

The Truth behind the Preaching

As a children's church teacher I've been told, "Guy, you've got the preaching down. It's just the closing part you need to work on." I'd always taken it as a compliment, at least until last Sunday. Poor little Jimmy... I just felt terrible.

Like a lot growing Churches, we sometimes run into some space restrictions. It causes us to herd kids ranging from four to twelve all into the same class. According to the experts, that's not good. Statistics say you can usually only expect about one minute's worth of attention span for every year of a child's age. Therefore, I usually shoot for around the twenty minute mark. Okay, so my math's a little off, but I've also heard it said that studies have found that over 83% of all statistics were just made up anyway. I reckon that's probably about ninety percent true.

I do try to keep on the lookout for tell-tale signs I'm losing somebody during my message though. One sure sign is when the older kids start rolling their eyes. That's code for, "You better come on out of Barney land pal or risk a rebellion." On the other hand, when several pre-schoolers are crawling off burping the ABC's it may signify it's time to back off the King James verbiage. It's all a delicate balance.

I guess that's where I failed little four year old Jimmy. Poor thing had just experienced information overload, and it caused him to act out a bit. A terrible pang of guilt gripped me as the class helper led him off to time-out.

"It's my fault," I thought, "I'm just a big windbag." I tried not to let it affect me as I proceeded with my third closing. Finally, with the parents waiting out in the hall, I decided to wrap up by carefully explaining the Gospel in a way they could all understand.

"Jesus left His throne in heaven and came down to the earth to be born as a man," I explained. "He lived His life without sin, and then died on the cross to pay for ours. Marvin, get your finger out of your sister's ear! On the third day God raised Jesus back to life. If we confess Him as our Lord, and humbly receive His gift of forgiveness, we will become children of God too. We will receive God's Spirit into our hearts and live with Him forever one day in Heaven."

My lips had no sooner stopped flapping than I realized I'd said it just like they do in "Big" church. I was just about to try and explain it again when little Jimmy shot out of that 'time-out' chair like his tail was on fire. He rushed down front to give his life to Jesus. Either he didn't want to miss out on the deal, or it was just an ingenious plan to shut me up; probably both. One thing for sure, kids have a wonderful way of putting things in perspective.

I mean, come on, which of us adults could honestly say we really understand all the complexities of this world? Or can really do much more than burp the ABC's in the grand scheme of things? We just have these short little attention spans, and frankly, are quick to roll our eyes when it comes to eternal matters. At any given time half the world's population is leading some kind of rebellion while the rest are pouting in time-out!

Yet God, in His great Love, knowing our human frailties, crafted a plan and a message so simple that even a little child could understand. (*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* **John 3:16** KJV)

But anyway- I guess the Truth really isn't all that hard to understand, even when it is hidden behind a lot of long-winded preaching. Little Jimmy recognized it. He didn't over-think it. He didn't ignore it, or refuse it. He just made a decision, and showed us all how to bridge the gap between time-out and glory.

-Guy Sheffield 1-02-07