

A new home

Our 4th and 5th grade ministry has been undergoing some changes as of late. Early this summer the one who headed it up for the last several years passed the reigns over to the one who had been running the younger ages for some time. His own duties now encompass the entire children's and student ministries, as well as co-running the church camp. Anyway, things for the last few months have been running pretty much as before with a few new policies thrown in- things like changing the reward system (for memorizing verses, doing devotions, etc) and having us interact more with the parents.

Well, transition period is over and things are a-changing. A few weeks ago someone who had been with us a few years ago came back and has been placed in a position organizing the 4th/5th grade ministry as a part of his studies at Moody Bible Institute, and he is full of ideas. He has made a few changes already and probably the biggest one this weekend is that we are now to call the children who are in our small groups weekly. We took down their phone numbers and I have a list of about six or seven who I will need to call this week. Next week some of them will go with one of the new leaders who has sat in the last couple of weeks and will be ready to lead some of the kids next week on his own and so he will become responsible for calling them. I hope we get more 5th graders next week though as they were pretty much outnumbered by the 4th graders and I would like to have a larger group than three or four after we split. Unfortunately at least one of them usually attends at a different service so I will lose him for sure. Oh, another change was to go back to splitting groups by grade as we have been just splitting by gender for the last year. I will be first to admit that we have been getting lax over the years so changes are refreshing and will hopefully benefit the students.

The biggest change however has nothing to do with the staffing

changes. While this weekend we started with phone lists, we also started in a different room. The room we are in now was at one time exclusively for junior high school, and on Sat night/Sun morning since junior high didn't meet (they meet Sunday nights) it was used as a live video feed for those who for some reason weren't in the regular worship center (parents with crying children who took their children out of the worship center for example). However, they redid the area in front of the church and that has become the new live video area. So now we are back in the junior high room. Wait, did I say *back*? Yes, when we started the ministry, breaking it off from the rest of the grade school ministry, it met in this very same room. I'm not sure why, but at some point they moved us to a different room (maybe this was the start of live video feed?) and we finally ended up in the school library after that wing was remodeled and second floor added. Now that we've outgrown that room we're back in the original room, only now it is better than before. We have a full sound and video system including microphones if we need it, we have games like foosball, carpetball, and air hockey that the kids can play before the service starts and while waiting to be picked up, and the room just looks nicer than it did nine years ago. Yes, I have been doing it for that long. Who knows, maybe my calling might be to leave this church and organize a similar ministry at a smaller church? Or maybe just stay here for another nine years.

It's official- summer is over

And mostly due to my laziness I am subbing once again, and that is good news for this blog. I have been on hiatus from this for too long. I still intend to have some posts of my life outside of teaching, but for a while I have just been

turned off from writing during the best time those post would have fit. Well, to tell the truth my life outside of teaching really hasn't been too exciting. Remember back in June when I went to camp? Well, I am finally making the DVD I have done for my cabin for the last few years. I have two slideshows and a video finished, along with a video I borrowed from my DVD two years ago in which I just had to modify the end to fit my more recent cabin. I have been using Ulead VideoStudio which I got free with this computer. It really is a nice program, and not ridiculously high-priced like some packages out there. Last year I used a 30-day demo of a \$250 DVD authoring package which was nice, but not worth that price in my opinion. Maybe \$100 like this one, but not \$250. I also used a slightly buggy freeware program to do one of the slideshows, and maybe another one. I haven't decided yet what to do about this last one to make it different enough from the first two. Well, I still have a week to put the DVD together before the next church time. This weekend is the last one of the month, so 4th and 5th grades don't meet.

