

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?](#)

Bored

One thing about my life is that I don't easily form relational ties, as in friends. This does make it easier to live on a substitute teacher salary since I don't go to social events, but it does make for a boring life. I have strong ties with my church, particularly children's ministry, but outside of that I don't do much. I occasionally visit with friends I have made, particularly those now in Ohio, but making new friends? Really just acquaintances I only see at church and

usually nowhere else. Is it any surprise then that I am still unmarried? Anyway, when I'm not teaching I am usually on the internet or watching TV. Tonight I came home, surfed the net, watched a few episodes of [Everybody Hates Chris](#), a hilarious weekly comedy loosely based on the teenage life of Chris Rock, and am using the internet again to write this. Unfortunately this is how just about every night looks. I have filled nights in the past with more schooling and musical theatre, but it has been awhile since either one so now I am just reflecting. I pray to meet someone I could eventually call my wife, but that requires social work on my part which just doesn't seem to happen. I really should make sure to get out tomorrow night to singles group at my church. It is a prayer and worship night, but it is followed by fellowship. Unfortunately I am in my mid-thirties and still socially-challenged. I often say really stupid things among people I don't know (and sometimes with people I do!). Also, after this month the singles ministry is breaking for a month to revamp the ministry somehow. I do know I filled out a questionnaire on this about a month ago so I guess this shouldn't come as a surprise. Well, enough about this.

Today I had 5th grade again, only this time it was an ELL (English language learner) class. Mostly Hispanic, but other nationalities were represented as well. This was at a school where I have had problems before, so I wasn't expecting it to go as well as in my home district, though I tried to not act as if that were true. Expectations are important. I don't know if this is a true story or not, but in one of my classes in college we learned about a new teacher who was hired to teach a class, and one of the first things she noticed were numbers by their names. These numbers were in the lower to mid 100's, but all starting somewhat above 100 (120 maybe? I don't remember). She assumed these to be IQs of the students, so knowing that smart kids would easily get bored with a standard curriculum she prepared a challenging and engaging curriculum which over the length of the school year

tremendously grew her students. She ended up with a very successful class with top grades. After it was over her principal (I think) asked her how she was so successful and she pointed out to him the IQ numbers for the students which made her try hard to keep them challenged so they would better learn. To this the principal replied that he was very happy with her teaching, but those were their locker numbers not their IQs.

Anyway, the day actually did not go as badly as I had feared. Sure, there were a few incidents involving a desk falling on the floor and a couple of boys getting hurt by slapping and punching each other, and also some strong-willed kids, but they did their work and they learned. In the end it wasn't a case where I just wanted to be done with it like some days.

Tomorrow: 7th grade language arts

**(Drama × 2) + Teacher +
(Leader × 2) = Full Weekend**

Definitely a full weekend this time around. My normal schedule is fairly busy as is, which is one drama and kid's leader for two services (one same service as drama). Then I go to the worship service during the first Sunday service. This weekend was also a teaching weekend for me and I filled in for another drama member as well. What's the difference between teaching and leading? Well, in a given service there are 30-40 kids in 4th/5th grades. That means several leaders are needed, at least one for every ten kids but the lower the ratio the better. These leaders lead discussion during small group time and of course all are on hand to assist whenever needed

whether it be to take care of someone injured during game time, redirect wavering attention, whatever. There is only one teacher though who teaches the actual lesson during lesson time. Today that was me- I do it once a month typically. Today was actually probably the shortest lesson I've given in a long time, meaning more time for small groups. If only I could keep it short all the time that would be ideal. Moving through the Old Testament we focused on King Saul, and why he didn't have a true heart for God. Next week will be focused on King David and how his heart **was** for God. King Solomon will follow the week after. Of course today the lesson started with how Israel wrongly wanted a King in the first place so God gave them the type of king they thought they wanted- tall and handsome. Just like the idols thrust before us today. Unfortunately good looks on the outside don't equate to a good heart on the inside. Yes he did lead Israel to some victories, but he showed himself as one who shifted blame to others, was jealous, and was disobedient. Eventually God just removed his right to rule and selected a king for them that they **should have** wanted. I would bet that David would have been completely happy with just being a leader while God remained king, but since the precedent was set David would inherit the title of king once Saul was finally killed. This last thought is my opinion of course, so if it is wrong then don't blame the Bible please.

