's incredible, Mandisa.

Mandisa: The best thing you can do right now is pray for us. Will you pray for us, boys and girls? (Slight pause). Will you pray for the strength to forgive our enemies? Will you pray for the supplies we need to rebuild our country once again?

Interviewer: Thank you, Mandisa. You've really opened our eyes to the needs of your country. Let's pray about these things right now. (**Interviewer or Pastor, close in prayer**).

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Day 3 – What Is Daily Life Like?

Preparation – You will need to gather the items listed below. You may want to set them up in view of the children or pull them out of a decorated box. You will need the following items:

Hand-held fan
Tropical picture or rainforest picture
Box of rice
Basket with fruit (real or plastic, take your pick)
Picture of meat or livestock or plastic hamburger
Metal cooking pot
Small, dry, tree branches (good for kindling)
Empty change purse

Review: Quickly review the name of the country of study (Liberia) and the mission project. Ask several children to each name one thing they’ve learned about Liberia.

Presentation: As you hold up each object, explain how it relates to daily life in Liberia.

1. **Tropical Picture And Fan** – explain to the children that Liberia is a tropical country. It is very hot and humid. Wet, tropical rainforests are found in Liberia.
2. **Box Of Rice** – rice is one of the main foods in Liberia. Other starches include: cassavas and eddoes (edible roots), sweet potatoes, plantains (similar to bananas), and sweet corn.
3. **Basket Of Fruits And Vegetables** – oranges, grapefruits, avocados, bananas, pineapples, and watermelons are readily available. Cucumbers, okra, collards, eggplants, and lima beans are also part of the Liberian diet. The land is good for many kinds of crops, but many farms have been destroyed by the war and have become forests once again.
4. **Meat** – is very hard to find in Liberia and, even if it was available, the people could not afford it. The barnyard animals were killed off in the early years of the war. Several years ago, a visitor to Liberia noticed he did not see any wild animals or birds. When he asked his Liberian friends about it, they told him that during the war years they ate whatever they could find in the forest to survive.
5. **Metal Cooking Pot** – there is no running (tap) water in most of Liberia. The women have to take their cooking pots and walk to nearby springs, streams, or rivers, fill them up, and then walk back home again. They do this at least twice a day.
6. **Small, Dry, Tree Branches** – Liberians don’t have ovens, stoves, and microwaves like us. There is very little electricity outside the capital city of Monrovia. Women and children gather sticks and twigs and cook outside over an open fire.
7. **Empty Change Purse** – Open the change purse, hold it upside down, and shake it to show that it is completely empty. Only 5 people out of 100 adults have a job. Even doctors, lawyers, and teachers are unemployed because no one has money to hire and pay them.

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Day 4 – “Launch Liberia” – Good News At Last!

Preparation: You will need to either gather your own visuals or recruit some volunteers to practice for this segment. Read through this day’s material and decide which you want to do.

Review: Quickly ask the children to identify the continents and the country of study. Ask them to name what they think are three or four of the most important things Liberia needs in order to begin to recover.

Introduction (Mission-Minded Kids Leader): Those were very interesting ideas. Perhaps you think things in Liberia look hopeless. **(Pause for response from children).** But, I want you to know that there are reasons for hope in Liberia today. First, there has been peace in the country for almost five years. This gives people (both inside and outside the country) hope and confidence that things can change.

People are more ready to send help and supplies. The E.C. Church has started a program called, “Launch Liberia.” Do you know what it means to launch something like a new ocean-going ship or, maybe, the space shuttle? **(Give children the chance to respond).** Yes, it means to begin something or to get it started on a journey. We want to help Liberia get started on the path to healing from the war. Do you remember how much money we would like to raise for “Launch Liberia?” **(Pause and see if children remember the answer).** Yes, \$110,000 is a lot of money, isn’t it? How do you think that money will be used to help the people of Liberia? I’ve asked some friends to come and help me.

The people of Liberia have many needs. They need help for the mind, body, and the soul. Here’s how the program will work.

(Boy 10-12 years old): I was a child soldier and my parents were killed in the war. I was homeless and starving. But now, I have a home at the children’s center. I have school supplies, so I can go to school now. **(Show some books and pencils).** If I feel angry, guilty, or depressed about the war, I now have someone who will listen to me and help me. **(Have an adult come alongside the child and pretend to talk with the boy and pray with him).**

(Young woman): My husband was killed in the war. I had no way to find a job or earn money for my family. Then someone came and taught me how to start my own small business. They taught me to sew and they gave me a small loan of \$50 so that I could buy thread and fabric. **(Show play money, some pieces of fabric or clothing).** Now I sell my clothes at the open-air market. We have food to eat and my children will be able to go to the new school that will soon open.

(Man): The people of Liberia need to know about the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. I have been trained to start new churches. **(Show an open Bible).** Now I will train other men to go into the villages and start churches, too. We will help the people of Liberia find hope in God. **(Leader, close in prayer. Ask God to provide the money needed to help the people of Liberia rebuild after the long war).**

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Day 5 – A Liberian Folk Tale

Preparation: Use the enclosed visuals to create hand-held puppets. You can mount the figures on large Popsicle sticks, wooden paint stirrers, or on paper bags. Read the story through ahead of time and make sure you are familiar with it.

You may also want to choose several children to each be one of the characters in the story. Line the children up, facing the audience with their puppet as you begin the story. Have each child step forward with their puppet when their character is mentioned. Often, these folk tales have a moral lesson. See if the children can figure this one out!

Review: Use the headlines from each day to review what the children have learned about Liberia.

Presentation: Explain to the children that very few people in Liberia have computers or TV sets. They tell colorful stories like this one to pass the time at the end of the day. As you introduce today’s story, ask the children to listen closely and see if they can tell you the moral (or point) of the story.

How Fisher-Bird Gained His Colors – by Aunt Clara

One day a woman was gathering palm nuts in the forest when she fell from a tree and hurt herself so badly she could not walk. As she lay on the ground in pain, Green Pigeon alighted on a nearby branch.

“Pigeon,” cried the woman, “Fly to my village and tell my people I lie here, hurt, and unable to move.”

“I am too busy,” Green Pigeon answered, and flew away.

Hawk saw her lying there, and came close.

“Hawk,” said the woman, “I give you these palm nuts. Eat them, and then go to my village and tell my husband to come. I have broken bones and cannot move.”

Hawk ate the nuts, but then laughed and flew away, saying he had no time to carry messages for foolish women. Then Fisher-Bird came. In those days he was a plain and ordinary brown bird without any bright colors.

“I see you are hurt, Woman,” he said at once. And, being a friendly creature, he added: “I will fly to your village, and tell your people to come.”

He flew to the village, and the woman’s relatives came to fetch her. Some days later, when the woman was almost well again, Fisher-Bird came to see how she was.

“O Fisher-Bird,” declared the grateful woman, “You are the best and most courteous of birds. I shall give you colors befitting your noble heart, so that all men may know and love you.”

With dyes used for dying cloth she painted the delighted bird in royal colors of purple, emerald, and blue, and Fisher-Bird has had these colors ever since. **The End.**

(Leader or Pastor, close in prayer. Thank God for the continuing peace in Liberia and pray that it lasts. Ask the Lord to help the people forgive their enemies, rebuild their lives and their country and find hope at last).