As for subbing, I was actually able to get three half days during this first full week of many districts. Apparently the special ed meetings started right away. I could have had a fourth, but they called me after 8:00 to arrive there at 8:30. Well, I might have been able to do that if I was ready to go when they called, but since it was 25 minutes away and in fact I was woken up by the phone call, that wasn't going to happen. Besides, I had to take my car in that morning for a new muffler. Anyway, the three days I did have were pretty similar. They were all at different Junior Highs (that district doesn't call them middle schools) and were 8th grade, or a 7th/8th mix. Two of them were 7:15 AM jobs (too early!) but fortunately I got to sleep in for the last which was an "afternoon," starting at 10:45 AM. I didn't have to leave notes for two of them either, which is always nice, since the teachers came back. Surprisingly one of these times was the "afternoon" job. I guess she came back from her special ed

meeting for the weekly school meeting. Since school started last Thursday in this district and the meetings are on Wednesdays after school, this may have been the first one which would probably make it important to attend. As for the other morning job, that teacher only teaches there in the morning, so I she wouldn't have come back. I would presume she teaches somewhere else in the afternoon.

All in all the three half-days went well. Hopefully I will have more work next week even if there is one day off for labor day. I am signed up again in three of the districts I worked in last year. The last was still on the hired subcaller system and barely called me so I switched them for another district that is computer-based so I have more of a chance for work. That is, I am still working on being signed up there, but that is for a rant in another post..

Teaching time again...

Well, teaching in Sunday school that is. Unlike last time I taught a month ago, I felt I did pretty well this time. I was able to do $1\frac{1}{2}$ lessons this weekend. The $\frac{1}{2}$ comes from last night, when I taught only half of the lesson. Why? Well, there was a shortage of leaders due to many taking the night off for this or that reason. In fact, one who had off rearranged his schedule so he could be there after all. Anyway, it was decided that we would spend most of the night with the younger kids (1st-3rd) as a result and not have small groups. In the end, we did wind up with enough help from last-minute volunteers to do our normal thing, but the wheels were already in motion. I really don't think 4th/5th grades got much out of the younger lesson, but fortunately we had time at the end to do the intended lesson, well half of it

anyway. It was an important lesson so we had to fit it in. I taught them the Romans Road to salvation. This is a series of four key verses from the book of Romans. Here's where I get lazy now and cut-n-paste from [another site](#). You may notice that there are five verses here (6:23a and 6:23b are one), but Romans 10:13 is covered by 10:9-10 so as a "repeat" it doesn't count: ☐



The ROMANS ROAD is a pathway you can walk.

It is a group of bible verses from the book of Romans in the New Testament.

If you walk down this road you will end up understanding how to be saved.

Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

We all have sin in our hearts. We all were born with sin. We were born under the power of sin's control.

Admit that you are a sinner.

Romans 6:23a

"...The wages of sin is death..."

Sin has an ending. It results in death. We all face physical death, which is a result of sin.

But a worse death is spiritual death that alienates us from God, and will last for all eternity.

The Bible does plainly teach that there is a place called the Lake of Fire where lost people will be in torment forever.

It is the place where people end up that remain spiritually dead.

Understand that you deserve death for your sin.

Romans 6:23b

"...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Salvation is a free gift from God to you! We can't earn this gift, but we must reach out and receive it.

Ask God to forgive you and save you.

Romans 5:8

"God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!"

When Jesus died on the cross He paid sin's penalty. He paid the cosmic price for all sin, and when He took all the sins of the world on Himself on the cross, He bought us out of slavery to sin and death! The only condition is that we believe in Him and what He has done for us, understanding that we are now joined with Him, and that He is our life.

Because He loved us and gave Himself for us!

Give your life to God... His love poured out in Jesus on the cross is your only hope to have forgiveness and change. His love bought you out of being a slave to sin. His love is what saves you. Not religion, or church membership.

God loves you! And reaches you right where you are.

Romans 10:13

"Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!"

Call out to God in the name of Jesus!