The drama was about doing the right thing, in this case my role was typical of my real self- procrastination. My character knew he had to clean up the lab after a failed experiment, but let it sit instead for three days without doing anything about it, so now it's showtime (remember, imaginary TV studio with live audience) and the place still isn't clean! He almost gets fired when the studio owner calls and asks what's up...

Anyway, now I'm home and three hours later writing this up. Now if you'll excuse me I have some of [The Office](#) to watch- it

is due today and I am not even finished with half the season! Good show, but it took a few episodes to get into it.

Happy Easter!, continued

I just wanted to get that Godtube video up before continuing writing. I can't believe it's been three days since my last post (not counting the first Easter post of course!). Well, yesterday was a busy day. Friday was, well, Good Friday. Like a Good Friday should be, it was a very dreary day outside- snowing for most of the day. After shoveling (for the last time until next winter I hope!) I headed out to the church.

The service that day was like a tour. The first stop of this "tour" was worship time. They basically played a loop of songs. From the bulletin we were given, it looked like they played the same five or six songs over and over for the five hours (with periodic breaks of just instrumental music). I hope they switched off bands throughout the night- playing the same songs for five hours straight would be kind of grueling.

Anyway, the songs would prepare our hearts for the next part of the "tour", which we could skip to at any time. This part had signs and card packets all around telling us why Christ had to die. There was even a projected image of this on the wall. There were many, many reasons along with Bible verses supporting each reason. I think I read maybe half of them as I walked through.

Next was a meditation area where we would see constant changing images of Christ's "trial" and execution. This actually wasn't working for some reason when I arrived, but they finally got the projectors going before I moved on. Step

four of the our had us write our own sins and nail them to a large wooden cross. There was a long wait for this as there were I think only two or three hammers. We could also leave the cards in a basket at the foot of the cross.

The final stage was communion. We would go in the room, grab our own bread (small cracker) and wine (grape juice) and take some time to reflect, pray, and take in the two elements all on our own time. All in all it was a very somber mood throughout the evening, befitting of a day like Good Friday.

Saturday I was at the church after 1:30 (supposed to be at 1:30, but as usual I was late) for choir rehearsal. The worship music the day before had been somber, but the Easter music we had been practicing was anything but. Where Good Friday was a time of reflection, Easter is a celebration! We actually did very well according to several people. It was a **lot** of singing- not just the four special songs we were doing as a choir, but five worship songs as well. It was near constant singing from almost the time I got there on Saturday until after 5:30, and again today. The well-wishers' critiques must have been spot on as our time to be there this morning was pushed from 7AM to 7:25, but it was still a bit grueling with so much singing- two services plus the rehearsal (similar to what felt like two rehearsals last night plus the service). I was actually supposed to sing at the end Saturday night (about 6:25ish) but I felt I was needed in the children's ministry as there was only one leader besides another choir member and myself there, and the other choir member went back down to sing the final song. I was able to sing this song the two Sunday services however.

So here we are, voice resting for now. I really should practice singing more often. My voice held out this time, but there have been times in the past where my endurance didn't last through all the services. I remember particularly from when there were **four** services at one time before the second campus opened and many people went there instead. That one

extra performance turned out to be a killer of my voice. But I don't sing in the choir all for me. It's about giving back to God. He gave me this talent, so it's only right to use it to give some back to Him.

Once again, HAPPY RESURRECTION DAY!!!

Happy Easter!

