



Extended Teaching Care Saga Continues

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Is it just me? Do you have trouble finding enough volunteers for Extended Teaching Care? Seems like we get a schedule finalized and printed just to get that call or text that someone wants to be removed. UGGHHH! It's enough to make a preschool minister cuss! If this has happened to you, then you know full well I'm not exaggerating.

Of course, we use our sweet voice and ask if we can rearrange the schedule or place them in a different area to try and salvage them because blank boxes already haunt us. I have learned from a couple of past preschool ministers (who are excellent in the classroom and leadership), they are not returning to the church ministry because of this issue. They are weary and worn with enlisting people who do not want to serve. I totally understand but deeply saddened by the fact we are losing such great leaders in preschool ministry due to enlistment challenges.

Seems like I have organized preschool committees to lead in this challenge, hired wonderful ladies through the years only to find them quitting in tears. They believed in this ministry and became defeated and heartbroken that others would not care enough to volunteer. What are we supposed to do? We are expected to make this magic happen. No excuses.

The reason I am writing this post is out of frustration. Our most recent ETC Coordinator has finally hit a wall and discouragement is overwhelming. She has written a note (attached) to be distributed to both hours of Sunday School in hopes that someone will join our army of servants. What do I do when she has empty spaces and no one else to call? Where's the "Easy Button" when you need it.

Here are some ideas I'm considering. If you have done these and feel the need to warn me, please don't hesitate to comment.

- Teachers of adult classes- Plan some lunch meetings with teachers of adult classes to include them in helping us solve this. I have often heard, these teachers will ask their class not to be absent in class by doing childcare. (You better not let that be the truth Mr. Teacher- fair warning.) Of course, use your friendly and tactful voice so not to scare the teacher. This has been true of music ministers and his choir too.
- Pastor involvement- I don't want to pull this out until last but that's not right. I need his endorsement and leadership. He can speak it from the pulpit and maybe even in Sunday School classes. He has a vision for reaching young families. Let him speak it.
- Staff planning- Set aside a focus time in the calendar where positive publicity is visual to the membership. When choosing the dates, stay away from summer months, holidays or other times that you might be competing for attention. Involve the staff so they can support it and not trump you by introducing a different ministry focus. Explain all that up front so the dates are protected. Positive publicity includes: Video record the experience for an announcement. Photos and words of appreciation posted from parents. Ask the pastor to serve one Sunday as an example.
- Clearly explain the mission and goal of this extended teaching time. Offer training and classroom support with pre-organized activities to be used. You might have a college professor willing to serve but completely blank with what to do in a room full of two-year-olds. Help her get acclimated.
- Instruct teachers to do well at transitioning over to volunteers after Sunday School. If they could share what is going on and any activities the kids have enjoyed, it might give the volunteer the handle they need to get started. What if the teacher had Thank You cards she could fill out and give to the volunteer? Sometimes we forget little things can make a difference.
- Pray- You might think I should have started there but I already have. I'm very concerned. It's time to involve the prayer ministry, deacons, and individuals you know as intercessors.

Although my current director is giving it all she has, I need to step in and support her with more than "We need helpers!" I'm ready to do this and maybe I can salvage a wonderful leader from resigning and better yet, provide good teaching for my early childhood learners. Don't grow weary in well doing! When your sacrifice cost something, presenting it to the Lord is so sweet.

