

1.2 Relationships

Building Relations: Visits & Calls

TEACHING BASICS**Relational Needs**

Before a child or teenager can place their trust in a guardian, certain fundamental needs must be satisfied. Establishing a strong foundation of love, acceptance, and security is paramount. However, there are more nuanced relational needs that contribute to a trusting bond. Providing opportunities for choice, fostering a sense of freedom and independence, offering recognition and encouragement, and entrusting responsibilities are all essential in nurturing a child's sense of self-worth and trust.

In His profound wisdom, Christ exemplified the principle that love begets love. He demonstrated that the act of being loved first is a catalyst for learning how to love in return. The scripture in 1 John 4:19 beautifully captures this truth: "We love Him because He first loved us." This verse underscores the transformative power of love and emphasizes that experiencing love is a prerequisite for understanding and reciprocating it. The implications of Christ's teachings extend beyond personal relationships. By imitating Christ's example of unconditional love, we can create environments where individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to make meaningful contributions.

A servant must seek to meet the emotional and relational needs of children and teenagers if they hope to seek to establish a solid foundation of trust. By providing love, acceptance, security, and opportunities for growth and responsibility, we can help them develop a healthy sense of self and forge meaningful connections with them. Furthermore, by embracing Christ's teachings on love, we can create a church community where love is the prevailing force, transforming individuals and society as a whole.

Feeling unconditionally accepted, regardless of their behavior or appearance is a big factor in the decision as to whether a child will open their heart to you or not. God accepted us unconditionally and we ought to do the same. We read in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This all begins in the classroom and works its way out into social settings.

Begins in the Classroom: Non-teaching Attendance

While most servants associate service with the chance of giving the lesson, this is far from the core of the service. The goal of service is to empower children to have a relationship with God, while the lesson certainly plays a part, it is nothing but a small aspect. Just like different individuals have different personalities and interests, the children also have different paths to coming to the knowledge of the truth. Unfortunately, some servants may mistakenly believe that not presenting lessons equates to optional attendance. This misconception steers them away from the true purpose of service, which

involves building relationships, praying for the teaching servants, receiving spiritual nourishment, assisting with classroom management, maintaining attendance logs, monitoring time, intervening politely, and serving as role models. It is important to recognize that some children may specifically seek out and connect with the servants. While the focus should always be on Christ and not on the individual servants, these interactions present opportunities to guide children toward a deeper understanding of their faith.

The ultimate aim is to achieve 100% attendance. While occasional absences due to legitimate reasons such as work commitments, illnesses, or travel are understandable, no servant should be absent simply because of laziness or a sense of feeling unneeded. Every servant plays a crucial role, just like the teaching servant who delivers the lesson. By embracing their responsibilities and actively engaging with the children, servants can significantly contribute to the spiritual growth and development of the younger generation.

Pray for the servant teaching, and for the Holy Spirit to guide them. It is essential to maintain a reverent and focused atmosphere in class, avoiding distractions such as chatting with fellow servants, coordinators, or Abouna. This is a time dedicated to learning and spiritual growth, and it is important to honor this purpose. Be observant of unusual behaviors or changes in trends among the children. Pay attention to those who may appear different, withdrawn, or overly active. Bullying, quietness, or sudden shifts in relationships can be signs that require attention.

Discipline is also a crucial aspect of classroom management. Help quiet kids down gently but firmly, allowing the teaching servant to focus on their lesson. Discreetly track the children's involvement, noticing if particular individuals remain quiet or are not being engaged. Encouraging quiet kids to participate is essential, as they may feel excluded or uncomfortable if they are not fully involved. Has the teaching servant been asking the same people all the time? Get quiet kids involved because inclusivity and a welcoming environment are key to keeping children engaged and motivated.

Furthermore, help with questions that get asked to the teaching servant, as they may already have their hands full answering others. Help them out if you know the answer. If you, yourself, are unsure of an answer just tell them that you can get back to them! Listen to the speaker as if you were a student as well: are they saying the right thing? If they say something that is not correct, then you need to find a polite way to correct them because you want the kids to come at the right time, as well as we do not wish to teach them false information. Know when to intervene, (if at all), as well as how to intervene, (in the form of a question, etc.) Usually wait for them to call upon you, as this makes for a good stopping point. The speaker can ask at the end of the lesson; any comments or questions from the other servants?

Begins in the Classroom: Servant Behavior

The impact of a servant's behavior and body language should never be underestimated. A simple act like smiling can have a profound effect on the impression one leaves on children and parents. A person who exudes a warm and inviting demeanor, marked by a genuine smile, hearty laughter, and a kind and peaceful expression, is more likely to be received positively by both children and parents. In contrast, a person with a loud and harsh voice, a perpetually frowning face, or a tendency to

reprimand other children in front of them is more likely to elicit fear and apprehension.

It is equally important to be sensitive to children's individual triggers and boundaries. Some children may be uncomfortable with physical contact, such as hugs or touches, while others may be afraid of individuals with certain physical attributes, such as beards or distinctive clothing. It is crucial for servants to be respectful of these boundaries and to tailor their behavior accordingly, ensuring that they do not inadvertently cause distress or discomfort to the children in their care.

By being mindful of their behavior and body language, servants can create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere that encourages positive interactions with children and parents alike. A genuine smile, a kind word, and a respectful attitude goes a long way in building trust, comfort and thereby building the relationship.

