

Fun At School

Some random kid-related stuff to report...

First, my “visitor” showed up to my Sunday morning class. I haven’t had the time to blog about it, but basically there is a parent who came to drop her daughter off a few weeks ago at the worst time possible, and the kids were all over the place (it’s not normally like that, a set of circumstances culminated to create the ‘perfect storm’ – long story). On top of that, her daughter is a 1st grader, which means that she has just come over to the north campus of church. Our first graders “graduate” from the preschool wing and move over to the other building when they get in 1st grade, and their curriculum changes. So this parent had concerns about what her daughter was learning and specifically where her weekly “coloring page” was. So she asked if she could come “observe” my class, and I was all upset and nervous. I sat and pondered this, I prayed about it, and I decided to give it my best shot and show this mother what a wonderful childrens’ ministry we have. I wasn’t even nervous, and I used the entire ride home from Illinois planning out my lesson for class the next day. And what happens? She is a no-show. Fast forward to the next week, which was in reality this past Sunday, and she shows up. Luckily I had kind of figured this would happen, so I was well-prepared again. But I also had 9 kids to look after – of course she couldn’t come observe when I had 4 kids last week when games and lessons are much easier... But I think it went well! I can’t speak for the “observer”, but the class ran as smoothly as it could have with 9 kids running around. She wasn’t just a statue standing in the corner making me nervous during class, but an active participant (after some encouragement by me) in the crafts and games. It is my hope that she came away from experiencing her daughter’s Sunday school knowing that our childrens’ ministry program at church is wonderful! We have so many components (there is music,

dancing, skits, big group games, small group games, story-telling and crafts – all in one hour every week!) and super volunteers who bring it all together which provides a variety of ways for kids to learn one lesson and virtue. I am so proud of how well my 1st graders are picking up on this month's virtue, which is "initiative". I know, a huge word for such small kids, but the lessons are broken down and relate to kids so well that they really are getting it – especially my 1st grader at home, which really surprises me!! So anyway, I just wanted to express my relief about how I don't have to worry about my "visitor" anymore. At first I was terribly upset, but after a lot of thinking and praying, it all worked out for the better! I was able to step back and take a look at our childrens' ministry and appreciate it even more when it was under scrutiny, so I am very thankful to God for opening my eyes and getting me through this.

Next bit of kid news – last week was National Eat Lunch at School week, so us parents were invited to eat with the littles. My husband and I folded ourselves into the kiddie-sized lunch tables and visited with the 1st graders. One problem I didn't see coming though – we brought little brother (he is 2), so of course he starts running around the lunchroom, but... Mom and Dad were so crammed into the little lunch tables that we could not get up to chase him unless someone else got up first – we were packed in like sardines! Finally we were able to get out and get him before he caused too much trouble, and we had a great time for the remainder of the lunch. I think Sammie really enjoyed haaving her family at lunch. Here are my 3 youngest at 'big kid' first grade lunch:



And at recess it was so neat to see some of my 1st graders from Sunday morning childrens' ministry!!

So after lunch in 1st grade, it was time to head to the fire station for a field trip with my preschool-age daughter and her class. I brought my 2-year-old along to this also because I thought he would enjoy it, and he did, even if it was a challenge trying to get him to hold still while the fireman was talking. But as soon as the fire gear came out and the fireman began to put on his boots, gloves, hood, hat, etc, my son was very attentive. After that, each of the kids got a turn "driving" the fire truck! My son made his way up to the front of the group and reached his arms toward the fireman – it was really neat to see because a few of the pre-schoolers, one being my daughter, were nervous about being lifted up by the firefighter and into the big fire truck. But once they saw the little dude have a turn and how much he loved it, they were all eager to try too!





So overall a great week! October is always so busy for our family, but I enjoy every minute of it!!

Dropping Like Flies

It's been really difficult to blog with a 2-year-old in the house, especially because mine is a boy. He just seems to get into anything and everything, and this phase of his is lasting longer (and is much much messier and harder on my house) than was any of his 3 sisters' terrible twos. Complicating my schedule is the fact that he seems to be growing out of his naps, so now Mom's daily time-out has been reduced to mere hopefulness for a time-out.