Romans 10:9,10

"...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

*If you know that God is knocking on your heart door,
ask Him to come into your heart.*

It was a blessing to get to teach this to not one, but two groups of kids this weekend. Today by the way was a normal day- we played kickball, had worship, lesson, and small groups just as normal. They even got to make "salvation" bracelets to remind them of the message. Only last night was weird. I am happy to say that I will have another chance to teach in two weeks- I normally only get one lesson per month. So, another blog entry about teaching then. In the meantime, more of the movies, retrogaming, and whatever. ☐

Transitions

This is a time of transitions. Of course, as you know this is the time school days transition to long vacation time for the kids. They will be transitioning to the next grade, moreso of course these days than yesteryear. Once upon a time schools believed that holding back a child who wasn't ready for the next grade was the right thing to do. Parents had to fight the schools to keep their children from this fate. Nowadays, schools have done a 180 and advance just about anyone believing it does more harm than good to hold that child back. This means that a child can do pretty much whatever he or she wants during the year without fear of having to repeat the grade. Parents who actually believe they might help their child by holding him/her back now must fight for this end

instead. Is being held back such a bad thing? I don't know- I just know things have really changed in schooling.

Okay, I have gone way off topic now, so where was I? Ah yes, transitions. I am transitioning from working to looking for work. I will be looking in to a state job possibly, among other things. I mean, besides teaching- there are state jobs in just about every field. There are also transitions in my church as of late. One of the teaching pastors left a couple of months ago after only a short time at my church to head up another college. The new singles group got started a couple of weeks ago. Most kids moved up a grade starting this week (the rest will change over at the end of August). And, there have been some staff rotations. The pastor that had written the curriculum for at least 4th/5th grade, probably the younger grades too, had transitioned to another church campus running both from there, but now he's back and they hired another one to take over at the other campus so now each is dedicated to one campus. However, as duties have changed now a different pastor who previously did mostly the younger grades has officially taken over 4th and 5th grades as well, meaning he is responsible to get out the emails about the weekend to the leaders, such as what we should be doing, who will be teaching, new rules, etc... Yes, with the transitions come new rules. Just a slight change, but since he didn't get an email out being new to this and all- he didn't let us know until Saturday night. One of us two leaders (yes, only two of us this service) had to take over last minute. Since I work two services, I agreed I would teach Sunday morning so she taught Saturday night. The third service was actually worked out between a couple of the leaders phoning each other when they didn't get an email I found out later, so Sunday went quite smoothly.

This was the first time for the former third-graders, now fourth-graders, so things were completely new to them. They are used to having a drama (which I was part of, of course)

but now they have a game time instead. Worship is also different- they have to provide all the singing. Prior to this, they sang to recorded children's songs, with the leader providing motions to do. Now the leader is more like the leader in the main worship service, providing the music via guitar and possibly other instruments depending on who is there. Well, this was how it worked Sunday. We had no worship leader on Saturday night. High school students are a big part of this ministry and we just don't have any serving on Saturday nights (they often provide the music as well as lead). We have had an adult doing worship Saturday nights, but he wasn't there this time for some reason. I hope he didn't transition out, or if so that a replacement takes over quickly.

Anyway, also new to the new kids are small groups divided up by gender. Girls with female leaders, boys with male. The leaders could of course be high-school age, adults, or somewhere in between which is why I don't say "women" or "men." Well, one thing that hasn't changed is my Monday night small group, and I have to do my homework for it, so- later.

Well, that's all she wrote...

...for the 5th graders in children's ministry that is. What? Did you think I meant I was done with this blog? Today the 5th graders made their exit from children's ministry. In a couple of weeks they will officially enter student ministries as junior high students. Being Memorial Day weekend didn't help though as there were a few who didn't make it due to traveling, though fortunately not too many. The Junior high pastor (I think? I don't remember the other one leaving) came in with a couple other leaders and spoke with them about the

welcome night, things to expect in junior high, etc. The kids were prayed over and given certificates- a sort of graduation I guess. Of course, some won't really be in junior high/middle school if they go to a public school in the area where 6th grade is still elementary, but at the church 6th grade is junior high even for them.