From your Home: Calls

Keeping attendance is very important, as it can aid in helping with outreach projects, as well as tracking trends among students. These are means to ensure you are a Christ-like voice. If they attend but do not know you, they will not listen or absorb much. Therefore, attendance can additionally familiarize them with you and your fellow servants. “But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:2-5)

The significance of attendance can be further illuminated through the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep, as depicted in John 10:2-5. The shepherd enters through the door, and the sheep recognize his voice, willingly following him because they know and trust him. Conversely, they would flee from a stranger whose voice they do not recognize. In the same way, consistent attendance allows you to establish meaningful relationships with students through calls, demonstrate love and care through visits, and build rapport through engaging activities.

By establishing a relationship through calls, you create a two-way communication channel, allowing you to connect with students on a personal level. Through calls, you can inquire about their well-being, offer support, and provide guidance. Visits, on the other hand, convey a sense of love and care, as you physically come into the students' spaces to show your concern and support. Activities serve as a platform for building rapport, as they engage students in interactive and fun ways, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding.

By all these means, maintaining attendance is not merely about tracking presence but about establishing a deeper connection with students. It enables you to be a Christ-like voice, ensuring that your words and actions resonate with them. Through regular attendance, calls, visits, and activities, you create an environment where students feel known, loved, and cared for, ultimately leading to their spiritual growth and development.

Home Calls- General Guidelines

When it comes to house calls, many servants wonder who they should call and how often it should be done. Typically, if they miss Sunday school twice consecutively, a servant should call to check in on them. However, if the child has been coming, can regularly call every three to four weeks.

Sometimes, servants worry the phone call will stall as they run out of ideas of things to talk about. However, it is an endless list and here are a few of them. Tell them that you missed them, and, more importantly, ask if they are okay, (particularly if they have been missing Sunday School.) Next, perhaps ask how their day/week at school went, or about their favorite hobbies. Try to then ease into more spiritual topics, such as asking them if they prayed, did their bible study, etc. However, never criticize them for not doing so; rather, encourage them to improve without sounding disapproving or judgemental. Before hanging up, ensure they do not have any remaining questions.

Make note to never make them feel bad or guilty for not coming to church. Avoid lecturing or scolding them. Never start off the phone call by telling them that they should come to church. Rather, always make the child feel that you care about them. Take an interest in the child's life, and try to end the phone call on a positive note, telling them that you miss them, and would like to see them soon.

Home Visits - General Guidelines

A regularly asked question is how often should visits take place? Before defining the frequency, let us re-evaluate the objective. The goal of the servant is to establish a relationship with each child such that they begin to see the voice of Christ being emanated from the servant. A visit is an act of love and closeness, as entering one's home is a privilege. By visiting the child at least once a year, a bridge is gapped. In an ideal world, each servant should visit each child at least once per year. A second visit is encouraged as it deepens the connection. These are even more important with children who DO NOT attend Sunday school much. Why? In a visit, there should be a habit of opening scripture. how beautiful is the image of seeing God come to the child when they don't come to hear the word of God. So if they do not come, go more!

Now looking at some guidelines, ideally, servants would go two by two, just like the disciples went to preach two by two. As an act of love, take a gift with you, unless it is deemed inappropriate to do so. Always pray before you go in or pick up the phone. Read the bible study assigned for that week, as you need to set an example to those you are outreaching to. Typically sit with kids and parents, as well as the child alone if possible.

Make it your goal to become the child's friend. Speak with them face to face as a friend. We read in the Bible, "God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend." (Exodus 33:11) Develop the type of friendship with the child that they seek your mentorship and guidance in life. Always talk on the child's level and never make them feel that you are better than them, more sophisticated than them, or more knowledgeable than them. After initial casual conversation, turn to spiritual topics, as recall this is the purpose of your visit.

The suggested time for a visit is typically 30 to 45 minutes. It can be divided as follows: one minute, before entering, to pray, five minutes for small talk with the child/ family, five minutes to talk to the parents, ten minutes to play with the kids, ten minutes of Bible study, and finally the last five minutes to pray, once again. Of course, if you are familiar with the child and their family the visit might be much

longer or shorter, but as a rule of thumb for new students, a visit should not go on too long. Always be mindful of the time of others and the privilege of the parents opening their homes to you.

Win them through love

Moreover, winning the child through love, acceptance, and security is the best way to keep them in the Church longterm. Always ask yourself, how do we accept the child? Then, remind yourself that the first step is to understand the child, as each one is different, and you must learn the most effective way to communicate with those which you interact with. Listen to them, observe them, and be perceptive, if you wish to pick up more about them: what they like and do not like, etc. Talk and work with the child one-on-one as well to make them feel that they are not overlooked in a classroom full of people. Do not forget to arrange a visit to their home from time to time, as well as call them on the phone regularly to keep them involved.



Review Questions

1. If you are not teaching do you still have to come to Sunday School? (A: Yes)
2. How long should a house visit be? (A: Thirty to forty minutes.)
3. True or false? Body language and facial expressions play a big role in first impressions, especially with children. (A: True)
4. How often should you do house calls if they come to Sunday School regularly? (A: Every three to four weeks)
5. When should Sunday School end? (A: 1 PM)