So anyway, this explains my blogging absence, and now you know why it's taken me so long to blog that...

My 6-year-old daughter Samantha lost her first tooth last week!

She was SO excited, and of course the tooth fairy made her nighttime visit. You might have read that I've been teaching 1st grade Sunday school (which just happens to be Sammie's class), and that's been going very well – I really enjoy it.

Sammie's lost tooth prompted me to ask last Sunday how many of my students have lost teeth, and they were all full of stories. One little girl (who is missing her two front teeth) told about how she lost *this* one and *that* one in the same day – and she was pointing to her missing bottom teeth, not even the top two that were visibly missing! So it seems that Sammie is just beginning – she has lots of teeth to lose, and because teeth seem to drop out of 1st graders' mouths constantly (dropping like flies? That doesn't sound quite right now that I think about it), it makes me think that I had better bring a little container or two with me every Sunday just in case I need to send a fallen tooth home with its owner.

What an exciting time in a kid's life, and it was neat to hear how enthusiastically all my first graders talked about losing their teeth and getting visits from the tooth fairy. By the way, the going rate for a baby tooth seems to be around \$5 these days – WOW! Do you remember how much the tooth fairy gave you for your teeth?

[poll id="21"]

Congratulations Sammie!

Disney's First Day Of School!

My almost 4-year-old daughter Disney joined her sisters in the profession of "student" the other day- it was her first day of prechool, and she LOVES it!!

Here is the cutie on her first day:



Disney's Driving Lesson

My daughter Disney is 3 years old and full of questions. Today was her first dentist visit, and she had questions about every aspect of going to the dentist. On the way home, she had more questions: Can I still sneeze? Can I still drink? Can I still eat? She had no idea what life would be like with clean teeth. Before the appointment, she was a bit scared, but in the end she found getting her teeth cleaned fun and tickle-y.

After the dentist, something happened that will have me laughing for a long time. A stoplight turned yellow, and it was one of those with the pedestrian's crosswalk really far in front of the light, so I had to hard-brake, which for some reason prompted little Disney to pipe up from the back seat and ask me, "What the h*** are you doing?" I turned around and asked her where she learned that word, and her sisters looked terrified that they were going to somehow get blamed for this – the looks on their faces were priceless. "From Kirsten", said Disney, referring to her little friend at the babysitters. I was relieved to know that it wasn't something she had picked up from home, and we had a little chat about some words not being appropriate to say.

Kids will be kids, and I'm not worried in the slightest about my sweet little 3-year-old becoming as foul-mouthed as a trucker's reputation. Actually, I will think of this little episode every time I need a smile – it was so funny how she just blurted it out that way, it makes me laugh out loud just thinking about it!



my sweet little Disney

Just Too Scary...

My son is newly 2 years old, and he has a favorite movie: Monster House. He asks for it by name, and he just loves it – even if some parts are so scary that he has to watch it from behind his hands:



Summer Blahs

My kids are driving me nuts!! It's the middle of summer, and although I've scarcely heard the words, "I'm bored", my kids are driving me and each other up the walls and back down again. My 3 girls (ages 10, 6, and 3) are bickering constantly! By the time I get their brother (age 2) down for a nap in the afternoon, I'm so exhausted that I really cherish my "me" time, which is always laced with sounds of the girls' fighting and bickering. My husband suggested we do more activities together (we read books and color in the mornings, and I take them to the library every day to play), but it's a vicious cycle. The more they fight, the less I want to do with them, and the less I do with them, the more they fight, as if their fighting could increase. I am so thankful that Friday is the day when I get to meet their Grandma in South

Bend and arrange a trade – 3 girls to Grandma's for the week!! I could not be looking forward to it more! Sure, I'll miss them, but given the way they've been acting lately, it will be a challenge for me to not dread the monotony of the summer continuing when they get back. I can think of plenty of things to do, but like I said, I'm so exhausted by the constant refereeing (aren't refs supposed to be paid?) that it's hard to find the energy to facilitate an activity and clean it up. Wait, Grandma reads my blog, I better not dwell on the fighting too much. Wouldn't want to change her mind about next week!!