So, kids I have been working with for the last two years are now gone and in two weeks the third grade moves up to take their place. They should recognize me though, at least Saturday night kids, as I have been in the kid's drama. This is supposed to be the time then to heavily advertise camp, but the early bird discount will be over by then as camp is one short month away, and unless things change significantly, yours truly will be joining them for the week. I have said before that that one week last year was very powerful for me spiritually, and I hope it will be the same for me this year- and for whoever will be in my cabin this time around.

Going back to drama, the headline applies here as well. It is done for the season, not to start again until next fall with a new theme. My usual exit line, to tell the audience to be sure to tune in next week, reflected this as well, instead telling them to be sure to trust Jesus since He's the only one who can make us super human. I also added a line for the third graders- that they would see me ("someone who looks like me") in two weeks. Heh, heh... So at the end, we added cast bows, and on reflection, I should have walked over to the puppet as well, since the puppeteer couldn't very well step out and take a bow too. Oh, well.

So what was the assignment?

The assignment I took for today at that furthest school was art and drama. Interesting combination as usually drama is the realm of the music teacher. It was actually a pretty easy day. School started at 8:00, so I was there at 7:45. My first class? 9:30. That's right, I had over an hour and a half to kill reading, answering nature's call, eating free food in the lounge...

This is teacher's appreciation week, so the PTO provides food all week for the teachers. Well, I certainly wouldn't want to offend the PTO by not doing my part here. Bagels, doughnuts, fruit, juice- a second breakfast! Okay, I didn't eat *that* much, but suffice to say I was satisfied with my mid-morning snack.

9:30 rolled around and the first of three classes came in. Now three doesn't sound like much, but remember this was art and drama so I had to teach two of the classes both, so it was really more like five classes- still an easy day though. This first class was 2nd/3rd grade, and it turned out I had subbed for this class before earlier in the year, which had its own interesting tale of two subs showing up for this one job. The teacher had requested a particular sub, making the arrangements herself, then proceeded to put the job in the system as sub needed but not filled so I took that job when it showed up. The principal chose to side with the system, so the requested sub had to do work elsewhere in the building. She wasn't too happy because this apparently was the second time this had happened to her.

Anyway, back to today they just completed a project for art- in fact all three classes did, though differing projects of course- and then I got to teach some drama. Well, play some drama games with them. We did a game called "Change Three Things" which was an observation game. They partnered up and

observed each other for several seconds. Then they turned around, changed three things about their appearance then turned back and tried to figure out what changed. It could have been something as simple as closing an eye, or as obvious as, well I will use one of the students as an example for this- one boy unbuttoned his shirt and put it on again, backwards. Yes, he held up the game doing this- it took as long as you can imagine. Now if it was a t-shirt like most kids wear it would have been quick. Oh, well. This was a pretty wild group so we only did one round of this. Next we moved on to a murder-mystery game, where one person is throwing a party (his/her choice of type of party) but there is a killer at the party. They walk around shaking each others hands while at the same time acting like the type of party it is- pizza, tea, whatever. The killer would "kill" someone by tickling another player with his/her finger while shaking hands. The "victim" would wait ten seconds before "dying" dramatically. The ten seconds being so we wouldn't catch the killer in the act. Of course, being 2nd and 3rd graders this more sophisticated game didn't go quite so smooth. Sometimes they would forget to wait ten seconds or the killer would forget to be discrete. And of course **everybody** wanted to guess at once.

6th grade was only art, so I will move on the the last class, 4th/5th grade. This class was supposed to be a pretty bad class, but to be honest, aside from a few boys who just wanted to make origami "[fortune tellers](#)" because they were finished with the project then go and bug everyone around them with their fortune tellers, I had more trouble with the 2nd/3rd grade class. In any event, for drama I didn't get to choose the mystery game, so for them we did skits about three items. In groups they would pick three unrelated items (example: frog/basketball/telephone) and make a skit around these three things. The trick was they were not allowed to say the names of these objects in the skit. When a group finished, the rest would try to guess the three objects. Of course the goal was

to make the objects easy to guess and this would be an indicator of how well they got their message across in the skit. In the end, many were easy to guess but there were a few tough ones. In all, I would say they did a pretty good job with it. Only some audience participation left something to be desired.