Okay, trying to make people say Resurrection Day instead of Easter is just pointless. If you'd like, Happy Resurrection Day! The celebration of Jesus Christ's victory over death is upon us once again! Hallelujah! No, I wasn't calling you over, Hallelujah (private joke: there is a boy named Hallelujah in one of the classes I teach). Now that you're finished cheering, I have a Godtube video to share. Godtube is like Youtube (ya think?) only it's all about Christ. My pastor showed a video in church a few weeks ago that really shows using dance/drama what God's love is all about. He loves us so much He went through the humiliation of becoming a man and the pain and suffering of becoming a sacrifice- *the* sacrifice for us. Anyway, on to the video. Let me see if this works...

<edit> Nope. I guess we can't embed videos- hey C, any way we can turn this feature on? like embed, target = _blank also gets cut out of the code when trying to make a link open in a new window. Anyway, here's the link:

[godtube]https://www.godtube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ee73e63418003b47d7d5[/godtube]

Resurrection Day is coming!

I say Resurrection Day because the word Easter is used in reference to the spring celebration with eggs and easter bunnies. Resurrection Day rather refers to the holiday we Christians celebrate at the same time, the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He was murdered on a cross by a reluctant Pilate at the insistence of the Jewish leaders who were blinded and could not see that He really was the Messiah they were waiting for as He came in humility rather than in power, to teach rather than to conquer. There *will* come a day of course when He does finally come to destroy the ones who reject him and build a new Heaven and Earth for Him and His people, but for now we wait and celebrate what He has done so far in offering a way out of the darkness we call sin. That He was resurrected shows all that He has victory even over death, what many think of as the final conclusion to ourselves.

First of course we must remember His death- His unfair trial, His suffering, and his being nailed to a cross in the most brutal form of execution know in those days. Good Friday, as it is known except by school districts that now refer to it as a "non-attendance" day, is the day we remember this horrible death. I of course have the bonus of it being a day-without-pay so I can really feel the suffering. ☐ Kidding of course, but it is a serious day. Our church is actually doing something a little bit different this year. We are still called to attend wearing black, but instead of a drama (I was in it 7 out of the last 8 years!) and a message it is apparently an open-ended service where we can come at any time within a 5-hour window. More on this after Friday as I really don't know anything more about it.

We are preparing for Easter with the choir and it is coming along nicely. Of course tonight we will probably have a train wreck as we're told to sing from memory- no sheet music for us

when we're up there! Of course the train wreck will be followed by further improvements as we improve in our confidence of the music and, just as important, will actually be looking at the choir director instead of the music! ☐ And once it's over, a week of (unpaid) rest follows...

Reflections

Well, this weekend it was mentioned that the next church anniversary in September is the its 20th. Yes I know that is nothing compared with some churches celebrating centennials and more. The church I grew up going to is a church like that, but the one I go to now is kind of mega-ish. That is, it is quite large, expands four campuses, and has a couple dozen "plants" following its doctrines and leadership style, but is still nothing compared to the likes of Willow Creek or Crystal Cathedral. Anyway, When I first started going to the church it hadn't yet celebrated its 10th anniversary. I remember that celebration was done in the school it originally met at before they got their own building. It was still on only one campus, its campground was still in the hands of its previous owners, and even the building they were in wasn't yet fully utilized. Inside was a big fenced in area of, well, *nothing* which would soon become the second half of a new improved worship center. Since then much has happened. Besides being on four campuses now (one of which used to be a plant but joined up for a reason I never found out) and having a campground, it has a chapel that didn't used to be there, used mostly for weddings, a second floor in part of the building (the building was always one floor, with a roof high enough for two), a school, and has undergone much remodeling.

