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Bible Class and Baby Shower - What a Combo!

by Joanne Beckley

We're having beautiful cool sunny weather here in South Africa. The bougainvillea and golden-shower are making wonderful splashes of color as we travel from place to place.



I had quite a day on Saturday and I'd like to describe it to you. The ladies of Tshitithuni asked me to host a morning of Bible teaching and then participate in a surprise baby shower for Rudzani (Lorrain, my maid, who is pregnant, a Christian, and has been translating for my classes) – in other words, could I teach them how to have a baby shower? Oh, my, but it has been YEARS since I hosted one, or even attended one.

So I went online to see what is going on out there. I copied several games to my computer to weed through later – and then discovered diaper cakes. Who woulda thunk! Apparently I have REALLY been out of the loop. So, I thought, why not. Off I went and bought 60 of those paper things. Carol Chaffin and I rolled them up, found some wrapping paper to be cut it in strips, and I bought several appropriate items to decorate it. (I tried to do everything at minimum cost, including the "cake" so that they could see the party was affordable.) When I returned home (Bible study at my home, shower at Carol's) Rudzani just happened to talk to me about paper nappies before her surprise party: "The problem is we have no way to trash them in the village, so I wish to buy cloth nappies." And here I was sitting with 60 in a "cake"!



The day arrived and we spent three hours studying about being parents, how parenting requires goals and planning BEFORE baby arrives.

In this photo Rudzani is translating and the occasion required that I don my "nwena", a gift from one of the ladies. Notice the additional decoration on the bottom. It is tied at the shoulder and another is usually wrapped around the waist. In early days (like when we first came over :-)) they made them out of mattress ticking.



The ladies all sat in amazement for the first hour – and then it dawned on

them – God in his wisdom has indeed given us exactly what our goals must be and what plans we must make. Too many parents get pregnant and think, ok, finances and physical preparation – but where are the discussions concerning what direction we want to direct our children, how are we going to do it, and how are we going to provide protection for our child from Satan's flaming darts?

I used the example that by bringing a TV into our homes it is much like opening the door to Satan and asking him to make himself comfortable. And it's not just the problem of sex, violence, and bad language on TV/DVD player – but it is devastating to parents who are trying to create and maintain good attitudes and respect for authority. "You are right. TV is a problem at my house." "What are the ages of your children?" "My first born is 14. The other one is 10." I suggested to her that she and her husband sit with the children and talk about the problem and ask them for their ideas of a solution. I then gave them an example of how our family tried to work with the problem during our sons' teen years. We bought a role of tickets (or make your own) and then designated 30 minutes per ticket for each of our boys, with only 10 tickets in hand for one week. This was an effort to ingrain an awareness that what we see and hear needs to have value in our lives. (The boys thought it a good idea that mom and dad have tickets also.) TV is a terrible babysitter, even creating a problem with attention span in little ones as they grow up. When our children do sit down to watch, mom should also be nearby to take advantage of occasions to talk about what is seen and heard. . . "I see now that mothering is a difficult work!"



Ladies on one side of the room during tea break. I laughed to see they all wanted "the big one" -- who fancy when you haven't had breakfast! Their first meal of the day is at 11am. Notice three of the ladies in their tradition dress, the one in yellow has adapted the traditional dress.



Bible study continued and we all trooped over to Carol's house for lunch and party time. Because of language translation problems nearly every game I had so carefully planned . . . bombed. And I thought I had so carefully adapted them! I finally realized the problem was not in the translation, but that they had never ever played "games" at a party. If their choice of words created a

sentence that came out silly, instead of reading what was written, they would correct it! We ended up playing nearly every paper game twice – only THEN would the beautiful laughter begin. Whew!

I also thought to draw a baby on a big piece of cardboard and have Rudzani "pin" the baby's clothing on the baby. We blind-folded her, and then I quietly turned the baby upside down. Before I realized what was happening she very thoughtfully turned it right side up for me – peeking out from under her blindfold! So we started over again and this time everyone understood and enjoyed the game – only the baby stayed upright.

And the gift table? The diaper cake was "very much appreciated" AFTER I explained what it was. The table had three gifts on it, two small ones and one large box wrapped in a piece of orange paper. Rudzani very carefully unwrapped the paper, and found at least 10 individual items in the box – each one from one of the guests. The gift table looked very bare, but they had saved on paper!



She went around to every woman to express her tearful thanks by hugging each one.

Her little baby would not come into the world unloved. How do I know this? Because a speech was then given how all of them (us) were ready to help her to be a good mother. It was a fine ending for "a number one" day (the word special is not in the Venda language).

Love to you,

Joanne