

Newsletter Date

September 2009

Familia de Dios

Unity is gained when both sides are making compromises to help the other!

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Working Towards Unity at Sherman Ave.

Last month I told about some problems at Sherman Ave. The young people had continued to grow in spirit and in number, but we failed to grow closer to the rest of the congregation. The adults were becoming frustrated by this. They were feeling estranged in their own congregation. When they felt as if no one was regarding their concerns, they strongly intervened and decided to remove all English classes from the Spanish speaking congregation. In respect for me, they allowed me to continue teaching English on Tuesday nights.

These changes posed multiple challenges and difficulties for the kids and me. They highly prefer English to Spanish. It is their native tongue and is much easier for Biblical studies. I can only teach in English. Whereas my conversational Spanish is increasing, teaching is a whole different matter.

I identified the real problem as not being language, but division between the young and the old. I realized that I needed to be a better example. I've been attending the Spanish worship service instead of going to the English congregation after I teach the kids. This has proven to be very fruitful. I've been a leader in worship services. I've even been able to do the Lord's Supper (with relatively few grammatical errors). This compromise has accomplished all that I hoped. It has helped me feel close to the rest of the congregation. It has encouraged the congregation to see me participating in their services. It has given an example to my kids of revering the Spanish worship regardless of age or language difficulties. This has given me the opportunity to see my kids in their Sunday morning worship. I've been able to address several other problems and

help my kids improve. It's amazing how such a small compromise can be so effective in bringing unity.

While making these compromises, I talked to the men several times about the issues going on. This has been the first time that I've really been a part of the congregation's affairs besides just teaching. It has helped my relationship with the men there. I wrote a letter and had a formal gathering with the men about a certain request I had. I expressed gratitude that they are working to bring unity, but said that more needs to happen than just changing the language. I told them that the kids had been very cooperative and compromised despite their frustrations. I asked for the opportunity to still be able to teach the kids on Sunday mornings. I advised that compromising in this would show the kids that they truly cared about their growth. At first the men still refused. This was a hard blow because I truly felt as though the men had just decided to put their own interests over the great needs of the youth. This greatly contradicts Philippians 2. However, after much prayer, within two days, the men decided that it would be best to allow me to teach English on Sundays. Now I'm part of a five-teacher rotation. This meant so much to me. Now both sides had made great compromises. Both sides were interested in helping the other. This was a GREAT step towards bringing real unity. It's currently my month to teach, and I'm teaching about unity and helping my kids understand what's been going on and their role. I am now very satisfied with the current situation and believe that it is God's providence. We are all learning so much. Things that can only be learned through experience and understood through Bible study.

There is so much more to say about these matters. Please write or call if you have further questions or concerns.

Weekly Classes

Sunday:

Teach teen class at Sherman Ave. Take kids to Washington for worship and teach teen class afterwards.

Monday:

Take kids to Bible class at Rosie's.

Tuesday:

Study Mat with Chris and Mike. Study OT with Anthony. Teach I Corinthians for Sherman teen class.

Wednesday

Study Mat with Vanessa. Study OT with Diana. Read with Alvin. Study Philippians with the Cruz boys.

Thursday:

Study with Marie. Study Mark with Grace. Teen class at Sherman Ave.

Friday:

Study Mat with Suweena. Study Hebrews with Bill & Kelvin and "How to Teach a Class".

Saturday:

Study with Mat Ibys. Study OT with Carol and friends. Drive kids for two classes in Fairlawn, NJ



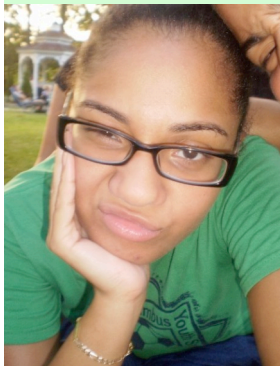
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Young Christian of the Month



September's young Christian of the month goes to Melissa Severino. You can read about Melissa's baptism on this page. Though she's always got some sarcastic comment, she is sweet and a friend to all. I'm so glad that she's recently committed herself to God. It has been a great encouragement to her brother and mother. Thanks to those who always encouraged her (even when she lacked interest) she is now our Christian sister. She is busy attending Bible classes and trying to be an encouragement to her boyfriend who is also making great attempts to grow in Christ as well. I pray that she can stay strong in the coming school year.