As for me, around that 10th anniversary was when I started

working in the children's ministry. It started with an ambitious children's drama which took up much of the service time and was scaled back the following year due to the teaching volunteers wanting to, well, teach. I of course knew God wanted me there and so was part of the first cast. This lasted about three years. I even had a short stint at directing in the third year. Well, after the first year I wanted more so I started teaching as well. They put me in fourth grade with another teacher and we took turns week to week teaching the lesson. On the weeks I was also in the drama (there were four casts- one per week of the month with any fifth weekends generally without drama) I would walk the kids down and then go backstage and get into my costume. Believe it or not, I wasn't the only one who did this. About that time a new combined program for 4th and 5th grades was just getting started. The prior year they had it as a Friday night program as a supplement to the weekend services, but now they were making it the weekend service. They started off with just one service on the weekend, but it wouldn't be long before it expanded to all weekends. Just why they did it this way I am not sure. Anyway, I switched to this service eventually. As I recall they went through a few staff members running it over the years to where it is at now with the current pastor hired about six years ago. I think I am the only one left still volunteering in that ministry from that first year (discounting the Friday night program). Like the church itself, this program has grown and is definitely in a mature state. I reflect on this because there is a high school student who volunteers in one of the services who was one of my first students in fourth grade. He is a senior in high school now. Well, actually from what he says he was a senior because he graduated in January.

I really enjoy working with the kids, and I know God placed me there and has kept me there. In fact, my best spiritual time I think was last summer when I volunteered as a camp counselor for 4th and 5th grade. Also the two summers before. I just

wonder if God will ask me to move on soon like the others have, and if so where to? I am still involved with kids ministry drama as well, which after a hiatus of a couple of years came back as a different sort of program. Really, I am deeply immersed in this church and currently have no plans to move on, but eventually God may ask me to. Will I be able to if and when he does? Will I be willing to go where He wants me to? Would I be able to shepherd children myself as a pastor if called to do it somewhere? I can only make sure be ready I suppose in case He does. And how about my own family? Has He been leading me toward this in a way? That is, I am single right now, but is this practice, along with subbing, to lead a family of my own one day, soon I would hope as I am not getting any younger...

No teaching today

Normally I teach first weekend of the month at one of the morning services, but this month for some reason they have me down for next weekend instead. Of course I did have a surprise last night as I wrote. Today there was no leader problem either, just a normal day. For some reason though the boys are more rambunctious at the second Sunday service than Saturday night. I suppose it is probably for the same reason I tend to have more energy in the morning myself. The lesson if I didn't say was an introduction to the book of Judges. The kids were taught about the cycle that happened seven times in Judges and still happens today. When we get comfortable we tend to forget God and sin. Once in that trap, it leads to suffering. As we suffer we remember God and cry out to him to help us. He hears our cries and saves us, bringing us back to him. Unfortunately the cycle starts over from there. The message we got in the main service was part of the series on family first aid. It

was about wrestling with God just as Jacob wrestled with God. While God could just crush us when we choose a path other than that which leads to Him (read: sin), He chooses instead to be gentle and let us wrestle a bit. However, no mistake is to be made on this: He leads us, His children, to a place of submission so we get back on the right path. The message can be heard here:

[This Week's Message](#)

When teachers go missing

Okay, they didn't go missing they just got sick, but "when teachers get sick" didn't quite have the same ring to it. Besides, they were missing tonight because they got sick.

So when I arrived at church tonight there were already about five kids waiting outside the door. Not a good sign as I was a few minutes late myself and someone more punctual than myself should have been there. I checked the kids in and waited for other leaders to arrive. And waited. Eventually Steve, the one in charge of the kid's ministry, popped in and informed me that the one set to teach the lesson tonight called in sick and asked another leader to fill in for him. And she was, up until about an hour and a half before the service, then *she called in too*. Now this was a bit unusual, and ordinarily Steve would then fill in since it was so last minute, but tonight he had other obligations, so the duty of teaching the lesson passed to me. Well, I didn't study the lesson beforehand knowing I wasn't on for this weekend, but I could do this- I've done it before. Hey, I'm a sub, remember? Thinking on my feet is normal practice :). So I had to miss the game time and study the lesson. No biggie- just another

game of dodge-ball and I'm usually doing drama at this time anyway (we're off this month). Oh, I guess I should mention that another leader finally arrived and handled the game time. So anyway, They got back up, sang a few worship songs while I kept on studying, and ready or not I had to teach. It didn't go too badly but when we broke off into small groups (well smaller than the large group anyway, there were only the two of us after all ;)) a couple of the boys mentioned they thought I was boring. Sigh.

Fortunately the other leader saved my ego and said she thought the lesson went well :D.

