

Was it me?

Okay, it has been a little over a week since my last post and it's time to post, and now that I have deleted the spam comments that have shown up in the last week I can begin. I see that some of you have been posting machines over the last few days, so hopefully mine will be seen among all your furious activity. ☐ Let's start with a quiz- which of last weeks videos were actually of my church choir and not just songs picked from the web by someone else? C'mon- the post mentions one directly, and you might be able to logically deduce another one even if you don't watch/haven't watched them. The answers are in the order of the videos in the previous post. Good luck! Answers will be forthcoming.

[poll id="6"]

So on to the post topic (and all said- "finally!" ☐), last night we had the ~~second~~ first of my small group events for the 4th-graders at my church. Why the ordinal confusion at the beginning of this paragraph? Well, last Saturday was the first scheduled event, for the Saturday night boys but one of the leaders backed out due to work so we are rescheduling it. Last night was for the second-Sunday-service boys. Or as it turned out, boy. That's right- out of over a dozen 4th-grade boys that service only one showed up. So it was two leaders and one boy. The chosen event was indoor mini-golf on a glow-in-the-dark course. Being really nice out, and with outdoor courses starting to open, it was quite dead for a Friday night- no one in front of us though people started to come in behind us. So since it was just the three of us, we kind of spoiled the one boy. His mom gave him extra money for food or whatnot, but told him not to spend it on the video and redemption games, so what did Brian and I do? Spent a few dollars on tokens for him of course!

About the title of this post, even though last Saturday was canceled, I still can gather a statistic for that day as the one at church who was going to notify the parents of the cancellation failed to do so for some reason, so as far as the parents and kids knew it was still on. The result? Only the two confirmed students would have been there (only one showed up only to be disappointed since I called the other one personally as I had their number). Lesson learned- if the parents don't RSVP, the kids most definitely will not be there.

So what was the deal? I know warmer weather kept people away who would have otherwise dropped in, but these were planned events. Do boys not like mini-golf? Was it too expensive? Do all of them have full plates outside of church to prevent participation in any event? Well, the last can't be true as there were plenty of kids at the official movie night last year and at the winter retreat. I hope it wasn't me! ☐ Okay, not likely. I really want the next one to be successful. To be safe, I think we will not make it mini-golf. Plus, hopefully something cheaper than the \$8.50 this one cost. Maybe we could have an all-ministry event again like a picnic and games (maybe hiking) at the forest preserve- something to perhaps bring up to the leadership.

Edit: I asked the kids tonight about it and they pretty much agreed that mini-golf would have been fun, but the outdoor kind not indoors. So, we will likely try this again for the middle of May. Of course, this was the kids talking. I didn't get a chance to question the parents so who knows if cost or transportation was a consideration? In any event, now to locate a local, fun outdoor course...

Back to drama

It was a little exhilarating to get back to the children's drama this weekend. We had been off for over a month, partly due to Easter. So this weekend we were back with a vengeance, err- three of us were. I guess the other two were still on spring break or something. Fortunately the head director, I guess I can call him, was there with his son who plays one of the roles on Sunday morning (this is Saturday night I'm talking about), though unfortunately not one of the characters who was needed. Young as he is (4th grade!) he happily brought out a script and filled in. No, he couldn't be expected to memorize it in a half hour. The other character was a puppet, so another drama regular easily filled in, no memorization even required for that role.

I play sort of a clumsy, bumbling, absent-minded TV scientist in the spirit (but not the intelligence) of [Christopher Lloyd's](#) Doc Brown character from [Back to the Future](#). There are two assistants played by kids, one an airhead-ish lab assistant and the other a geeky research assistant. The one tends to ask some very silly questions (to which my character has a wacky response) and the other is immersed in a computer and constantly correcting anything misspoke (usually by me). There is also a puppet I mentioned and a guest character, a recurring role played about once every other month.

The lesson was about being thankful. My character was the one who had something to learn about it, as almost usual, but comes up with the proper thankfulness in the end, attributing all power to Jesus, to whom we should be thankful. Presumably this leads into the actual lesson taught after the drama which should be on the same topic. However, I have never heard any of the lessons as I usually go directly to 4th/5th grade

(drama is only for K-3) right after the drama, or head into the worship service if it is a last weekend of the month like this weekend.

I wish I could say it went perfectly, but a couple of us had some minor line trouble (nothing the kids in the audience would notice) and for some reason none of us thought of putting a microphone on our young 4th-grade fill-in so he was very hard to hear. Well, nothing can be done for it now but to move forward. I will be looking forward to the monthly rehearsal this Wednesday.

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.

Church

Yes, tonight I went to church service. It was actually a sort of unusual service in that all of the children's ministry was asked to attend the main service. Ordinarily the 4th and 5th grades would be in service anyway as the last weekend of the month they go to service with their parents (in preparation for junior high when they always attend regular service), but this time it was kindergarten all the way on up in a family service. It made sense though- the series my pastor is currently in is about family. What this meant though was there was no drama and no kid's ministry for me to be involved with this weekend. In fact, there is no drama for the next month. Though drama is fun, I appreciate the break.

Tonight they also did an "impromptu choir," meaning they called on people to come up front and sing the worship songs in the choir risers, children included. Well, because the children were part of the service, they chose a few children's worship songs in addition to some regular songs. During the kid's songs, they had one boy who came up, a 4th grader, stand in front of us (yes, I came up to sing!) and show the motions that the kids do when singing the songs. It was so cool- this boy has no trouble in front of large crowds- he actually has been doing drama with me for the last couple years. Incidentally, his dad was one of the worship leaders which probably gave his confidence a boost as well. His dad must have been quite proud of him (the *good* type of pride for another, not the selfish pride the Bible speaks against). Unfortunately he ran off the stage before I could give him a high five for doing it (and doing a great job at it too!) so I guess I will have to catch him next week in class.