

Presentation at Durban Circuit CE Workshop - KwaNyuswa - 29.1.2011

How to prepare a Sunday School/ Confirmation Class Lesson

Exercise:

- i) *As teachers we are down to earth, coming down to the level of the kids, we are humble, hard working - you'll be grunting and sweating as Sunday School Teachers - (exercise: while standing, reach with your fingers to the floor).*
- ii) *As teachers of the Good News we reach for the stars, we stretch our imagination in teaching, our gifts grow and we look beyond what we are and have - we are children of the Almighty, children of hope! (exercise: reach up with your arms as high as you can).*

Example: Resource Book 1 - Lesson 6: Call of Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:1-21)

1. Prepare **setting** for preparation (time, quietness, inner preparedness)
2. **Pray!** (God teaches through you - without him, the main lesson content is absent)
3. **Bible Text** - reading, meditating, reading, noting. Your attitude should be one of expecting to learn something yourself, of expecting God to touch and enrich you while you are preparing and teaching. Preparation of lessons is a spiritual exercise - it should energise you, just like you need proper food before a days work, or even before you run a marathon!
 - i) Context: (see background for teacher preparation, pg 26)
 - ii) The role model Daniel: It is always helpful to not describe the role models as too perfect to follow. Daniel was probably scared as the others, he might have had doubts just as we know them of ourselves (Should I really stick to the commandments of his religion and to his God, would it not make life much easier to obey the orders of Babylons ruler and to follow their Gods?). Daniel was not perfect, but he trusted his perfect God to be with him.
4. Read the **Focus, Background for teacher preparation and lesson objectives**

The focus for this lesson is: „Daniel was faithful to God during difficult times“. This will be your compass during the lesson. This is what you will always again have to focus on and come back to, if you have strayed from the plan of your lesson. The more clear and concise (short) the lesson objectives are, the better, ...and the greater the chance of fulfilling the objectives. If you want your child to buy full cream milk at the store, you will have to explain it in a short and effective way to him, otherwise it will bring you dog food, or Jik, or whatever. The same with your lesson.

5. **Picture your learner group** - Who do you expect to be present, what kind of children are you teaching - lively, quiet, happy, worried, serious? Have there been developments in the family of the child, which impact on them? What do they enjoy in Sunday school - story telling, drawing, acting, singing? How might God want to bless the child in this Sunday school session? Do you expect to be enriched while teaching them - are you open to God speaking to you through them?

It is also important to be aware of any abuse that children coming to Sunday might be subjected to - be it at home, in school or elsewhere. Be aware of the signs of abuse and of the steps that can be taken to help - the most important being the Tollfree helpline of Childline: 080005555 (On their website you can find many helpful information, such as: „Signs of abuse“ or „Guide to parenting“ - documents which can be downloaded from - www.childlinesa.org.za or www.childlinekzn.org.za)

6. Read Bible text again and make **notes for story telling**

- The stories about Daniel teach us about a special way of teaching and preaching - it is the art of telling a story. Through story telling you create a relationship - the most effective way of conveying something about faith; much more effective than by stating facts or bare truths, to which the learners can seldom relate. This will also guide us as teachers to create the proper balance between learning facts about our faith and learning bible verses by heart on the one side, and telling faith stories, be it our own or from the bible.
- In the story in Genesis 12:1-9 look for the important markers, which children can also relate to: i) **being taken away from your family** - Grade 1 kids a few days ago! ii) Food! iii) being strong and healthy

7. Read **„Talk about it“** - and jot down questions for conversation with learners.

- How must Daniel have felt, being taken away? Have you ever left your home? How did you feel? Why did Daniel refuse the king's food and choose vegetables? What does faith have to do with my diet? Is eating sweets a sin? Children come up with the greatest questions and comments if they feel at ease and comfortable.

8. **Activity**

- Read and choose age appropriately. Many of you will know the basics of communication theory: Some of you are familiar with the communication studies that report that your real impact comes not from your words alone, but from what you are saying non-verbally with your gestures, posture, movements, use of space, facial expressions, and tone of voice. The statistics vary but 10% verbal / 90% non-verbal is a common finding. Albert Einstein said, "Nothing happens until something moves." If systems theory is correct, you are a system. This implies that each of your system

functions influences each other. That is, how you think influences how you feel which in turn influences how you move which influences how you think.

- What does that mean for my lesson plan? It means, children have to be able to move, to be able to think and be creative. The lesson objective will be reached with much greater success if we apply these basics of communication theory. Don't rely too much on words!!! God gave us one mouth, two ears but ten fingers - maybe this should be a guideline: Let children talk one minute, listen two minutes and draw or dramatise 10 minutes. What does all of this mean for our preaching?!

9. **Special Guest** - Everyone likes guests, at least most of the time. They mostly bring some news, some new story or gossip - in some way they make us relate to them, and lure us out of our usual boring routines. In this part we start taking seriously the african proverb „It takes a village to raise a child“. In our sunday school we still think it takes only a mother to raise a child - and then in the end we wonder, why we only have women in the church. Take a statistic tomorrow in sunday service: Who is the biggest group of worshippers? Who is the biggest group of sunday school teachers? We can break the cycle - at least a bit - by taking seriously this part of the lesson and invite guest from other age group, gender or even church or nationality. Don't be lazy and rob your learners of this opportunity - and rob the potential guest of the opportunity of sharing and witnessing!! Sunday School is the responsibility of the whole congregation - challenge them!

What could a special guest to this topic of Daniel be? ...a nutritionist, a doctor, a farmer? A dentist?

10. Read **„Action/Response/Mission“** and choose the appropriate action for age group of learners

- This is the biggest challenge for Lutherans, and maybe for us South Africans as well: Activity - not theory, not strategic planning, not workshopping, not discussing, but activity! Implementation! Service Delivery in the name of the Lord! How many of you, who have used this material already, have really done the activity part with enthusiasm?

- This is also an important change from the concept, that a child is just to be taught and can not teach. We can not just see our children as passive recipients of the Gospel. They too are participants of Gods mission here on earth. They too have a gift and something to offer in the life of a congregation. Activities such as the one presented in the resource book in this lesson can sometimes have a much deeper impact than a very clever, well researched and presented sermon. Do we take seriously Jesus words: I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mk 10)

11. Memory Verse:

- Think of gestures (such as during singing of choruses)
- Think of melodies/ choruses which go with it

- Don't make it a horror trip for those, who don't learn quickly

12. Closing prayer

Think of who might pray, what kind of prayer might be helpful and encouraging to the kids. Teach the kids a wide variety of ways of praying: a minute of silent prayer. A sung prayer. A read prayer. A conversational prayer. A plea. A joyful thanking prayer. A common prayer (Lord's Prayer). This might be a challenge to your own prayer life.

13. Evaluation: Plan a time for looking back at the lesson and noting down for future lesson plans, what went well, what needs improvement. You might even ask someone else to sit in and give you an honest opinion. A teacher, who is not him- or herself still curious and interested in learning and improving his methods or lesson content, is a sad and sorry affair! (A huge problem in our country.)

14. Closing Remarks:

You should know, that our ELCSA Almanach (Unsuku zonke) has changed its reading roster. We are now following the Revised Common Lectionary (the same or similar as Anglicans, Methodists and as Lutherans in the USA). The lessons and bible passages of the Book 1 (green cover) of the Sunday School Material („Living together in Christ" Book 1) goes together (but is not always the same) with our Almanach Readings in 2011, so this Book should be used for teaching Sunday School in 2011.

God bless you richly while preparing your lessons and while teaching and interacting with our Kids!

Yours in Christ,
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