Well, I was able to find another job in the same district tomorrow while writing this. More free food I hope. ☐ Same school as the rejected job, a school I will be at on Friday as well. So far four days in this same district this week.

Miscommunication

Well, I thought I was teaching at church today, but I found out otherwise- right before I was going to teach. As the kids sang worship songs, I went into an adjoining room to look over the lesson again. When I came out, the family pastor was there with his Bible ready to teach. Oh well. I was actually going to ask him last night, but I talked to another teacher who said he saw on the email the ones who would teach this weekend and he thought my name was on it- also that the email said that this month would be the same schedule as last month. So I decided not to bother John. It looks like I should have bothered him after all. Plus when I talked to him afterward I think I may have sounded like I was shifting the blame to that other teacher I talked to when in fact it was me who decided not to talk to the one I should have. I hope I'm just being critical of myself. Anyway, one of the kids I saw earlier this week made it to church, but the other one didn't. Oh well, I hope he shows up next week while I still remember his name. ☐

Well, perusing Worthyboards I encountered this Godtube video I thought I would share. It's about fitting into church. Just so you're prepared, it was in their humor forum...

[godtube]https://www.godtube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=a7bedeb99312cc5d7f4e[/godtube]

I also learned of another video site while looking for a teaching example- it is called [Teachertube](#)! Needless to say, I will be looking through some of these videos, hopefully to post about here!

Memory not as sharp as it used to be?

Memory for remembering scripts that is. We all know about my memory for names and faces by now. Memorizing scripts used to be a breeze, but now I just can't seem to get it right. I had two weeks this time, and it was better, but I still changed a few of my lines because I couldn't quite remember them. I know part of this is actual rehearsal time- we seem to be able to run through it an average of 1.5 times before the performance- but even with this handicap I feel I had a better handle on the memorization at the beginning of the year.

Today we also had a crisis getting props together. There was supposed to be a squirt gun, for example, but I had to improvise by using a flashlight instead (cool flashlight by the way, in the shape of a cordless drill so I think it worked). Also I had to make a backpack have *some* semblance of a rocket jet pack using some printed graphics and rolled-up paper tubes. Of course the tape on this and another prop failed. I will have to bring duct tape for the two groups

tomorrow.

And now, I have to study the lesson for tomorrow's 4th/5th grade class- it is my turn to teach again, and this time I have more than a half-hour notice so it needs to sound like it. ☐

4th-grader I DID know!

Usually I go a long time between seeing kids from my church in their natural daily habitats. Tuesday was the super day, way out of the ordinary. Today I ran into another one, apparently whose memory was not as good as the one I ran into on Tuesday. This time he wasn't in my class, but he was in a nearby 4th grade classroom. I passed him in the hall, then turned and did a double take- I actually recognized him. At the same time, he did his own double take, but he wasn't as sure. When I went to pick up my class from fine arts, there were two other classes in the same room, sort of a special fine arts day. His class was one of them, and his teacher was already leading the class away. He asked if he knew me, maybe from church. I just smiled and said, "I'll see you on Sunday, Brandon!" (okay, I guess first names are okay- I've been a bit paranoid on identifying people). Then he knew. At the end of the day I gave him a high five. So on Sunday, I will see two fourth-graders at 11:15 who I encountered this week, maybe three if Daniel (from Tuesday) brings his friend again.

As far as the day went, it was very easy- no teaching at all. Ordinarily this wouldn't make me happy, but it's been a long week and I was ready for some rest. I even made two errors this morning since I was so tired. This morning went like this: fine arts (combined classes), math test, fine arts

(single class), finish math test, lunch. That was it. The afternoon was a little more complex with SSR (silent reading), spelling test, reading test, computer lab. Yes, they took three tests in one day- not a fun day for them. I guess I did do more than babysit in the afternoon. I of course had to give the words and sentences for the spelling test, and additionally I had to proofread and correct papers on the computer before the kids printed.

