

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

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.