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Lessons from the Classroom

BY VIMBO ZVANDASARA-ZHOU

After years of working at camp, taking education courses, and helping in classrooms, you'd think that I would have seen it all! However, I've been learning a lot in a short amount of time since I began full-time student teaching this month. As my responsibilities in the classroom have increased, so has my prayer life! I teach at a public school, and each day I pray that God shines through me to my students.

One snowy afternoon last week, I had just finished teaching my second-graders, and the school day was almost done. I dismissed them to go to their lockers and collect their backpacks, coats and boots. They hurried back to the classroom, and sat on the carpet in a line while we waited for the buses to arrive.

While they were sitting there, I imitated what I had seen my mentor teacher do, and we practiced multiplication facts together.

"1 times 3 is..."

"3!" they shouted in reply, looking up excitedly.

"2 times 3 is..."

"6!" they roared back, some of them squirming on the carpet in their spots.

Most of the students were participating, but as I walked down the line, I saw two kids picking on one of my students toward the back. I separated the boy being picked on from the other two bullies, and didn't think much of it.

The bell rang, and my students popped up off the floor and followed me out to the buses. When the last boy, who had been bullied a few minutes earlier, was walking toward his bus, he stopped abruptly on the sidewalk. I was about to say goodbye when suddenly, he threw his boots into the snow and cried, "Everybody hates me!"



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Pieter Damssteeg

He began to sob, waving his hands frantically as he stood there. Teachers and students were walking by, but I kept my eyes on him, and my heart sank. I murmured a quick prayer, and whispered, "I don't hate you. Here, let's pick up your boots and get you on the bus."

I knelt down next to him as he picked up his boots. I then gave him a quick hug and watched him saunter up the bus stairs and disappear.

As I walked back inside the school, I thought about how I sometimes treat God the way my student treated me. I throw a fit, throw my hands in the air, and declare that everything and everyone is against me. Yet, God patiently approaches me time and time again. He gently reminds me that he really loves me, and he is on my side even when others aren't. I had thought that I was the one teaching, and that I would have to handle all of this on my own, when God has been by my side all the time. The longer I teach, the more I realize God actually is teaching *me* about his love through my students. And here I was, thinking I was the teacher.

Vimbo Zvandasara-Zhou was born in Zimbabwe. She is currently a senior elementary education major undergraduate student at Andrews University. Vimbo grew up in and currently resides in Berrien Springs, Michigan.