Only 39 days until school starts! One week at Grandma's and 10 weekend days, so really only 22 days left – not that I'm counting or anything... Now where is that countdown timer widget? ☐

Teacher, Teacher

Well, I survived. Today was my try at teaching my 3-year-old daughter's Sunday school class. Every summer, church members have the opportunity to serve in our church's Kids' Kingdom in order to give the regular teachers a much deserved summer break. Instead of requesting a specific age group where I might have been comfortable (last summer my husband and I taught 4th grade boys, and I'm used to teaching 5th and 7th grade girls from my youth group teaching experience), I decided to let the Kids' Kingdom coordinator put me where I would be needed the most – so the 3-year-old room it was. And lucky for me (cough cough), there aren't very many 2-year-olds at our church at this time, so they were just combined with the 3-year-olds, putting me in charge of fourteen 2 and 3-year-olds for over an hour. But it was SO much fun!!!

Not something I'd like to do every week (just because of my responsibilities at home with 4 of my own kids 24/7), but definitely worth a shot, especially since I was helping out. I might even sign up for another Sunday with the 2/3-year-olds; they were so cute!! In anticipating my teaching experience today, one challenge I did not foresee were the kids who cried when their parents left. We had about 4 of those – their world was blown apart when this strange lady (me) was in their classroom in place of their regular teacher. 3 of them got over the shock right away; one little girl did an actual 180° turn in personality. She began the class by crying and clinging to the wall, only to come out of her shell later and insisting she sit by me at story time as well as wanting my constant attention. The 4th little boy held out a little longer; he was a cute little guy who clung to the wall for most of the class. He stopped crying for his parents within the first few minutes, but I couldn't get him to participate in any of the activities. I kept asking though, I didn't let him fade into the background, and I think that helped. Also helping was my teenage helper, without whom I surely would have lost track of all those kids.

Upon arriving, I was given a packet of papers detailing my lesson plan and ideas for activities related to the lesson which I will share:

Basic Truth: God Made Me

Key Question: Who can help you?

Bottom Line: God made people who help me.

Memory Verse: "Be kind and loving to each other." Ephesians 4:32, NCV

Bible Story Focus: God wants families to help each other.

Boaz cares for Ruth and Naomi • Ruth 2:1-23

As kids were arriving (and some were bawling into the doorframe), I had them sit at the table and draw their favorite foods in the pre-printed basket they were given on cardstock. I got a big kick out of one little girl who drew

chocolate fudgicles, chocolate soy milk (?), and chocolate pancakes. I attempted to draw my own basket (filled with spaghetti; I didn't think I could draw Greek food nor did I feel like explaining saganaki or kafta to 2 and 3-year-olds), but there was too much to do for me to finish my artwork. Soon, we ran out of table space to color, so I moved on to this activity:

Get Up and Go

What You Need: Blue painters' tape, masking tape and different forms of transportation toys such as cars, horses, trucks, trains, buses, boats and airplanes.

What You Do: Make "roads" on the floor with the masking tape. Make "waterways" on the floor with the blue tape. Pretend you are traveling on the roads with the trucks, horses and cars and in the water with the boats. Fly the airplanes around the room. Make up places to go and let your imagination take you on a fun trip.

What You Say:

During the activity: "Who wants to go on a trip with me? These cars and trucks can take us places. These boats can take us places. Oh! And look! We have horses and an airplane too! We can use these to go all kinds of places. This white tape can be our road and this blue tape can be water. Come on! Let's get up and go!"

At the end of the activity: "Cars and trucks and boats can take us to all kinds of places. There's one more way to get somewhere that we haven't talked about...our feet! We can WALK to places too! In our Bible story today, two ladies named Ruth and Naomi have to use their feet to get to a new place."

So as you can see, the instructions were laid out pretty well for me. After the kids laid out their "roads" (and had a BLAST doing so, I must say! Gives me a great idea for an inexpensive, non-messy fun activity to do at home this summer with my own kids!), it was time to go down the hall for story time. Here we met up with the 4-year-old group and the 5-

year-old group (of which my other daughter belongs; she was happy to see me!), and the kids listened to a Bible story. During the story, my teenage helper stayed behind to set out the snack, so it was solely up to me to keep our group of 14 quiet and listening to the story – yeah right. I did the best I could, and I even got to dance with the kids.