In any event, I am glad for the weekend. I enjoy what I do (mostly) but I need the break. Before I sign off, I should mention that all went well except for a couple of boys. One was *constantly* talking, even during the math test in the morning, which he did not have to take since he was in a different math class. Unlucky for me the teacher didn't tell me what he should do so I had to find him something to do. He said he finished the poetry project, didn't have a book, and wasn't allowed to read one of the books in the room because they had to be "checked out" and he had lost a book so he couldn't check out another. I didn't think the teacher would mind, as long as he didn't bring it home, but no dice. Sigh. He was actually elsewhere for most of the afternoon, so that time went better. The other boy was really only a problem while the first one was in the room- they kind of fed off of each other.

Well, that's it for now. Time to torture myself by taking out my contacts, then winding down for bed. Yeah, I know- Friday night. Well, I still haven't gone back to the singles group. They have a movie night tonight, I am David, but I think I have seen it and I just didn't want to go. I really need to force myself next time. Why the torture? Well I just made myself some salsa, 3½ pasta-sauce-sized jars of it. Made with habanero, serrano, jalapeño, and other hot peppers, tomatillos, tomatoes, onions, and cilantro. The hot pepper juice of course clings to the skin for several hours, so hot pepper meets eye and... If I don't post tomorrow it may be

because I'm blind from this. Anyway, goodnight.

Those kids I (should) know...

I have mentioned in the past occasionally running into students who I know from church. The most interesting response one has ever given me was a few years ago in a district I used to sub in. It was an afternoon position and the kids just came back from lunch. Then one boy just shouted out, "Hey, I know you!!!" Well, as is often the case working with so many kids, plus my faulty memory when it comes to names and faces I only vaguely remembered him, but at least I knew from where I knew him, so I said so then slyly looked up his name. From that point on I got to know him better at church, as well as his brother who would enter the 4th grade the following year. Today I found myself in a similar situation. He didn't blurt it out like the one a few years ago, but quietly let me know. Unfortunately my memory of him was no better than that other time. In my defense I should say that I work two services and interact with about 80-90 each weekend. Some I interact with more than others, and he unfortunately was one of those others. No sly tricks this time though, but I mentioned that I may have to have him put in my cabin at camp this June so I remember him better.

So of course this wouldn't be as interesting a post if there wasn't more to this story. After the kids had PE in the morning, they came back and switched classes for science/social studies (my class went to social studies, another class came in for science). So then *another* boy told me he remembered me from church too! After telling him I didn't recognize him, he confessed he'd only been there twice as a guest of the first boy. So, not as much coincidence then

since the first boy was involved. Later, after lunch, you guessed it... I ran into someone else from my church. What three in one day? Is God telling me something? If so He will need to be clearer unfortunately- this mind of mine isn't seeing it. I actually ran into someone from church picking up his daughter for a dental appointment. In fact, I had worked with him one year in [AWANA](#). He was the new director of TNT boys (Truth in Training, 3rd-5th grades) and I was a leader. Anyway, care to guess which class his daughter was in? Just by my asking the question you know it was mine. She didn't know me though as far as I know- it's possible she goes to the service I don't lead in. I'll have to find out.

Speaking of AWANA, I had one of my bigger memory freezes with the former director of the 3rd-5th grade boys. After about six weeks of working with him once a week, I saw him at a churchgoer's get-together at someone's farm. He saw me and said hello, and I recognized that I knew him, but I suddenly couldn't place where I knew him from! Ah, that mind of mine- short-circuits from time to time. Once I said so and he told me, it was the biggest duh! moment ever.

Well, until next time.

Update: Here's a story about someone with a memory opposite of mine:

[Would you like to remember every day of your life?](#)