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Teaching Sunday school in Madagascar is an exciting experience

Published November 12, 2017

Teaching Sunday school in Madagascar is an exciting experience. It is a special call like no other. The only tool the teacher has is the Bible.

In most of our Churches, children are the majority. Sadly, some of these children have no one to teach them, but these children hunger and thirst for righteousness. The few teachers are so committed to meet these children and transform their lives. This means that the teacher must also be growing in their prayer life and seek to have a Christ-like character. Given the limited resources in teaching materials and aids, one has to be very creative on how to pass the message to the young ones. Especially, that most teachers have the zeal to teach but have not yet had enough training. And so as the children's coordinator, my first task was to train Sunday school teachers with basic teaching skills and how to develop a growing spiritual life.



For a long time, we did not have a teaching guide for the teachers and each had to do their own way. Others would just sing with or just do a bible reading with the children until time is up and they go home. It is only recently that we have adopted a book that we use as a guide but we are still in the process of designing a guide book that meets the needs of the children and teach the spiritual needs of the children.

A typical teaching session will include song and dance, prayer and thereafter a Bible lesson and a time of giving offering to God. These are children who go through many issues and challenges in life for example, some come from single-parent families (and they feel that they miss either the father's or mother's love), divorced families, alcoholic parents, some drop out of school to help fend for their families etc. With such a background, when they come to Sunday school, they would like not just to hear good Bible stories but also to learn how God will walk with them through these challenges in life. And so after the teaching, we usually have a prayer session where we pray for the children individually for the Lord to intervene in their lives and that of their families. We not only pray for them but we teach them to pray as well.

Teaching does not end in class though. The teachers also visit these children at their homes during the week just to see

how they are doing and pray with their families as too. The teachers sometime offer advice to the parents concerning parental issues. And in some cases, the teacher has to dip into their pocket to support a family that is needy. At times, the teachers play the role of parents. You will discover that some parents have no time for their children. So we give the children a listening ear and give direction in how and what they should do. The children on the other hand have developed trust in return and have become very open with the teachers and can speak to us about every issue they are facing at school, at home, or in their lives. And the teachers are more than happy to give advice or have a talk with the parent.

Children, being good evangelists, we also teach them to bring their friends to faith and every once a while we organize an outreach for the kids and they go out to the village and bring their friends to church. That is why the number of the children is ever increasing. And even some of their parents have started coming to church and have become devoted Christians at the invitation of their children.

Just recently, we had the very first children's conference in the Diocese, and it was awesome. These children prepared for a competition where everyone had to show their ability in remembering the Bible stories accurately, memory verses and songs. Their teachers were trained in *Rooted in Jesus* which is a very contextual disciple program for the kids. This I believe will catapult the teachers to a new level in teaching as well as enable the children to grow in their faith. As they interacted with their friends, one could see the joy they had. One of the kids approached me and said, "teacher, I just want to stay here and not go back home again." That showed that they really enjoyed their time and fellowship with the new found friends and the teachers.

The work of teaching children takes a lot of patience and commitment but brings joy. Especially, when you see a child growing from a point of naivety to a level of spiritual maturity and that they can teach others, it brings a sense of accomplishment to the teacher. Being with them is always a reminder to us that the Kingdom of God is for those who are like children when you see their sincerity, love, humility etc. And at the same time, one must be very careful lest one gives a bad example to them because that is what they will grasp. Both the teacher and the children seek, serve and follow Christ.

By Nolavy Osoro