

TOUCHING LIVES THROUGH TEACHING ENGLISH

English is the language of choice today for business, education, and government the world over. People want to learn English so they can study abroad, get jobs, or work for a foreign company in their country. Since opportunities abound to teach English in countries where missionaries are not welcome, going as an English teacher is one way to get a visa.

Our family, along with others, worked in an area where it was not possible to openly share the Gospel. Under shar'ia law, proselytizing or trying to convert someone could bring a strong reaction, even deportation in our province. Even handing out a tract could raise suspicion. But building relationships and trust to the point where you can share spiritual truths on a more personal level is a way to get into the hearts of the people.

The classroom provides a natural environment to get to know people and to talk about culture, religious holidays, personal viewpoints, and much more. We taught students from all walks of life – college students, businessmen, medical doctors, university lecturers, etc.

The aims of our workshop were three-fold:

- (a) To demonstrate in a classroom setting how we turn the conversation to spiritual things.
- (b) To highlight opportunities to teach English as a second language in our own communities as well as abroad.
- (c) To give homeschoolers (and parents) a vision to excel in their English language studies to better communicate the Gospel.

IN THE CLASSROOM

We began with a typical classroom scene where the teacher uses pictures to get the students to talk (practice their English). We showed two pictures of families

doing something together. One was watching a scary TV program (no interaction with each another), the other husking sweet corn together, talking and learning together. First, students were asked to share similarities in both pictures, then differences.

After that warm up exercise, we had the students work in pairs to come up with reasons why someone would not want to watch television or have a TV in their home. This was a natural opportunity since a student had asked me earlier, “Why don’t you have TV in your home?” We selected our topic and teaching material for this lesson to lead up to that.

“I explained how I grew up in a religious home but did not know God.”

Nearly everyone has a TV in our city, and it is on all the time. Many could not imagine being without it – until I prompted them to look deeper into the matter. So they began to discuss some ideas.

After a few minutes I drew out the reasons from the groups and listed them on the whiteboard:

- Not enough time
- TV is a time-waster
- Many bad things on TV
- People may imitate or do the bad things they see
- TV affects the way children learn (e.g., attention deficit)

Since I had promised them that I would tell them the reasons I do not have a TV, this led smoothly into sharing “my story” (testimony). I explained how I grew up in a religious home but did not know God. Even after I joined the church and tried hard to live a good life, my life was still so very empty. I had no power in

me strong enough to keep away from the bad things on TV and other temptations. Only later at a meeting did I come to know God in a personal way. I learned I could be forgiven and my heart washed clean because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Many there can identify with the empty life of religion, materialism and relationships— none of these meet the deepest need of the heart. But as for television, I emphasized that God also took away my desire to do, or even look at the bad things portrayed on TV. Many Muslims believe you can look at sin and not be influenced by it. They try to separate the outward influences from the good that they do, or feel that doing good will outweigh the bad. But thank God, we have the power of God in us to overcome sin. He is not a God who is so far away that we cannot know Him.

Our English classes provide a natural place to ask questions and discuss innumerable topics, e.g., culture and religious holidays (like Good Friday and Easter). People often commented about how different our family was. Frequently we were asked about modesty and the veiling. Our sons were often asked why they did not smoke, or why they did not have a girlfriend. People liked to discuss politics and would ask, “Why does your country like war so much?” All these questions give opportunities to go deeper.

... be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you... (I Peter 3:15).

OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

At our Missions Conference two years ago, there was a workshop on reaching out to immigrants and internationals around us. Most of us now live in or not far from communities that have ethnic groups that speak languages other than English. Some of these people may want to learn English in order to get a job or just to talk with their neighbors. Not knowing English, they feel isolated, especially the older folks. While the younger ones will learn English in school, others may welcome some help. We spoke to one Russian man at the conference who was encouraged by our workshop. He said, “I learned English this way when I came to the United States.” And here he was, a believer!

There are also countless openings to teach English overseas. But we recommend being part of a team that has an aim of sharing the Gospel and planting a

church. Yes, planting a church in this setting is a long-term work, but even short-term teachers (one to two years) can play a crucial role in building relationships that develop over time.

“Do you know what a gerund is? It is not some wild animal in Africa!”

Charity Christian Missions can place English teachers in Asia. We have house parents there that provide a family atmosphere and give direction to the work. If you want to find out more about this opportunity, contact the CCM office.

A WORD TO HOMESCHOOLERS

You never know how you will use what you learn in school in the future. If for no other reason, you should learn the structure of the English language well so you can study the Bible and prepare to share the Gospel effectively with others. I did not like to read books in high school. I was a slow reader. But I have read hundreds of books over the years as a missionary. I dreaded writing essays in college. But I have written hundreds of newsletters and articles during my career as a missionary. I hated the mandatory public speaking course I was required to take in college. But I have spoken in hundreds of public meetings over the years. I could never have guessed that I would do all this when I was still in school. But God had other plans for me! When I was converted my whole life, future, and goals changed. I had a desire to share the Good News effectively with others.

Also, knowing your own language well will give you a good foundation for learning a second or third language if you go to the mission field someday.

So, I encourage all you students... get your grammar down well. Do you know what a gerund is? It is not some wild animal in Africa! It is a part of speech; probably one many people do not know much about.

Learn how to read well. Learn how to speak well. And learn how to write well—for God’s glory and for His kingdom.