Running into acrylics

Erm... Running into what?? It sounds like I mixed up two topics here... Well as to the second, since it's the least interesting, the position I wound up subbing for was art. After patting myself on the back for actually arriving a little early for once I ashamedly dragged my tail out the door and over to the school I was **supposed** to go to. Okay, though that scene has actually happened before, this one wasn't my fault. Really. You see, many of the specials positions in this district are itinerant, or traveling jobs. That is, the teacher works out of two schools. Having been burned before I meticulously checked, and rechecked both the message ("special instructions") the teacher left and the online system so I would *really* know where I was going. Real- okay, enough of that word. Anyway, the message told me all about how there was a student teacher and I would leave the teaching to her... yada yada. Been there, done that. No school mentioned. Check. Over to the online system, looked at the school, check. Go to the school, sign in, drop my lunch off, pass over the store-bought

bagels someone brought in, go to the art room, and... another teacher is there who says she has the room Friday mornings. Check in with the office, and sure enough all my careful detective work is shattered when they (now) inform me the teacher I am subbing for works out of a *different* school on Fridays. Oops... Sign out, collect my lunch, pass over the bagels again, travel to the other school which is fortunately only five minutes away hoping all the while it wasn't one of *those* schools that closes their parking lot when the buses start to arrive (seriously), fortunately again find out it is not, check in, put my lunch away, pass over... wait- *Panera* bagels? Grab bagel, go to art room, carefully verify with student teacher that I am indeed in the correct place this time, then finally take my coat off and plop down with relief. Hey, at least someone brought good bagels over here. ☐

So, it turned out there were eight classes to teach: four 5th/6th, and four 3rd/4th. Apparently all classes except kindergarten are multiage at this school. Well, the 5th/6th classes were in the middle of a project involving Crayola®-clay animal pots and acrylic paints. Yes, they looked better than that just sounded (most of them...). I of course assured them that yes, the olive green and yellow plaid shirt I was wearing was on purpose because I hate it and don't care if it got messed up in art. Through all four periods unfortunately it didn't. I guess with three wins ("fortunatelies?") I was bound to lose one.

The 3rd/4th grade classes started a new unit on movement. No, this wasn't PE or performing arts. Movement as portrayed on the canvas. They even got to draw a little, well, er, two of the classes did. Such a crime- art class and some didn't even get to do art! Well, that's unit introductions for you.

Okay then, until next post.

Wait, I'm forgetting something aren't I? Yes, really (didn't I ban this word earlier?). "Running into" doesn't actually refer

to the movement, as they weren't allowed to draw people today anyway, only objects. Drawing people and showing their movement is apparently for more advanced students, more advanced than 8-10 years anyway. And besides, I had to have added the church category for this post for *some* reason.

In this case "running into" refers to me running into someone I actually knew from church. No, not *really* (that word again!) running into him, adults don't run in school rooms now, do they? So anyway, It had been a couple of years, and memory for names and faces isn't exactly one of my strengths, or even neutral features (you know where I'm going with this...). Apparently his memory was only slightly better as I just "looked familiar" like maybe someone from camp. I one upped him and said "church camp?" still not recognizing him. Then *he* one upped and gave the name of the camp and his name. I of course pretended to recognize him before he said his name (secretly grateful he said it, ~~reall~~ truly recognizing him only *after* he said it). As it turned out, he was the one student from my cabin I spent a week with (yes I truly am pathetic...) and never saw again after that summer. There were two like that the following summer, but at least I *knew* I wouldn't see them again when they told me that the one was from another church and the other was a friend he invited to come with him. Anyway, since you have suffered through this entire post I will provide an obligatory picture of my cabin from that year, but you will have to just guess which one he is. All I'll tell you is he isn't the one on the right (that would have been a *really* (sigh) big 5th grader). The one on the right was actually my junior counselor (I was the adult counselor). I of course am behind the camera, so no picture of me- sorry! ☐

Note: The thumbnail picture is not so good, so click on it to see it in it's full glory!