We returned to our classroom, had snack, and then we tried the Foil Food activity:

Foil Food

What You Need: Aluminum foil.

What You Do: Give each child a piece of aluminum foil. Show them how to shape the foil into different food shapes like a hot dog, banana, apple, small grapes, chicken fingers, French fries and carrot sticks or anything a child could easily shape with foil.

What You Say: “Watch what I can do with this foil. (Shape the foil into a food item.) Look! It’s a (name of food). I have some foil for you too. You can shape it into all kinds of foods like a banana or several small grapes or even an apple. Ruth and Naomi were very happy to find food to eat when they got back to Bethlehem. God gave them Boaz to help take care of them. God gives you people to help take care of you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people who help me.”

The kids had a ball with the foil activity too, even though some of them misunderstood – my little friend the chocolate lover, requested that I make her a butterfly out of the foil... oh, and there was one little guy who completely misunderstood and began to EAT the foil ☹

When the kids grew tired of that activity, there was still about 15 minutes left, so we did some free play with the toys and puzzles in the room as I did not feel prepared for the other activities on the list. One little girl kept putting a cow toy on my shoe, and she and about 5 others were loving it when I would react every time – OH, there’s a COW on my shoe!

Am I going to have to take this cow home with me?!? That lasted about 10 minutes; imagine if I had tried that one with my 7th graders – they'd be gossiping about me being bi-polar as they do about one of their teachers, gossip which I try to stop, of course.

My teen helper had to take about half the kids to the bathroom at some point, so I decided it was a good time to try this activity – I didn't want to try it with all the kids there since we were only given about 6 pieces of fake food. Having 4 kids of my own, I'm well-versed in kid-fight-prevention, so I knew doing the following activity with only 6 pieces of food and 14 kids was a recipe for disaster. But with about 8 in the room, I thought it was worth a try... until the bathroom group came back in the middle of the activity...

Fast Food

What You Need: Toy food items, a large basket like a laundry basket and a stopwatch.

What You Do: Spread the toy food items all over the room. Place the laundry basket in the middle of the room. Challenge the children to see how fast they can get all of the food into the basket. Time them and be ready to tell them how fast they do it each time. Continue doing the activity as long as the children are interested.

What You Say:

At the start of the activity: "A girl named Ruth has to look for food to go in her basket in our Bible story today. Our basket needs some food in it too. Do you see some food that we can put in it? (Pause for response.) OK. When I say "go," I want you to put the food in our basket as fast as you can. On your mark...get set...go!"

At the end of the activity: "You got faster and faster each time you put the food in the basket. I wonder how long it took Ruth to put food in her basket? I can't wait to hear her story."

Ok, I wasn't given a stopwatch, so I just had half the kids

hide food items and the other half find them... but then the bathroom group came back and we had too many kids and too little room and too few food items to hide. My little friend threw a not-so-little tantrum because she wanted to be the one to hold the basket – and she was going to have her turn as I said, but first she had to wait, which wasn't cool with her (ADHD diagnosis, anyone? It's sad, but they seem to be slapping that one on kids left and right these days). But oh, great, now I had a kid screaming just as parents are starting to arrive. Luckily she got over it quickly, and the parents came a few minutes earlier than I had expected – good thing too, since I was out of activities for which I had supplies.

Overall, a GREAT experience – I'm so proud of my own little 3-year-old who was not only one of the best behaved in the group (of course), but who was surprisingly not very clingy to mom and let me be a teacher to her peers. I think the kids had trouble remembering my name, so by the end of the hour, I was known as 'Teacher, Teacher' complete with pant-leg-tugging – hence the name of this blog post.

