

What does it mean to be the body of Christ in the world, for the world, for the glory of God?

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I

I was at Friday Night Life a couple of weeks ago getting all the Kids' Club stuff set up and ready to go, preparing for another night of kids wanting my attention, our attention [love through discipline]. My friend Brittany was walking around with me as I was going in circles making sure everything was in its proper place. We were heading back from the water fountain to the dining area and she asked me, "Can I do this someday?"

I questioned in reply, "Do what? Kids' Club?"

"Yeah" she said, "Be a Kids' Club leader!"

I responded with enthusiasm, "Absolutely yes, you would be the best leader Brittany, after all you have grown up in Kids' Club." She smiled and actually seemed excited by this idea, we continued on our way.

This teenage girl actually got it. I smiled, I felt relieved knowing what we were doing every Friday had a purpose. Most nights I know Brittany is bored, I can see the expression on her face, the rolling of the eyes, the absence in her presence. Let's face it; we do have to cater to the young. Our Kids' Club is for ages 4-17. What a difference, what a range! I know this is why we consistently have to lay the law down for the teen boys who just won't calm down, I know this is why we have to even ask them to leave from time to time, and I know this has to be why our teen girls never show up. It is a huge gap, a huge responsibility to keep all these minds entertained for an hour every Friday. I guess we do the best we can with what we

have. I too wonder if this has become an unknown prayer of mine, *“God, please let me do the best I can with what I have to work with, I mean with what you have given me to work with.”*

Being a co-supervisor of a ‘Club’ for Kids’ is really a demanding responsibility. We have to discipline, we have to be consistent, we have to be ‘on’ at all times, we have to catch fights before they happen, and sometimes we have to tell the boy without a coat it’s time for him to walk home. This is emotionally draining and if I really let it get to me my whole weekend is spent thinking in hindsight, ‘did I really get my point across to Billy?’ ‘Did Stephanie know that disciplining her whining was really an act of love?’ ‘Did Jack know I really care if he doesn’t have a coat, or even a sweatshirt?’

So what does it mean to be the body of Christ in this world, of snot-nosed, whiny, beautiful children and teens? I find it hard sometimes to even ask this question, at least ask this question out loud. I am afraid of the answer. I feel selfish and comfortable where I am and only giving myself to them for so little time one night a week. But in this world of youth they need Christ. In this world, the body of Christ needs to be consistent and easy to read, like a picture book.

I often think of those pictures we see with Jesus surrounded by children. Like in Matthew 19, “Then the little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them....Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’” He did it so well. He loved them so easily, faith like a child, right? That’s what He asks

of us, His body of believers. Christ is asking us to be like the children, to trust blindly, to be lead by faith, to have hope and express open-ended love to our world.

Our children in Athens County are living in poverty. Do they know they are living in poverty? Do they know they are compiled in statistics? I bet if I asked them they would be surprised to know this. They would be confused and ask many questions on how that could be. They are too concerned with playing with their friends, and giving to their families to see themselves as poor. To be the body with these youth is to simply listen and love, to play basketball and color, to listen to jokes and give genuine advice. To be the body of Christ with this culture, with this generation, is not show pity but to be honest and available, to be a friend, to give love.