

Sunday Schools in the Unification Church

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Well, back in the day, Sunday School involved whatever whoever wanted to volunteer thought of doing. This was well before we had a curriculum.

At UTS, the seminary, I was in a ministry class that required me to do some kind of ministry work for a couple of months and reflect on it. I was informed that UTS had a Sunday school for the BC population, which was around 8 or maybe 12 children, with ages from around 6 to 14. There they were in the chapel, some of them sitting there looking bored, others swinging their feet several inches above the ground as they sat.

And there was Dietrich Seidel, with a chalkboard, giving them a lecture on Jacob's 21 year course, and how it paralleled True Father's course. Riveting material for the younger generation. "I've been doing this because there is no one else. It's hard to hold their interest in the Divine Principle," Dietrich told me. "Perhaps you can think of something more suitable for their ages. I leave you to it."

The only thing I could think of was to start telling Bible stories, about Noah, Abraham, and the other central figures. I'd begin by telling the story, and then the children would choose parts and act it out. Their favorite part of all was the Voice of God.

"Nooaahh!"

"Whaaaat!?"

Have faith!”

One Sunday that sticks in my mind, we were re-enacting the siege of Jericho. There were the priests circling the chapel, the Voice of God telling Joshua to have faith, Joshua urging the people on, Canaanites jeering from behind a row of pews, and the trumpet blasts - three girls playing Zipadee Doo Dah on kazoos.

It was chaotic, but as they left, cries of “Have faith, Joshua!” echoed down the halls.

I hope it did some good.

Some years later, I was in New York, sharing a house with Bill and Shirley Miho. Shirley was a Montessori teacher and helping co-ordinate the Sunday School at Belvedere.

Even though I'd gone to Sunday service at Belvedere many times, we always cleared out after the speech was over. Little did I know at the time, there was a whole Sunday school that went on after that. Shirley asked if Miyuki and I could help with it.

The second-gen teachers gathered as many of the kids as they could (there were always some trying to escape) and sat them down on the carpet. We'd sing a few holy songs. There were several groups of kids, in particular a group of Japanese boys who hung together.

Things had to be pretty stimulating to keep their attention, so I leaned heavily on marching rhythm holy songs like “Unified Soldiers”, with the boys calling out “Hey! Hey! Heey-yey” when the girls took a chorus. Several of the sisters thought this destroyed the spiritual atmosphere, a valid point, but if we sang slow holy songs, out came the Gameboys.

The group ranged in age, I think, from grade one to sixth grade, which is quite a span. I told Bible stories, and tried to keep it as dramatic as possible. After the service, they split off into age groups to do things like write 95 theses and pin them on the door.

Once or twice, Hyo Jin Nim's eldest daughter was in the crowd at Sunday School, which I remember mostly because she found everything so utterly boring.

Who knows what anyone remembers from that time?

I did manage to keep their attention after a while, and I was standing speaking on that little wooden stage where Father spoke so many Sundays. It was a special time.

What was your experience teaching the second generation?