Next up – in August I'm scheduled to help with my 5-year-old's class, and I'm excited to see the differences in behavior between the two groups. But after today, I'm quite tempted to volunteer for another Sunday in the 3-year-old room... they are fun kids who are quite sweet. My only regret is that there were so many of them, which impeded my ability to get to have more fun with them on a one-on-one basis. Plus there were a few that were handfuls (well, just my little friend and then another little boy who started all kinds of trouble all morning!), but it was still hard to give attention to the kids who were being good, and that should never be the case. Too bad I know in my heart that I'd be spreading myself way too thin if I volunteered to be a Sunday school teacher. I need to stick with the youth group kids I committed to, and both groups plus my own kids at home would be way too much... something to think about when my kids get older and my youth

group kids graduate though!!

For those of you looking for ideas for Christian fun at home, for your small Bible study groups, or a Christian daycare, here are the rest of the activities I was given and didn't have the time / materials to do:

Looking for Food

What You Need: A clear plastic soda bottle or a large clean peanut butter jar, uncooked white rice, several pieces of Runts® candy and a hot glue gun.

Tip: Runts® candy comes in a mix of green, red, yellow, purple and orange. You can pretend these are little green apples, red cherries or red apples, yellow bananas, purple grapes and orange oranges

What You Do:

At the start of the activity: Fill the plastic container no more than 2/3 full with the rice. Put in several pieces of the Runts® candy pieces. Put the lid on tight and hot glue it.

Tip: Make one bottle for every three children to share.

During the activity: Show the bottle to the children. Point out that there are different kinds of "food" inside the bottle. Their job is to roll the bottle around in their hands until they see a piece of "food."

What You Say: "Come and sit with me. I have something to show you. Watch the white rice while I turn this bottle. Tell me if you see anything. (Wait for a child to respond.) Yes! There are little pieces of food hiding in the white rice. There are little green apples, red apples or red cherries, yellow bananas, orange oranges and purple grapes. Here. You can hold the bottle. Keep turning it and see what you can find. Two women named Ruth and Naomi have to go and look for food in today's Bible story."

Make a Match

What You Need: "Food Items" (from the Activity Pages on the Web site), scissors and white cardstock.

What You Do:

At the start of the activity: Make two copies of "Food Items" on white cardstock and cut the cards apart along the perforated lines. This will give you one set of cards to play a game of memory match. To play the memory game, place all of the cards facedown. A child will turn over two cards at a time and try to make a match. If a match is not made the next person has a turn. If a match is made the player can go again. Tip: Make more than one set of cards so more than one group of children can play at a time. You can pair children up or put as many as four children with each set of cards.

During the activity: Show the picture cards to the children. Ask them to help you identify each food picture. Next, place all of the cards face down and play a game of memory match.

What You Say: "Boaz helped Ruth and Naomi in our Bible story because they were in his family. God wants families to help each other. God gave you a family to help you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people to help me. That's right! In our story Ruth and Naomi had to look for food, right? Well, I have a game for us to play and we're going to have to look for food too!"

My Favorite Food

What You Need: No supplies needed.

What You Do: Sit in a circle with the children and play a food memory game. Begin the game by saying. "My favorite food is an apple." The child next to you will say, "My favorite food is an apple and (their food choice)." The next child will repeat, "My favorite food is an apple, (name of food) and (their food choice)." Assist the children in remembering when the list gets long.

What You Say:

At the end of the activity: "Raise your hand if you like food. (Raise your hand really high.) Me too! We all like food and we all NEED food. Ruth and Naomi needed food in our Bible story today. They also needed help to find food. God gave them Boaz to help them find food. God gives you people to help you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people to help me."

(Ok, so this activity didn't require any materials, but I found it way too daunting to attempt for a group of 14 2-3-year-olds...)

Fool Me Once, Strike One

My kids have been totally crazy lately. End of school year I guess? Great, let's take a look at the irony in that... end of school year makes kids act crazy, which makes me dread the end of the school year when I will have 4 crazy, bored, unstimulated kids 24/7. Nice irony, that. But anyway, today it's been one thing after another. So much so, that I've decided to use my spare minute to blog it instead of doing one of the other many and more productive things that I had planned for today.