Melissa and Kevin Got Baptized!!!

Melissa Severino has been around for a while. Her mom was converted about three years ago. She came to church with her on and off for a year. She has attended all the summer camps. However, unlike her brother and friends, her faith and interest dwindled rather than increased. One year at camp she told me that she was going to get baptized soon, but after that she did nothing about it. She was confused by the differences her Catholic school and family told her. She was confused by the many different "Christian faiths". She was discouraged by sports and school friends. Still, she would come occasionally. This past year at camp, she had some good conversations with others and me. Then the light turned on. She realized that nothing she had been doing had much value. She was ready to give herself up to God. She began attending church VERY regularly. She was going to multiple weekly Bible studies. She has been making changes in her dress. Though afraid and hesitant of

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As you may or may not know, a Christian brother got involved with my work and helped arrange a system where I received donations to be used for the work with the young people. Since many of them lack Christian parents, they don't get the same kind of support as other more fortunate young Christians. Roger, Emily, Gardner, and I have stepped up to bear these financial burdens. These donations have greatly helped in that regard. I have been able to purchase 19 Bibles for different kids, 5 other Bible study books, help us pay for lunch for the all day studies, and help Emily with the girls that she is "adopting". These funds help cover the needs of young Christians that shouldn't be paid by a church treasury. Thanks to all the amazing generous Christians that made the sacrifice.

Greater Problems; Greater Power

Besides the added pressure of dealing with unity in the church, we've also been dealing with greater challenges amongst the young people and their moral issues. We took the first batch up kids and diligently trained them in the Lord. Now they are stronger and working for God. However, after camp, we've been given a whole new batch of interested young Bible students, and they've brought all their worldliness with them. Bad language, bad tempers, immodest dress, and crude joking have been some of the more obvious problems. We are working so hard to have our faithful young Christians to be the greater example. I thought we were losing, but after strong exhortation I feel that we've got back on track. Besides those issues, we are also now dealing with some violent histories and gang related issues. The church is a harbor for people like this, but it poses some great challenges; however, in the past, God has taught me to believe in His amazing TRANSFORMATIVE POWER. GOD BE PRAISED!!!

upcoming challenges, she recently gave her life to God in baptism this past month. We are so proud of her, but know she will need constant encouragement. Pray for Melissa.

Kevin Cruz has been around a while too. His faith has gradually grown throughout the past 3 years. Just like Melissa, he told me he wanted to get baptized sometime soon. I said, "Don't just say that. Work towards it." And he has ever since. 1.5 yrs later he tells me that he's ready for baptism. Kevin is a great guy, but has a hard time being spiritually mature, but he's constantly trying to improve. Though he's made mistakes in the past, I always see his willingness to receive correction and improve. If his zeal can sustain, he can prove to be an important servant and worker for God. Hopefully his baptism will encourage his brothers to take their faith more seriously. Pray for Kevin.

Feeding the 5,000

Before, we had nothing to offer worldly people. There was nothing interesting to pull them into church. However, God being so amazing, managed to capture the hearts of some very worldly kids and create amazing servants. Now, however, because we have some very cool Christians and some very fun Bible study events, we have found that it's much easier to attract kids interested in things besides God's word. This is a challenge. I want everyone to come, but I don't want to harbor shallow faith. How do we prevent this? My best idea is to NEVER COMPROMISE THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE BIBLE. I'm fine if we sometimes bore these newcomers, so long as they know how much we love God's word. I also feel that Spanish at church will help in this regard as well.