I guess it began when my son pooped and smeared it all over the bathtub. He somehow managed this while his sister was watching him so I could run to the kitchen for a minute to stir lunch which was on the stove. I had to turn down the stove and delay lunch while I cleaned up the mess. Don't worry, I washed my hands (many times), but lunch was late, giving my daughter less time than usual to eat it before school. I took extra time today to make their favorite mac n' cheese, but no one ate anything. So that also cancels my make-your-own pizza sandwiches I was planning for dinner. Like I'm going to allow the extra mess and time it will take for the kids to make their pizza sandwiches when they wouldn't even eat lunch. Besides, I have my end-of-the-year MOPs meeting to get to, and I'm not taking 4 hungry kids into MOPs childcare if they don't have time or refuse to eat. Let's take bets on whether or not I will actually make it into the shower before my meeting... I could go now, but then I'd have the company of

my 3-year-old, who's been wanting to take showers with me lately. It's nice to have a buddy, but my showers used to be my downtime, especially needed on a day like today... By the way, did anyone see the [nice article about MOPs](#) in the latest American Profile magazine? I enjoyed the few paragraphs I've had time to read...

Back to today – I finally got my 3-year-old to eat her lunch (had to drop what I was doing to chugga-chugga-choo-choo into her mouth), so she was rewarded with Cheetos. Next thing I know, she and her brother had stomped the entire bag into the floor.



While I was cleaning that up, they were playing in the bathroom sink and flooded the floor. In the words of Michael Scott from my favorite tv show The Office – “Fool me once, strike one. Fool me twice, strike three.” So rather than leave them unattended, even for just long enough to clean up yet another mess, I put the little guy down for his nap before I cleaned up the latest mess. Thought that little Office quote would make me smile, so at least I was right there ☐

And if you think that my 3 and 1-year-old kids were actually helping with the cleanup, you must not have kids because they only succeeded in spreading the Cheeto crumbs around further. But at least they thought they were helping, and they had fun while doing so. Plus, note my gorgeous Mother's Day bouquet in the background of the one pic – It's from the kids (yeah

right). I ♥ Hubby!

I'm just extra stressed since I'm trying to keep the house nice since we're having a birthday party this weekend. Don't ask me why I'm trying to keep a nice house while waiting for 22 five-and-six-year-olds to run wild around my house celebrating my daughter's birthday... that doesn't make much sense, does it? Maybe I *have* finally lost it...

The First Time I Had To Call Poison Control...

...was today, and I hope it's the last. I have 4 kids, the oldest of whom is 10 years old. So I've been doing this kid thing for more than a decade, pretty much a third of my life if I shave off a couple of years, which I'll gladly do. My older kids are girls, so why am I not surprised that the boy is the one who prompted the call to Poison Control. The good news is, everything is fine.

This morning, Beeber (an affectionate nickname for my son Christopher because this is what his older sister called him when she was 2) was out of my sight for just a few minutes – I think I was cleaning up some sort of mess he made as usual. In the back hall we have a pet cabinet (which will now be moved) where we keep leashes, dishes, rawhides, etc. Back by the pet cabinet, I found an open, empty package from a dog's heartworm pill. It was opened neatly, and it didn't look like it had been opened by a 21-month-old expecting to find candy. I checked his breath and his teeth (the heartworm medicine looks like a chunk of dog food – I would think if my son had eaten it, then some would be stuck on his teeth), and there

were no signs that he had eaten it. Perhaps the last adult to give the dogs the medicine had put an empty package back in the cabinet. Or, knowing my son, he might have just fed it to the dogs. But I had to call Poison Control to be sure; the chemicals listed on the box sounded frightening. Poison Control said they didn't expect a problem, which I thought was a strange response but a better one than I had hoped. I thought they would at least tell me warning signs of trouble or something, but I'm just glad they gave the all clear and that we didn't have to make a trip to the ER or worse.

Ah, Poison Control, the number every mom should know: **1-800-222-1222**. They are very calming, friendly, and they can actually speak English unlike a lot of places that we call these days, so don't hesitate to call them if you think your kid might have gotten into something they shouldn't have. Better safe than sorry!



Dead Forever

A cute Spring video I shot the other day of my 3-year-old daughter Disney explaining what would happen if a ball rolled into the street and got hit by a car: